

Dealing with Disappointment with Ourselves

Introduction

Good morning. This is week 7 of our Summer Sermon series based on Great Questions that you have submitted. And this is the final week of a mini-series within that series where I am addressing three of your questions dealing with Disappointment. Disappointment with God / Disappointment with other Christians / Disappointment with ourselves. We are looking at what causes disappointment – and what God’s word has to teach us about dealing with disappointment.

Review

The first week I defined disappointment as what happens when our experience of something doesn’t meet our expectations. And we looked at how that applies to disappointment with God. We concluded that one of God’s highest purposes was to develop our faith and that He allowed disappointing experiences to build our faith. He was calling us to a faith that is:

Acting as if it is so
 Even when it’s not so
 In order that it might be so
 Just because God said so.

So often we get disappointed when “it’s not so” while God is calling us to a faith and a trust in Him so that it might “be so.”

Last week, we heard God’s call for a paradigm shift in the way we look at other Christians. We are called to look at one another with eyes that see the “new creation” growing as the seed of the Holy Spirit in each and every Christian we meet. And I challenged us to develop this as a new spiritual discipline in our lives. I asked us to pick one person and to try out this new discipline for one week.

This week we are going to look at perhaps the most tenacious of the disappointments – and that is with ourselves.

Let’s pray and ask for God’s help

Causes of Disappointment with Myself

I need to first set a bit of a fence around what I will be able to address. There is a disappointment with our self that is a very natural outgrowth of our past and present circumstances. But there is also a deep disappointment that has no specific cause but rather flows out of a malfunctioning of our body or it surfaces because of deep wounds

from the past - independent of our circumstances. This is very real and requires more specialized help than this sermon can provide. If you find yourself with a disappointment with yourself that has no specific cause or somewhat vague causes, I would encourage you to get some outside help to enable you to discern the cause of this.

You can contact the church office who will connect you with Susan Lester. Susan can provide you some referrals of professionals in this area who can help.

Most of the time, however, our disappointment with ourselves is traceable to specific circumstances. Our scripture today offers some specific hope for dealing with that kind of disappointment. The Word of God can, in the words of Martin Luther King "Carve a tunnel of hope through the dark mountain of disappointment."

Most of us experience disappointment with ourselves for a variety of reasons. We are disappointed when we have let others down. I still cringe at the memory of having lied to two of my best friends on separate occasions and the pain of having to confess it to them. And the lies were of an inconsequential nature. I was so disappointed with myself.

Sexuality is another area where we can carry great disappointment with ourselves. Especially if we have crossed a line that God has drawn for us not to cross. Even for those who don't believe there is a line. Donna Freitas has interviewed thousands of college students about their sexual activities, and in her book, *Sex and the Soul*, says "the majority of them will regret almost everything about [last weekend's] party and what followed, although very few will ever let on as much." If you find that surprising, you are not aware of one of the primary works of the Holy Spirit and that is to make us disappointed with everything that is not of God.

We get disappointed with ourselves, as one of you wrote me this past week, when we make "failures of competence" – where we just don't have the skill necessary to accomplish some task – How many times do we do dumb things and say to ourselves – "I'm just so stupid."

Or we get disappointed with ourselves in cases where we know the right thing to do – but out of "habit" or fear fail to do even what makes most sense.

Finally, a deep disappointment with ourselves can set in, when the tenacity of our sin nature makes real change so hard to come by.

Learning to deal with our disappointment with ourselves is important for us in many ways. When I am disappointed with myself, I am usually not very pleasant to live with. I find myself becoming very unproductive – both at work or at home. Deep

disappointment can lead to debilitating depression that can completely take us out of the game of life – preventing us from enjoying God and serving Him.

Someone came up to me last week and told me that they could not think of anybody who has disappointed them except them self. And so I told them I would be speaking about that next week. He said he wouldn't be here. I told him that I was disappointed with him. But I went on to say that all that I had said could be applied to disappointment with our self.

