Series: The Lies We Believe

“I have to perform to be loved and accepted.”

Review

Last week we said that our culture tells us that we need to make much of ourselves and our problem is that we think too lowly of ourselves. We said that the Bible says that we need to get our eyes off ourselves and seek to express love to God by obeying Him and express love for others by serving them.

Phil 2:3 says, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition (the desire to be #1) or vain conceit (excessively proud of or concerned about one self), but in humility consider others as better than yourselves.”

Intro

This week we want to look at the lie, “I have to perform to be loved and accepted.”

I. Our need to justify ourselves

What does it mean to justify ourselves?

A. We all feel like we need to do something, perform in a certain way, so that we can feel good about ourselves and people will accept us.

B. This just seems to be the way the world works. If you want to be accepted, you need to have a performance record which opens doors

1. High School transcript

If you want to get accepted into a good college you have to have a good academic transcript (report card). If the school looks at your grades and they say they are good enough then you get accepted into that college- the doors open. If not, then you are rejected.

2. job resume

What is a job resume?

It is a record of all the jobs and training that you have had that you present to an employer when you are seeking a job. It is a record you are giving to try to prove you are qualified for the job. If they like your performance record, then they will offer you the job. If they don’t like your resume they will tell you to keep looking.

C. The idea of performance records are used all over the place in our culture. It is the idea that we need to justify ourselves to others as worthy so that we are accepted. Our performance is often the way that we even justify our value and worth to ourselves. This seems to be the natural default of the heart.

D. Typically, when we try to justify ourselves, we look to the thing that we do best.

So the runner competes and feels worthy when he runs well.

The student, who may be a terrible athlete, feels justified when she gets good grades.

The businessman feels justified when his company makes a good profit,

the performer feels justified when he hears the applause of the crowd.

E. Unfortunately, since this idea is so prevalent in our culture, we think it should apply to our relationship with God and so the religions of the world conclude that we need to have a validating performance record that shows that we are good enough to be accepted by God

F. This was even what the Jews thought was the purpose of law. They thought that the law was given so they could try to keep it and in so doing justify themselves.

G. Religion says: obey (be good)-> be accepted by God.

This what the Jews believed.

H. Why is it such a big deal to understand this lie: “I have to perform to be loved and accepted”?

1. Even if you are a good person, you know that you could always do better.

a. Have you ever heard the saying, “good enough” is never “good enough.” Think about it. If you ask your friend about his girlfriend and he says, “She’s good enough”, what is he really saying about his girlfriend. “She’s not really all that special. She’s not really all that good.”

b. Paul addresses this very issue in Romans 2. He talks about people who know, because of their conscience, that they should be living in a certain way and yet fail to live even according to their own standards.

c. God says that He will judge these people not just because they don’t live up to God’s standards but because they don’t even live up to their own standards.

Romans 2:1-3

1 You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.2 Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. 3 So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?

2. Another problem with seeking your own righteousness is that not only is it never enough, **but it never ends**. There is always more to do, another race to run, another business, transaction, another test to take, another performance. And what happens if you fail?

Wouldn’t it be great if you were loved and accepted not based on what you did but because of who you were?

II. Acceptance apart from our performance

A. Imagine how shocking Paul’s words would have been to the Jews when he said in

Romans 3:21-22

“But now a righteousness from God, **apart from law**, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.”

B. Paul is now saying that there is a totally new way to obtain a perfect record that comes apart from our performance. It comes as a gift from God and when we possess it, we are fully accepted.

Religion says -> obey-> be accepted

Gospel says -> believe –> be accepted-> obey

C. That is a radical message not just for the Jews but for us today. But to accept it people have to be willing to admit that no matter how hard they have been trying, no matter how good they have been, they will never be good enough.

D. That is why Paul goes on in this passage and basically says that this justification from God is needed by everyone.

Romans 3:22b-23

“There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

E. There is a righteousness from God apart from the law- apart from all the things you have tried to do to be good enough.

