

12 - Accept Your Acceptance
Pastor Deborah Oakley – GFC – 7/14/24

We're in a sermon series entitled: Greater Freedom. We've been teaching on how to deal with root causes of our problems. We found a key in Matthew 3:10 when John the Baptist said:

The ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

We find those roots by understanding what Jesus came to earth to accomplish on our behalf. Those ministries are listed in Luke 4:18-19 when Jesus said-

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

This is the last sermon in this series and I'm addressing the fifth and sixth ministries Jesus came to accomplish – to set at liberty those who are oppressed and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. So – who are the oppressed and what is the acceptable year of the Lord?

Oppressed means them that are bruised; literally, "broken in pieces." The same word is used in Isaiah 42:3

A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.

Being oppressed speaks of being beat up, beat down, held up, held back, bruised and abused. There are many people walking around with the bruises of Satan. He doesn't do it directly; he does it through others. He uses all kinds of abuse - verbal, physical, sexual - to bruise, wound and hold people in bondage.

How do you know if you have been bruised in life? Think about a physical bruise. Most bruises are not real painful... until you touch them! And people who are bruised are usually very touchy. Touchy means sensitive, grumpy, quick-tempered.

Many people walk around in life like they are okay – but if you address certain issues – issues that touch the bruises in their lives – watch out! They will react in anger or be easily offended. Likewise, if you are touchy, easily angered, overly sensitive, easily offended - chances are you have unhealed wounds and bruises.

And Jesus wants to heal those wounds and bruises. That's one of the reasons He came to earth. He came to heal your bruises and He does that by proclaiming your acceptance with the Lord.

Look at how different Bible versions translate Luke 4:19:

NIV - *To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

AMP - *To proclaim the day when salvation and the free favors of God profusely abound.*

The acceptable year of the Lord means that Jesus came to this world to bring the good news that when we accept Jesus, God accepts us. The problem is that a lot of people have a hard time believing this! So I'm preaching a message called Accept Your Acceptance.

The good news is that no matter who you are or what you've done, Jesus Christ died for you and you can be accepted by God because of what He's done, not because of what you've done. Ephesians 1:6 says:

God made us accepted in the Beloved.

When we accept Jesus, God accepts us! But we have an enemy who wants to blind us to the knowledge of the truth! And one of Satan's biggest tools is to bruise us to the point that it keeps us from accepting our acceptance.

Many times those bruises result in rejection and condemnation. Condemnation causes you to get down on yourself so you give up on yourself. But please understand that we do not honor the Creator by putting down His creation! When we put ourselves down by saying things like, "I'm ugly. I'm stupid. I'm nothing" – that does not glorify our Creator.

So I want to encourage you to stop putting yourself down!

Don't put down what God put together!

Don't criticize what God created!

Don't reject what God accepts!

Instead, lay the ax to the root of condemnation!

We know those roots are never in God because Romans 8:1 tells us

There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

So – condemnation comes from other sources – Satan or self or other people. In order to accept our acceptance, we must lay the ax to condemnation and rejection.

Everyone experiences rejection at some point in their life.

It's the kid who gets picked last because no one wants them on their team.

It's the teen who never goes on a date because no one wants to go out with them.

It's the adult who never gets a promotion because they're not good enough.

It's the spouse who gets left for someone else.

It is impossible to escape rejection in life. But you don't have to live one minute longer with rejection. You can live knowing you are loved and accepted.

You see if I can overcome rejection...anyone can. My childhood was defined by poverty, alcoholism, divorced parents, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, fear, loneliness, neglect and rejection.

My stepfather was an angry, controlling person who drank all the time. His frequent words to me were: You don't have a brain in your head or you'll never amount to anything. Sadly, I believed Him. Although his words left me feeling worthless, it was the abuse that stripped me of any worth and left me feeling ashamed and alone.

