

Rejection: The Cry for Relationship
How Life Feels part 7
The Books of Psalms
May 31st 2020

There isn't much we feel more acutely than the pain that comes with rejection. But why do we feel it so strongly? And what should we do with that isolating emotion? Let's take a closer look at rejection

Monday: A False Repentance (Background for Sundays message)

"So Samuel said to him, "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you" (v. 28).

- 1 Samuel 15:24-29

With Samuel's devastating announcement that God has rejected him as king, Saul at last seems to acknowledge his sin. But Matthew Henry writes in his commentary; "it is too evident that he only acts the part of a penitent, and is not one indeed." To support his case, Henry notes:

1. Saul excuses his fault, saying he feared the people and listened to them. But Henry notes that he never shrank before the people before.
2. He is most interested in saving face. He asks Samuel to participate with him in a thanksgiving service and to honor him before the elders. He wants no one to know that God has rejected him as king.

God has rejected Saul as king, but He will not reject him if he comes as a penitent sinner. But Saul seems disinclined to do that. Then, in his most disturbing statement of all, he asks Samuel to return with him that he might worship "the Lord *your* God." Samuel's God? Has Saul forgotten that Yahweh is not just Samuel's God, indeed not just Israel's God, but the one only living and true God of all the universe? We're told that he worships God, but his understanding leaves much to be desired. Samuel initially refuses to go with Saul, for he has rejected God's word and God therefore has rejected him. As he turns to go, Saul grabs at Samuel's robe and tears a piece of it away, an event that Samuel turns into a parable. He tells Saul that God has torn the kingdom from him and given it to another, "better" man, a man who will be faithful to God's covenant. And this decision of God's is irrevocable, for "He is not a man, that He should relent."

What a pathetic figure Saul presents—his heart is far from God, but he is more concerned with saving face before his people. The condition of our souls must always be our highest personal concern, and true grief over sin is a key sign of spiritual health. Does your sin grieve you? If not, ask God to help you see your sins as offenses against Him.

Tuesday: My Biggest Fear

People are afraid of a lot of things. And by *people*, I mean *me*. I am afraid of a lot of things. There are the popular choices, of course, like fear of dying, fear of heights, fear of Mongolian death worms. (Okay, maybe not that last one.) But of all common anxieties, I think the one that tends to weigh heaviest on the human soul is the fear of rejection. The fear that people will leave you, that they won't like you, that they'll turn their back on you. I'd like to say it's just an adolescent thing, something we get over after the perilous trials of high school, but we never quite grow out of it, do we? There's something about us that wants to be liked or respected or, on an even deeper level, just wants to be loved. And if that doesn't happen, well, there's nothing scarier than the idea of being utterly and completely rejected. It certainly sits at the top of my list of worst nightmares.

That's exactly what God subjected himself to, all in order to save us. And this was not some last-minute plot twist on God's part. Long before Jesus was born, this divine prophecy had been written for all to see:

*He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

— **Isaiah 53:3-4**

This was the plan for the Messiah of the world. Jesus, who was *God* — literally the individual most deserving of our admiration — purposefully came into the world knowing that He would be completely rejected, even despised. Who would sign up for that? Surely not the God of the universe! Let's not even factor in the physical pain Jesus would endure. Just consider the emotional toll of having your creation, your children despise and reject you. And yet, God volunteered for this. Why? To save the very people who would reject him.

What God demonstrated through Christ was the complete opposite of rejection. He faced their hatred head-on and countered it with grace, mercy and unconditional love. Instead of rejecting the world, he embraced it by embracing the cross. He embraced pain, both physical and emotional. He embraced the totality of rejection. Not just rejection from the people, but also, as he bore our sin, from the Father himself.

And as mind-blowing as that is, it's great news for anyone who has ever felt or feared being rejected. There will always be one who chose to love us instead of reject us, and he is the author of life itself. And he demonstrated this love in the most epic of ways. He even painted the picture way back in Isaiah 53. That picture is Christ. He embraced the pain of rejection so we could have the joy of fellowship with him. It is a gracious gift, and all we have to do is be willing to accept it. Yes, God bore our worst nightmare so that we don't have to.

Wednesday: Being set free

Growing up, I had a really hard time fitting in at school. It was a small school and I seemed to be the odd duck, I couldn't seem to click with the other students my age. I felt rejected and I rejected myself.

Some of you may have suffered rejection as a result of some traumatic experience and it was so heavy that you have been unable to release these feelings. It created a root of rejection and you carry it everywhere you go.

Be comforted in this, Jesus paid the price for all the anguish, pain, and rejection you have experienced. He experienced rejection so we would not have to carry rejection the rest of our lives. God's word says:

God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. (Ephesians 1:5-6 (NLT))

The NKJV puts the end of verse 6 in these words: *"He made us accepted in the Beloved."*

We are no longer rejected, but accepted in Christ. We belong! It took me some years to discover the depth of God's love exceeds personality, lifestyle, mistakes, sins, etc. "He has made us accepted in the Beloved." I am accepted, and I am made free.

John 8:2-11 records that story of the woman caught in the act of adultery. If anyone was rejected, this woman was. I cannot help but feel that the man committing the adultery was setting up the woman so the Pharisees could have someone to bring before Jesus. She was set up. She was facing being killed in public. She felt betrayed. Death seemed eminent and she was rejected by someone she may have loved.

Was the woman caught in adultery innocent? No. Even though we may have sinned and fallen short, let us hear the words of Jesus sounding in our minds and hearts saying,

"Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" "No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more." John 8:10

Do you know what it's like to be rejected of man? Only to find out that you are accepted of God.

Thursday: Overcoming Rejection

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” – Romans 12:21

Rejection is never easy, but rejection from people we care about really hurts. Maybe it’s the rejection of losing your job or having a spouse walk out on you. Sometimes rejection can be so devastating we’re not sure we are going to recover. Here are a few thoughts that may help:

1. ***Jesus understands.*** On the cross, He faced the rejection of the whole world. Be honest with God about your feelings. He understands.
2. ***Don’t seek revenge.*** Trust God to bring about ultimate justice. Ask God to help you forgive. After all, Jesus forgave us for rejecting Him on the cross.
3. ***Don’t confuse forgiveness with a lack of accountability.*** Holding wrong-doers accountable is good – for them, for us, and for others.
4. ***Choose to get better, not bitter.*** The best way to get even in a good way is to get better. Remember, “Bitterness is the poison we swallow while hoping the other person dies.”

These four insights can help you overcome rejection. Putting them into can help you move out of the isolation that comes with rejection. Rejection is never easy, but overcoming rejection allows you to live life more fully.

1. Are you dealing with rejection? What is your plan to move away from rejection?

Friday: We will be rejected

Rejection hurts. And unfortunately our Christianity increases the likelihood that we will encounter it more often. Part of the cost of “taking up our cross” and “following Jesus” is the harsh reality of “bearing the disgrace he bore” (Heb.13:13).

As Jesus himself said:

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first” (Jn.15:18).

It is a vain hope to expect the favor of Christ and the accolades of everyone else at the same time.

“Woe to you when all men speak well of you,”

Jesus warned (Lk.6:26).

Amid the pain of rejection, our challenge is to learn to value and cherish the approval of Christ more than the acceptance of those around us. But that, of course, is easier said than done – especially when the rejection comes from those we love. In the lyrics of his inspired song, David is resolute as he sings:

“Though my father and mother forsake me, Yahweh will receive me” (Ps.27:10).

While we can expect the pain, we can also anticipate the incomparable treasure of being embraced by the King of kings and Lord of lords!