

He Loves Me Series Part 2

Forgiveness, Delight, and Golden Retrievers

Pastor Brian Flewelling

Recap - This is week 2 of our mini-series He Loves Me, in which we are discussing identity as God sees me, and not as I see myself.

Ill: Look at your neighbor's nose. Look at your own nose.

How well could you see your own nose? Not very!

It's the same way with personal identity. You're too close to it. It's too personal. You don't even have an accurate perception of yourself. Your emotions lie to you. You need to be able to see yourself as God sees you.

Last week Pastor Brian talked about the voices of rejection in the room. This week I want to talk about the voice of rejection in my head, or that I perceive is coming from the Heavenly Father.

Guilt

Maybe we have this general sense that everything is going alright until something goes wrong. Until I mess up. (That's the moment my identity is tested.) Now I feel this **guilt**. I know God is loving. He's loving towards others. But I should know better.

- I'm supposed to be a Christian and I'm still struggling with this.
- That my devotional life is anorexic.
- I have these binges of jealous competition.
- Anxiety and depression (what's wrong with me?)
- I've got this greed and these appetites; I want more.
- I've got lusts multiplying like bunny rabbits.
- I feel the weight of disappointment in myself.
- I kind of know God forgives me. I wonder if he just kind of puts up with me.
- I'm really not all that valuable.
- What do I do with my inability to live a holy life?

I would never say this out loud, but in my most vulnerable moments I'm shocked to realize that I'm afraid God is going to withdraw his love -- his love is conditional to how well I perform and conform. And I'm terrified that I don't have what it takes to measure up. (I want to put salve on that guilt wound.)

Ephesians 1:4-8 (The Message Translation)

Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!) He wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son.

Does that sound like God is dragging you around disappointed at how poorly you've performed?

There seems to be this stark disconnect between these powerful feelings I have, and the reality God is communicating.

What is my pathway out of guilt?

Guilt wants to bully me into playing the role of defeated Christian victim. Father wants to help me stand on my feet grow into a confident and powerful and whole-hearted prince in His Kingdom.

I wonder if we haven't understood that.

#1. There's a difference between our condition and our identity.

- My condition is...I just ran a red light and I'm about to get hit by a Mack-truck.
- My identity is that my wife loves me, and she doesn't want to lose me.
- My condition is what sin does to me. My identity is how the father feels about me.

Ephesians 2:1, 3-4

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ.

- Our condition used to be that we were dead in our transgressions, and perishing.
- Our identity is that we are loved and valuable to God. God's workmanship.
- We have to change our mentality.
- You are an inheritor of rich mercy now...
- After Fall Fest: Subway vs Chick fil A – God's got more mercy than you know what to do with!

#2. God already lavishly paid for your sin debts and made provisions for your mistakes.

You know this. I'm just reminding you. God fully anticipated that you'd be mistake prone, and full of blunders. Get over it.

Ill: Early in NASA's history people were afraid of making mistakes because of the multi millions of dollars. New leader came in and instituted policy that every time something blew up on launch pad everyone in mission control clapped because it was a sign that they were on the path to progress. It gave them permission to go for it.

You're going to fail. Forgiveness granted.

Ephesians 1:7-8 (NIV)

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

- It wasn't free. It got paid for.

- I'm convinced that God gave mankind golden retrievers to show us what unconditional love looks like.
- I'm not trivializing God. But we have to start thinking differently about Him.

“with all wisdom and understanding.”

- God knew full well what he was getting into. And he loved you anyway.
- [Hebrews 12:2](#)
...For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

He bought you with an “as is” sticker, with all the dents and dings in it. He’s not expecting you to be perfect. That you’d struggle in some areas. He wants you to have the confidence to keep running back into his arms.

That’s not an excuse to go soft on sin. You’re still going to attack sin –but no longer out of this guilty victim attitude. You’re going to attack it out of the overwhelming confidence that God stared straight into my darkest parts and he loved me anyway.

One of the things that sets you back on your feet is the power of confession.

#3. Confess your sins to the Lord and other people. Don't hide them.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and **purify** us from all unrighteousness.

Jesus taught us to go to the Father and ask him “forgive us our sins...”

James 5:16

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be **healed**.

There’s freedom when we break the heavy chains of silence and communal shame.

I wonder if one of the reasons we struggle so much with shame is because we aren’t living in confessional community. Real, messy, vulnerable relationships. We can become more concerned about looking right instead of being right. We can have all the appearance of being put together on the outside -- be full decaying filth on the inside.

It’s in our confession that there’s purification. In our confession we are healed.

#4. In my weakness there is an opportunity to encounter the Lord’s great grace.

- Guilt wants me to keep looking at my unworthiness and then I miss the glory of God.
- Grace wants me to keep my eyes on the Father and praise His extravagance love.

2 Corinthians 12:9

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

(pause)

I want to give one final tool to help you encounter God and receive his love for yourself. So that your emotions and feelings that are lying to you can begin to match the truth of the Bible.

#5. Meditating on His truths helps me encounter them for myself.

Meditation Pathway

1. Speak his truths out loud over and over to yourself.
2. I receive this gift/truth from you.
3. Offer it back to him in praise and thanksgiving.

Psalm 147:11

the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.

MINISTRY SONG: How He Loves