

Do You Believe the Devil's Lies More Than You Trust God?

I once heard a story about a little boy named Johnny who was visiting his grandparents. Johnny had just received his first slingshot and practiced in the woods nearby, but just couldn't hit a target. When he came back to his grandma's backyard, he noticed her pet duck. On an impulse he took aim and shot a rock. The stone hit—and killed—the duck. Of course, he panicked. His sister saw the whole thing, but said nothing.

After lunch that day, Grandma said, "Sally, let's wash dishes." But Sally said, "Johnny told me he wanted to help in the kitchen ... didn't you Johnny!" She leaned over to him and whispered, "Remember the duck." So Johnny did dishes with Grandma.

Later that day, Grandpa offered to take the children fishing. But Grandma said, "I'm sorry, but I need Sally to help make supper." Sally smiled and said, "Johnny wants to do it." Again she whispered, "Remember the duck." And Johnny helped Grandma prepare dinner while Sally went fishing with Grandpa.

After several days of doing both his and Sally's chores, finally he couldn't stand it anymore and confessed to Grandma that he had killed her duck. "I know," said Grandma, giving Johnny a big hug. "I was standing at the window and saw the whole thing. But I love you, so I forgave you. I wondered how long you would let Sally make a slave out of you."

You're Not a Slave!

That may be a cute, funny little story, but it conveys a very serious truth: God's love for us is about so much more than the things we do. He loves us ... period. Nothing we do will ever change that. Nothing.

Too many Christians live their lives like slaves of the devil because they believe his lies more than they trust God. His tactic is to deceive God's people into believing that we must do everything right in order to be accepted and have favor with God. He lures them into a legalistic view of life, making them "slaves" to their good works, because they believe this is what makes them righteous, or pleasing to God.

So, when they're doing "good" things, they feel like they're all right with God. And when they feel like they're not doing well, they believe God is angry with them. This is where the enemy becomes like Sally, Johnny's sister.

The devil knows that some people are unable to separate their "who" from their "do" or simply accept that they have been made righteous because of what Christ did—not what they do. He likes to constantly remind us of all our weaknesses, mistakes and sins, setting us up to live an endless cycle of comparison and competition with others, shame, judgment and a constant, nagging feeling of not being good enough.

On the contrary, God is not like that at all! Ephesians 1:4-5 tells us that "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before Him in love; He predestined us to adoption as sons to Himself through Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of His will." Verse 7 says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace."

You're God's Beloved!

God loves you! You were chosen, a unique, wonderfully made creation, for relationship with Him. He wants each and every one of us to understand that He sent His Son to die for our sins, to bring us into fellowship with Him—not because of anything we do, have done, or ever will do ... It is simply because He loves us.

I really want you to get this: Nothing we do will ever make

God stop loving us! He sees the things we do. And when we make mistakes, all He wants is for us to realize that there is no reason to hide.

Our righteousness is based on what Jesus did, nothing more or less. We do not have to live under guilt and condemnation when God is ready and willing to forgive us when we repent of our sins. God is gracious and His mercies are new every day ... We can count on that!

So no matter where you are on this journey of faith, you can say, "I'm OK and I'm on my way," because you are secure in the knowledge of who you are in Christ! Don't worry about your "arrival," or how far you have to go. Just keep living by faith, knowing that God is in control and He will lead you by His Holy Spirit, according to His purpose and plan for *your* life.

Learn what God's Word says about you ... And believe it! Learn to live more and more in your new nature of righteousness. When you know who you are in Christ, the result is you will not live a mediocre, compromising life, but you *will* live without guilt and condemnation.

You won't live to try to impress anyone in order to prove you're good enough. You will no longer be tormented by the lies of the enemy, but you will be free to be whom God created you to be: righteous by faith in Christ.

Learn to agree with God! Your past—whether it's your childhood, yesterday or just five minutes ago—is over. You don't have to live with guilt or regret. Give your failures to God, and He will be able to use everything for *your* good and for *His* glory! After a while, the devil will no longer be able to torment you because you will be able to counter each one of his lies with the truth: *I am the righteousness of God in Christ!*

*For more on this topic, order Joyce's four-CD series **God Is***

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