

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday February 2, 2020. "Rise above: living from acceptance not for acceptance."

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

II Sunday.

Sunday we did a stand alone theme on being accepted by God. There were several reasons why we did this service. One, next week we're starting a three part series on prayer. And in order to have confidence that we can go to God and just pour out all of our inner...stuff, we have to trust and know that God wants us to go to him. There are a variety of reasons we don't pray, we'll hit those next week. But we wanted to make sure we are assured we can go to God boldly.

But also so many churches make fitting in, belonging, being accepted harder than God does. Churches can be so judgmental, closed-minded, that they make certain struggles, behaviors, sins, (and never their own) as barriers to both a relationship with God, and being accepted or belonging to the church. So we plowed through a passage in Romans to see how God views us, what is our standing with him, and what those truths mean for us specifically.

Read the passage and we'll pull out of it the specifics for us. **Romans 8:29-39.**

What jumps out at you from this passage?

What spoke to you specifically about how God sees and feels about you?

Kal said there were specific truths from this passage that let us know how God feels about us.

1. We are chosen by God.

In this passage it specifically said God has chosen us, and continues to choose us. That's a huge statement about what being accepted/belonging looks like. We all have stories from our past where we were either chosen or not chosen, and we know how each feels. Knowing we are chosen by God should completely change how we both understand and relate to God. He didn't create us to give us rules. God created us to have a relationship with him. That chosenness opens doors for us.

How could our lives look, and our relationship with God, if we lived fully into the knowledge we are chosen by him?

2. Because of how God feels about us, he shares with us generously.

Generosity is a response to our feelings about others. Generosity always is born out of being chosen and accepted. Chosen doesn't just stand in isolation. Chosen means there are benefits and things we gain because we were and are chosen. In this passage God chooses us, gives us the right standing, and out of that relationship God shares everything with us even his son...because he chose us.

How do you define generosity? How does generosity look practiced well?

3. God accepts us as we are.

This is probably the most important and impactful truth from this passage, and what we talked about at the beginning. Paul says: *“who dares accuse us if God chose us”*. This removes a lot of the extra rules and restrictions churches place on people to fix themselves, stop doing those bad things or start doing those good things before they’ll accept you. We don’t have to get cleaned up or fix all our issues before God accepts us. The church is powerful when it practices this same acceptance of people.

Where have you experienced the church practicing conditional acceptance?

How could it change our community, the world, if we were to practice this like God does?

4. When God chooses us we are ‘in’.

Being chosen naturally implies we belong. We are accepted. There are countless scriptures where the disciples asked Jesus questions about who was in and who was out. And Jesus ALWAYS refused to answer them. The who’s in or who’s out question is not the right question. Paul said when God chooses us, when we’ve been given *“right standing”*, then the “who’s in who’s out” question becomes a non issue. Even the prodigal son who rejected his father’s love never stopped being his son.

This passage also states there is no condemnation. How would you define that?

How would you practice treating others with no condemnation?

5. Once you’re in there’s no getting out of the club.

And this is one of the toughest issues because it dances around the topic of *“once saved always saved”*. We want to know if you can lose your salvation, and if so how does it happen. In this passage Paul states once we’ve been chosen, once we have “right standing”, once we’ve been saved and freed from condemnation, then NOTHING can separate us from the love of God. And then there is this long multi-example piece on all the different ‘nothings’ that can separate us from the love of God.

Aside from the question; ‘once saved always saved’ , what does “never being separated from God” mean to you?

III Challenge.

Wrapping this teaching up we can boldly claim some truths. God loves us, as the passage states is *“for us”*, (where have we heard that before), and no one can take it away. And once we are chosen nothing can separate us from this love. This gives us the special and unique relationship with God that opens the door for us to boldly to go him.

So, in our lives and in the church how would we practice these truths in order to change the world?