- Just as we need to go to those who have disappointed us – and go very carefully - we need to confront head-on the failures / the sins that we committed. We cannot hide them under the rug. True confession and repentance can be some of the most freeing experiences in our lives. If we are continually crossing one of God's moral lines in the sand – unless we confront that behavior head one, we are not taking that first step towards dealing with disappointment.
- Just as we are called to forgive those who disappoint us, we need to forgive ourselves when we disappoint ourselves. We need to give ourselves permission to be free from the guilt. Please hear this – sometimes we think that by truly forgiving ourselves we are condoning our behavior. I have a good friend who has made several tragic choices – choices that have deeply wounded her and her family. She cannot forgive herself in part, because the consequences of her past sin are ever before her. And she wrongly believes that to live completely free of that guilt and sin gives the appearance to others that she condones what she did. Very often we don't let go of our disappointment with ourselves, not because of how my sins make God feel – it comes from what we think others might think. Just as God commands us to forgive others and move on – we must truly forgive ourselves and accept that God in Christ has forgiven us. And that is hard work.
- Just as we are to look for the new creation in others, we need to look for that seed of the Holy Spirit growing inside of us

The scriptures have much more to teach us about dealing with disappointment. Today I would like to share with you a simple but profound truth that will help us dealing with disappointment. Our scripture passage today has a little phrase in it that, if we can allow it, will help us to take another step towards being set free from disappointment. Can anyone guess what that little two word phrase is?

Even though

Scripture

If you have your Bibles with you, open with me to 1 Timothy chapter 1 beginning at verse 12. The scripture is also included in the outline in the bulletin.

¹²I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, ¹³even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; ¹⁴and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.

Considered me faithful – The first thing I want us to look at this morning is that little phrase “considered me faithful.” What does it mean that Jesus “considered Paul faithful?”

The way that verb “consider” is used in the New Testament and other literature of the time implies an act of faith. Much like you and I would use the phrase:

I’ll consider the debt paid Even though the debt is not paid, I will act as if it paid.
OR I’ll consider it done. Even though the task is not done it will be done for sure.

Jesus is exercising faith with Paul. He is considering Paul faithful – even though he is not faithful. Jesus is acting as if it is so with Paul. Notice that Paul acknowledges Jesus’ faith at the end of verse 14 when he references being set free by Jesus’ faith and love. Not Paul’s faith – but Paul found grace in the love and faith of Jesus.

But the other word we need to look at is the word “faithful.” When we use the word faithful – we mean one who is trustworthy. One in whom we can put faith. Have you ever given a job to somebody who you know is not trustworthy? If someone has failed us, we rarely entrust them with another job.

But that is exactly what Paul is saying Jesus did.

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord – who exercises faith by looking at me as one who is trustworthy even though I’m not and is putting me to work serving Him.

Even though ...

And then he goes on

Even though, I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor.

This is one of the most remarkable truths in the scriptures

That God not only accepts us the way we are
That God not only loves us the way we are
That God not only allows us access to Himself the way we are

But that he puts us into service even though we formerly were everything that would disqualify us for serving Him. He has chosen us to be on His team with Him.

Do you see how significant that is? Do any of you remember that angst of not being picked to be on a team – or to be picked last? Jesus has chosen us to be on His team. One of the greatest ways we can show our love for somebody is to ask them to do something for us when they have violated our trust. God does that with us – all the time.

I have had the privilege of serving God in many ways over the years. I have found many times that my disappointment with myself is a gigantic wall, that if I let it, would keep me from serving Him. I think to myself:

Who am I – to think that I can serve God when my own life is littered with past failures?
Who am I – to think that I can pray for others – when I forget to pray for people
Who am I – to think that I can preach about dealing with disappointment – when I disappoint others – when I don't have it all figured out about dealing with disappointment with God

This is Day Camp week. 260 of you are going to be serving God by serving hundreds of kids. I suspect if most of you are like me at some point in the next week this nagging question will pop into your head:

Who do you think you are serving these kids when you did such and such?

Paul says:

Even though – Even though I did terrible things in my past – Jesus considers me faithful enough to put into His service.