This righteousness is found through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

F. There is a new identity for us to receive. It is so much better than a performance based identity.

G. This identity comes as a result of gift righteousness as opposed to works righteousness.

1. Works righteousness (religion)- obey to be accepted by God.

2. Gift righteousness- we are accepted by God because of the work of Jesus on our behalf. It is a gift- not based on anything we do.

H. Have you ever been in a situation where someone covered for you (maybe they took the blame that you deserved so you didn’t get in trouble)?

Ex. Scott and driving accident

I. That is what Jesus did for you and even more. He took the wrath you deserved and He also gave you His righteous record as part of our new identity.

J. You have heard of identity theft. Where someone takes your identity online and taps into your financial resources.

1. As a result of being Christians we get a different identity than we were born with.

2. We were born as condemned sinners but when we accept Christ, we get His identity and His righteousness gets applied to our record.

3. this is so much better than identity theft. It is **identity gift**.

We go from being:

children of wrath-> children of God

Wicked-> holy

Sinful-> forgiven

K. “In Christ, there is nothing you can do today to make God love you more, and there is nothing you have done that would make Him love you less.”

L. But this is only true of those who are in Christ to those who have received this new identity.

M. Christ’s obedience was so spectacular that there is nothing we could ever add to it.

His death was so compete there is no way we could take ways from it.

N. Satan’s #1 attack

He wants you to question your identity in Christ, to doubt your acceptance by God in Christ.

O. In Matt. 4:1-11 Satan tempts Jesus in the wilderness and tries to get Jesus to question His identity

1. Matt. 4:3 “If you are the Son of God….”

2. Matt. 4:6 “If you are the Son of God…”

P. But right before the wilderness temptation God tells Jesus His identity:

“This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased.” Matt. 3:17

Q. Satan starts with what you did and tries to tear down who you are.

Jesus starts with who He’s made you to be and then helps you rebuild what you do.

R. Our identity is not based on our ability to perform.

Our identity is based on the performance of Christ on our behalf.

Rom. 15:7 “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.”

III. The place of our performance

A. Now that we are in Christ we do good works, not to try to gain acceptance but because we are accepted.

B. Religion said, Obey -> Be accepted

Gospel said, Believe -> Be accepted -> obey.

C. Our good works are to glorify God, not ourselves.

1 Cor. 10:31 “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

D. As one who is fully accepted, we want to do everything to draw attention to God and bring Him glory.

Conclusion

1. Are you believing the lie, “I have to perform to be loved and accepted”? What are you believing about your identity?

Do you see yourself as one in Christ and there is nothing you can do to make God love you more and nothing you have done to make Him love you less?

2. Are you working hard trying to prove to yourself, others, and God that you are good enough?

3. if you have never trusted in Christ as your Savior, why not do that today. Admit you cannot do it. You are a sinner and that’s why Jesus came, lived, died, and rose again. He did it because He loves you and wants a relationship with you. Trust in his death for the forgiveness of your sins.

4. Perhaps you are a believer and you’ve listened to the voice of Satan, and you have tried to find you identity in your performance.

If that is you, will you repent of whatever you have been looking to for your identity and give it to Christ and allow Him to be your all.

5. Seek to do good works, not to measure up but because you are already fully accepted.

“You are loved and accepted apart from your performance. You are loved and accepted based on your faith in Jesus.”

Growth plan – relationship to self

Last week we talked about getting your eyes off yourself and seeking ways to **love God**-> obey and to **love others**-> serve

Tonight we have challenged you to find your acceptance in Christ and not your performance.

What steps do you need to take to help you think rightly about yourself and your relationship with God?

Small group questions

1. In what things do you typically look so you can feel loved and accepted? What is the problem with looking to those things?

2. in what areas of your life does Satan attempt to get you to doubt your identity as a son/daughter in Christ?

3. Why is how you view yourself (your identity) such a big deal?

4. In Matt. 4:1-11, how did Jesus respond to Satan’s attacks on Jesus’ identity? How does Jesus response encourage you as you deal with identity accusations?

5. The gospel prayer says: “In Christ, there is nothing you can do that would make God love you more and nothing you can do to make God love you less.” Will you make this your daily prayer of thanks to God?