My mother was passive and depressed. She rarely said I love you or hugged me. I grew up feeling worthless, ashamed, alone, fearful, and rejected. So, I understand the pain that rejection causes. But I also understand the freedom that comes from accepting our acceptance. Today I want to share three ways that God helps us do that. First, we must understand...

I. THE CAUSES OF REJECTION

Rejection doesn't just happen. If you struggle with rejection chances are the seeds of rejection were planted in childhood.

Children are impressionable.

They look to their major caregivers for value and worth.

If they don't get acceptance - a seed of rejection can be planted in them.

When children live with acceptance, they learn to love.

When children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.

When children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.

However...

When children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.

When children live with ridicule, they learn to be shy.

When children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty.

Children live what they learn.

What are some of the ways children experience rejection?

- Physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse.
- Divorce – many children think it's their fault.
- Unwanted conception – Child grows up hearing they were an accident.
- Abandonment – When a parent leaves the child may feel unwanted.

Some of us have experienced these types of rejections as children. Others have felt rejection from friends at school. Some of us had great childhoods yet we experienced rejection as adults. But without exception everyone has felt the pain of rejection.

As a matter of fact, many great men and women in the Bible also experienced rejection.

- Noah experienced rejection while building the Ark.

- Moses was rejected by the Egyptians.
- Joseph's brothers rejected him and sold him into slavery.
- David's father overlooked him when Samuel came to choose a King.
- Even Jesus the son of God was rejected.

Isaiah 53:3 says: *He was despised and rejected by men...*

Luke 4:29 tells what happened shortly when Jesus visited his hometown shortly after beginning his earthly ministry. As Jesus spoke the people were amazed at His wisdom. However, because they had known Jesus since childhood they were skeptical of his message.

Scripture tells us they responded by saying: "Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son?" So they turned on Him and even tried to throw him off a cliff. These were his childhood friends He grew up with and played with. John 1:11 says:

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

The fact that Jesus was rejected illustrates a basic truth – even if you're perfect - people are still going to reject you. And that is painful! But pain isn't the only result of rejection. Let's look at some other...

II. CONSEQUENCES OF REJECTION

People with a root of rejection believe they are worthless and unacceptable. They are plagued with feelings of insecurity. They are controlled by whatever others say or do. Insecure people are oversensitive - they take everything personal. They get their feelings hurt all the time.

Other consequences of rejection include:

- Self-Pity
- Hopelessness
- Jealousy
- Inability to trust others
- Defensiveness
- Hardness of Heart "I don't need anyone" "I'm never going to let anyone hurt me again."

Generally, people with rejection cannot be confronted or corrected. They consider it a personal attack. They can't admit they are wrong. This is because they can't separate who they are from what they've done. If they have done something that you don't approve of, then in their mind you don't approve of them.

They think they are being rejected when in fact they are not. The rejection they feel is not real - it's totally in their mind – but it feels real to them. So how do we overcome this? How do we lay the ax to the root of rejection?

III. THE CURE FOR REJECTION

I told you how I grew up with rejection. I tried and failed to overcome rejection. And learned that on my own I couldn't overcome rejection. But with God's help I could turn rejection into acceptance. The first thing God taught me was that I had to...

ACCEPT THAT I WAS ACCEPTED BY GOD

The opposite of rejection is acceptance – so to lay the ax to the root of rejection, we must first accept that we are accepted by God. In John 6:37, Jesus said

Those the Father has given Me will come to Me, and I will never reject them.

Jesus said He will never reject anyone who comes to Him.

We see that all through His story –

Jesus loved the unlovable.

Jesus touched the untouchable.

And Jesus accepted people others thought were unacceptable.

We must accept that we are accepted by God.

We must believe that we've not gone too far!

We've not done too much wrong!

We are accepted in Jesus!

God accepts us unconditionally even when others don't.

