



Carrying

It's all about grace.

I can carry all those plastic bags. I'm sure of it. It required most of an entire cart to get them from the store to the car, but from the car to the house? My two skinny arms should work just fine, thanks.

I can ignore the fact that my scrawny biceps are burning like a thousand suns because I've made it to the front porch. But then as I'm ready to reach for the doorknob, I realize both burning-like-a-thousand-suns arms are more than occupied. Elbows won't turn knobs. Feet? Nope. Mouth? That's just silly. If I put the bags down, however, I know there's no regathering that tangly mess of loopy handles. Miss a bag handle and everything inside slops out of the bag in a potentially toxic porch spill. The whole thing is an epic, hot fail.

So no choice. This is where I live now. On my porch. With all these bags.

Anytime I find myself living in the space of my own hot failures — even real and hotter failures — I find comfort

and almost inexpressible relief in focusing on the unconditional and never-changing love of my God of grace. My tendency is to imagine the Father seeing my failures the same way I do. But He puts them in an entirely different bag. All condemning thoughts I think about myself and my failures are all and only my thoughts. Not His. He's made clear again and again His overwhelming, unshakable love for me, skinny-scarred arms and all.

**In Jesus, I'm forgiven.
Blameless and untangled. Free.**

Paul drives it home in Romans 8:1-2: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death." No condemnation. Not one hot speck.

Oh, the freedom. As I let go of erroneous views of a God who only condemns, I find myself living in peace. And joy. In security. In His love. My toxic mess ups don't define me. In Jesus, I'm forgiven. Blameless and untangled. Free.

"Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds as expressed in your evil actions. But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through his death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before him" (Col. 1:21-22). Trying to skinny-arm carry guilt and shame will leave us tied up in knots in mind and heart. We were never meant to carry that heavy load. We're reconciled through the sacrifice of Christ, "holy, faultless, and blameless."

Could I encourage you to open your heart and mind this very day to the freedom found in embracing forgiveness? Live in the light of His saving grace. It's complete. It's enough. Abundant, even. Redemption bigger than I can mess up. Looped together in His faithful love. I can live well there. In the house, on the porch — anywhere. □

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