

“God still loves us, even after...”
part 3 of *Dismissing the Myths that Make Us Miserable*

Sermon for Sunday, October 28, 2018
by Bruce Fraser, based on sermon by Rick Warren

Scripture: Romans 7:14-23 and others

Children's Message: God wants to be our heavenly Father.

John 1:12, New Living Translation:

But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

Show our family photo: Jane, me, and our three daughters. But we are not Agnes' original parents. She came to live with us when she was eleven years old. Her parents were unable to take care of her, so we offered to be her parents. We adopted her to be our own child. Her parents still love her, and they keep in touch with her, even now after all these years.

Show the adoption paper for Agnes, signed by the judge. Impress upon the children how official this document is. It basically means, “We love Agnes and we want to be her parents.”

In the Bible God says, “I love you, and I want to be your heavenly Father.” That doesn't mean God takes the place of our earthly father. But it means that we can have a close, personal relationship with God, calling him our Father in heaven.

Message God still loves us, even after... part 3 of *Dismissing the Myths that Make Us Miserable*

Last week we looked at the myth that says “God is unreasonable.” The truth is that God is a compassionate Father. Today I'm going to continue on from there, looking at another myth about God, and compare that with the truth in the Bible.

1) Myth: I've done so many wrong things, God cannot love me

Perhaps some of you have parents who were impossible to please, and you think God is like that. If you brought home a report card with C's, they'd ask why you didn't get B's. If you got B's, why not A's? If you got some A's, why not straight A's? Or if you straightened up your room, they'd come in

and straighten it up a bit more. No matter how good you were, no matter how hard you tried to please them, it was never good enough.

Some people think that God is like that: God is always disappointed in you, always discouraged, never satisfied. If that's really what you think God is like, then is it any wonder that you don't want to spend time with him? Do you like hanging around with people who are always disappointed in you? I sure don't. If that's what you think about God, then you won't want to be around him either.

Many myths start with a kernel of truth, but then they stretch it and twist it so that it's not even close to the original. That's the case here.

There are many Bible passages which talk about the problem we have with sin. To sin means to deliberately reject what we know is the right thing to do, what God wants us to do, and we do the wrong thing instead. Some sins are awful, like murder. Some sins are relatively minor, like being envious. But all of them are sin; all of them mean that we reject God; we push God out of our lives.

Here's an example of a Bible passage about sin.

Romans 7:14-15, New Living Translation:

The law is good, then. The trouble is not with the law but with me, because I am sold into slavery, with sin as my master. I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do the very thing I hate.

The myth goes like this: “That Bible verse sums it up: I'm hopeless. I've sinned so many times, so many ways. Yes, I've repented; that is, I said to God, ‘I'm sorry. Please forgive me.’ But then I go and do the same thing all over again. God could never love someone like that: a liar, a fake, a hypocrite. It's hopeless. I'm hopeless.”

This is one of the most destructive myths around. It leads to giving up, not even trying to follow God's way, to aimlessness, a life without enthusiasm or purpose or meaning. Or perhaps life *with* meaning and purpose, but the wrong meaning and purpose. In the extreme, it leads to depression and suicide.

2) The truth: God is a gracious Father

The word “grace” means to love someone when they don’t deserve it. “Gracious” describes someone who lives by grace.

The myth says that it’s impossible to do enough to please God, to be accepted by God. Ironically, that’s also the truth! You *cannot* do enough to make yourself acceptable to God. The answer is to accept what God has already done for you.

1 Corinthians 6:11, Living Bible:

“God has accepted you because of what the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God have done for you.”

Romans 3:22, Living Bible:

“Now God says he will accept and acquit us — declare us ‘not guilty’ — if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, by coming to Christ, no matter who we are or what we have been like.”

God is gracious. He really, really wants to have a relationship with you. He sent his Son, Jesus, to earth to tell us that, and even to die on the cross for you. He wants you to have a Father-child relationship with him.

You can utterly and completely trust God to love you and accept you. Period. No “If I do this...” or “But what about...” None of that. God’s grace is greater than all the sins you’ve ever done, or ever will do.

One study said that the number one reason kids rebel against their parents is because of resentment. And the number one cause of resentment is broken promises. “Dad, you said you’d do this.” “Mom, you promised me that you’d do that.” Broken promises lead to resentment, which leads to rebellion.

God is not that kind of Father, who says he’ll do something, and then doesn’t do it. You can count on God. One thing you can especially count on, God’s love for you will never change.

Psalm 59:10, Living Bible:

“My God is changeless in his love for me.”

When everything around you is changing, here is one thing you can count on: God will never stop loving you. It doesn’t matter who you are, where you are, what you’ve done—God will never, never stop loving you. Even when you do things that are wrong, and even though God is disappointed with you, he will never stop loving you. God is not only gracious; he is *consistently* gracious.

Next Steps:

- Stop playing the game: “It was only a little thing.” “It’s not my fault.” “I was drunk when I did that.” All these are excuses to cover my sin.
- Confess my sin. Be honest with God—after all, he already knows all about it! Confession is for *my* sake, not God’s. We unload that heavy burden of guilt and shame.
- Receive God’s grace: forgiveness, acceptance, love. Relish it. Soak in it.
- Surrender to God: “I really, *really* want to follow your way. Will you help me, please? Fill me with your Holy Spirit, and guide my way.”

Would you like to have this kind of gracious, consistent, caring relationship with God? Would you like to be loved and accepted, just as you are, no matter what you’ve done? You can. God wants to be your Father. All you have to do is ask to be his child. You can pray with me.

Prayer:

Dear God, I want you to be my Father, and I want to be a part of your family. I want to learn to depend on you, the way a child depends on a father. Thank-you that you are a consistent Father, that you always keep your promises, that you never change your mind about me, that you always love me. Thank-you that you care about me, that you’re very close and personal, that you’re not distant and remote and uncaring. Thank-you that you are gracious, that you love and accept me when I blow it. Thank-you for sending your Son Jesus, to forgive the wrong things I’ve done. Amen.