

Who God Says You Are: Your Actions

Introduction

- Hypocrite: saying you are something but not really living it.
 - The word was used to describe an actor who would wear a mask: you are playing a part.
 - Within religion used towards Christians.
 - Implied: If you're going to claim to be a Christian, then you need to act like one (we would agree with this).
 - Stronger: You aren't a Christian unless you act like a Christian (too strong?).
- The reality is that our identity is determined by what we do.
 - Someone who plays baseball professionally is a baseball player; someone works at construction is a construction worker; someone who helps in the medical field is possibly a nurse/doctor. Someone who saves the life of another from a shooting is a hero (not simply because they thought about it but because they acted on it).
 - On a deeper level, the moral decisions/actions we make determine who you are: if you lie, you are a liar; if you steal,

you are a thief; if you murder, you are a murderer—actions define identity.

- We really don't like this. We like to think we are actually better than our worst decisions. **That we are the person we would like to be instead of the person we chose to be.**
- What you do, in some way, determines who you are.
- Sadly, there seems to be a disconnect within Christianity when it comes to action.
- That is, we believe if we say we are Christian, and think like a Christian, and hear Christian things every week this means we are a Christian.
- In reality, it is only when we allow our faith to define our actions, when the believing becomes the doing, that we can truly be called a Christians—or in other words when we “obey.”
- Want to discuss the connection between our identity and our Christianity within 1 John 2:1-6 as we continue our series: “Who God Says You Are: Your Actions.”

Who You Have Been, Doesn't Have to Determine Who You Can Be

- Some of you sitting here are already depressed: man if perfection is the goal, then I may not be a Christian.
- Yet, it is completion/sanctification that is the goal for the Christian—that is a *process* of transformation.
- Notice the tension between “That you may not sin” and “but if anyone does sin.”
 - The ideal/reality: not saying sanctification is impossible, but that is only accomplished through the advocacy of “Jesus Christ the righteous.”
 - Advocate: “Called to one’s side”; legal counsel/advocate.
 - When we sin, Jesus comes to our aid; the continuing work of salvation for the believer (Rom. 5:9; 1 John 1:9).
- What this means is that God’s forgiveness is always on the other side of your repentance.
 - You may have been caught up in a sinful habit, and are convinced you can never stop, that God can’t possibly forgive you.
 - Yet John dispels with both lies: you can stop sinning, and God can forgive you.

- Two of the biggest lies sin convinces us of is that our sin is too difficult for God to break, and too damning for Him to forgive—but Jesus dispels both of those lies.
- This isn't only based on your strength, but on God's power as he works in you to transform you more by his grace.
- Yet, at the same time, we have to dispel with the myth that Christianity doesn't really care about who act because...

Outward Action Reveals Inward Truth

- As mentioned we like to disconnect who we are internally to how we behave externally; we do things and say “That's not who I really am.”
- Yet John sees our actions as a confession/witness of who we really are, or more importantly, **who we really know**.
- Have you ever wondered if you are really saved? If you really know God?
 - John informs us that one of the self-evident test comes from our obedience: are we living a life of submission or rebellion?
 - Submission is confession. Submission

- This test is so absolute that John says the person who has a confession that doesn't match their actions as a "Liar" and "the truth is not in him."
- This connection between faith and works is exactly how scripture describes it in other places (James 1:22 (NIV); 2:14-22).
- Notice that Abraham's faith was "completed by his works."
- Saying that obedience is a necessary part of Christianity isn't a question of whether you are trying to be "saved by works" but if whether or not you really believe.
- Every time we obey/disobey we are answering the question: "Do you really believe?"
- Here is what's encouraging: our actions also are means of us becoming who we want to be.
- Matt. 5:44-45: Notice "Do this" so that you "may be."
- Your obedience and actions are a means of transforming your identity.
- This is freeing because we often feel that we are enslaved to what we feel, but truth is that we can, by the power of Christ, overcome our desires and act in a way that submits to his will.

- Because of Jesus, you don't have to be a slave to passion or passing emotions, but rather as you simply "Trust and obey" you can gradually be molded into the image of Christ.
- Notice that "whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected" (v. 5).
- If you want to be a good Father, be a good father; if you want to be a good mother/wife, be a good mother/wife; if you want to be a good Christian, be a good Christian—we have to break out of the mentality that is constantly waiting to "feel" like a Christian, and simply be a Christian.
- Yet, this obedience and these actions we do are not cold rule keeping, but are a means of participating in the life of God.

Obedience: Living Out God's Love

- I want you to think back to your wedding day. You've looked forward to this day your entire life. Your love is finally standing across from you at the altar and you begin the vows, "I _____ take thee _____ to be my wedded wife. I promise to take out the trash when I am supposed to, to occasionally help with the dishes, and to work at my job and provide for our family."

- We realize that we aren't married for the sake of rule keeping.
- Yet, the covenant of marriage cannot be experienced and enjoyed without certain rules: the promises that we make in those vows imply that we will stay faithful to them, that we will take care of them.
- Yet, all of this is done out love for our spouse, and when it isn't, when we simply do things "out of routine" we know something isn't write within the marriage.
- The same is true for salvation: God saves us to know him, yet that relationship comes with certain boundaries, rules, which are there so that we can enjoy the fullness of that covenant.
- Notice the emphasis on "knowing God" the love of God being "perfected in us" and "walk in the same way he walked."
- God gives commands, guidelines, and rules so that we can fully enjoy life with him (1 John 5:3).
- And, as John points out, we "walk as Jesus walk."
- Obedience is following the footsteps of Jesus.
- If we claim "Christian" we are telling the world "This is what Jesus is like" (1 John 4:17).

- What picture of Jesus are you drawing for the world?

Conclusion

- Within the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus discussed culture of the Kingdom of God; i.e. this is how the people of God act.
- Christ centered attitudes (be meek, merciful, pure, peaceful), leads to Christ exalting actions (we don't burst out in anger, lust after women, make rash oaths, pray for our enemies).
- He ends this section with a somewhat terrifying judgment scene (v. 21-23).
- Notice that these people claimed Christ as Lord (Lord, Lord) which is the equivalent of John's "Those who say I know Him."
- Not only that, they did great works "In your name" (3x).
- Yet, they did not "do the will of the Father" and the sentencing if "I never knew."
- Their actions betrayed their identity.
- What a terrifying, terrible fate to have deceived yourself into believing you actually know Jesus, only to discover that he doesn't even know you.
- "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."