Some of you might be saying:

Bob, that's all well and good for Paul – because he did those things in the past. I am those things now. Paul did those things before he was a Christian. I have failed God since I became a Christian. Paul did those things ignorantly out of unbelief. I did them willingly.

Good questions. We must understand that In God's economy, our entire past can become a "formerly" a nanosecond after we have allowed the blood of Christ to wash us clean. Our past failures are a confession away from disappearing from God's radar screen. One of the other great themes in this letter is the clean conscience. And the scripture proclaims that our conscience becomes clean when we acknowledge our wrong doing and accept the atoning work of Jesus on the cross to cleanse our conscience. Once we have done that, all our past is "formerly."

And concerning the willfulness of our sin? The Word of God tells us that all sin ultimately stems from unbelief. The first recorded sin had its roots in our ancestor's pride – but ultimately it came down to unbelief – questioning “Has God really said that?” All sin can trace its roots to ignorance and unbelief. If we really know who God is and the consequences of our sin, it would profoundly affect our actions. The rub is “if we really know.”

You and I can become disappointed with ourselves when we fail to recognize that there can be a “formerly” for everything we do. And we fail to deeply embrace God's “Even though.” God demonstrates His faith in us by doing the unthinkable – He invites us to work with Him – to serve Him.

A personal transformation

A number of years ago, when our youngest daughter was little, Barbara was out of town and our oldest grand daughter was with us. As young children are prone to do on Saturday mornings, they were up long before I was ready to get up. So I sent them downstairs to play while I kept two eyes shut and one ear open. After a while they got bored and I heard Abby say:

“Let's make my Dad breakfast in bed.”

At that point I needed to keep both ears open. But it was very sweet and endearing as I heard them say:

“Oh Dad will really like this.”

“Grandpa really likes that.”

Then Abby said:

“Dad really likes grape juice.”

And so after a few minutes I heard them coming up the brand new light colored carpeted stairs – with everything on a tray. A very light colored carpet.

What – did I tell this story before? You already know how this ends?

Well about half way up the stairs, I hear the tinkling of glass and an exasperated:

“OOOooh No!”

Now fully awake I rushed to the stairs and was amazed to see how the grape juice had managed to hit every rung on its way down the stairs. As I was blotting up the mess I

noticed that I had this incredibly warm and loving feeling towards the two girls. There was none of the usual (and many of you know how I can be):

Why weren't you more careful?
Couldn't you have ...
And so on.

I was amazed at how I was looking at them. Just then, the Holy Spirit spoke to me:

"Bob. The way you feel right now towards Abby and Maia is the way I feel about you even though you mess up so often while you are serving me."

I was overwhelmed. And I was moved. I got a glimpse of how God saw me when I was serving Him. More importantly, I was changed. Since that day I am not afraid to serve Him – even though I have repeatedly failed Him in countless ways and was deeply disappointed myself. I discovered that God is not disappointed with me – even though... Whenever I start thinking that I am not worthy to serve my King – when I am so disappointed with myself about my past failures – I realize that even though all that is true -in myself, I am not worthy to serve Him - that is not how God looks as me.

He considers me faithful and he demonstrates it by putting me into His service.

For those of you who haven't become the person you desired to become the Holy Spirit says to you today, 'Even though ... I delight in having you part of my team.'

God's Word to His Saints

I want you to close your eyes and listen to the word of God to the some of the saints:
Sarah - even though you laughed at Me and My promises – I still fulfilled my promise and used you to found the nation of Israel.

Moses - even though you killed a man – I used you to deliver My people out of Egypt

Rahab - even though you dragged your sexuality through the mud – I used your sexuality to bring forth a child who was in the lineage of the Messiah

David - even though you committed adultery and killed a man, I kept you in service as King over My people.

Peter - even though you denied Me three times, I asked you to feed His people. -

Paul - even though you blasphemed Me, I considered you faithful and put you into service.

God is calling your name right now – He is saying to you – My child even though you have failed me countless times – I want you on my team – I want you to work with me. Even though you are disappointed with you – I am not.

Amen