Years ago I had a friend and mentor named Anne Murchison. Anne was one of the people that helped me overcome my rejection. But for six years Anne rejected me. I mean she would have nothing to do with me. I asked her to lunch and she turned me down. I asked her if she would meet with me once a month and she refused. If I saw her at church she would head in the other direction. She just did not want a relationship with me.

To make matters worse, Anne did want a relationship with a close friend of mine. They would have lunch together, pray together, and travel together. I can't tell you the rejection I felt when Anne and she became friends.

For many years I wondered why God allowed me to go through this. Then I realized that rejection was a tool in God's hand to shape me. John Eldredge says God wounds us in the areas we are most wounded to heal us. That is exactly what He did with me.

It was not just acceptance that healed me it was also rejection.

Why?

Because it was rejection that drove me to the cross.

It was rejection that exposed my spiritual bankruptcy.

It was rejection that broke me and showed me my need for God.

Until we know that we are accepted by God we won't be able to overcome rejection. However when we know we are accepted by God – with His help - we can turn rejection into acceptance.

It is true that we all need love and acceptance from others, however, until we receive God's acceptance no amount of acceptance from others is enough.

I have already told you how my friend Anne rejected me for six years. That whole time I believed that if I could have a relationship with her I wouldn't feel rejected any more. I thought her acceptance would take away my rejection. But guess what? It didn't totally remove all my rejection.

I eventually had a close relationship with Anne and she prayed with me, cried with me, listened to me and it still wasn't enough. All her acceptance still left me feeling rejected. Why? Because, I was looking for Anne's acceptance in place of God's. And I found out that human acceptance alone is not enough. I had to accept God's acceptance first and foremost!

The second thing that God taught me was to...

ACCEPT THAT I WAS LOVED BY GOD

Not only are we accepted by God - we are also loved by Him. When we know God loves us we will be able to accept our acceptance.

We all know the verse "For God so loved the world." The question is do we believe it? Do we believe that God loves us just the way we are? He loves us despite our immaturity, imperfections and failures! Even with all our quirky ways we are permanently and irrevocably loved by God. Jeremiah 31:3 says:

The Lord appeared to His people and said, "I love you people with a love that will last forever.

The third thing God showed me was that I must...

ACCEPT MYSELF

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to blame yourself when someone rejects you? We start thinking we're not good enough, smart enough, or spiritual enough. Then we get critical of ourselves and we don't like ourselves very much.

Then we wonder why no one accepts us.
We don't even accept us.

Accepting yourself isn't based on what you are, it's based on whose you are. You are not accepted because of how great you are – but because of how great your Savior is! Jesus is our Lamb without spot or blemish. That one sacrifice is sufficient for every sin ever committed by everyone. 1 John 1:7 says

The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

How much sin? All sin!

There is no sin that the blood of Christ cannot cover.

There is no wrong that the blood of Christ cannot forgive.

There is no crime or guilt that the blood of Jesus cannot remove.

The blood of Jesus has the power to forgive and cleanse from all sin!

So we need to get our eyes off ourselves and onto the spotless Lamb of God who is worthy to pay the price for our sins. We are accepted because the sacrifice of Jesus was accepted by God!

So you don't need to live one minute longer with rejection!

You can live knowing you are loved and accepted.

And the way to lay the ax to the root of condemnation is to replace the lie with the truth of God's Word!

Lay the ax to the lie that no one loves you by choosing to believe the truth that nothing will separate you from the love of God!

Lay the ax to the lie that you can't be free by choosing to believe the truth that whom the Son sets free is free indeed!

Lay the ax to lie that says you have nothing to offer at church by choosing to believe the truth that God gives gifts to every member for the good of all!
We love you! We accept you! We need you!

Lay the ax to the lie that no one would choose you by believing you are chosen by God!

Lay the ax to the lie that no one accepts you by choosing to believe you are accepted in Jesus Christ!

Today if you are struggling with rejection will you allow God to help you turn your rejection in acceptance?

Will you accept that you are loved and accepted by God?

Will you accept your acceptance?