

GOD’S SOLUTION FOR PERFECTIONISM

Last months article, *PERFECTIONISM: TRYING TO BE GOD*, focused on our drive to try to meet unrealistic standards, which results in separation from God. At the heart of perfectionism is the lie:

I MUST MEET CERTAIN STANDARDS IN ORDER TO BE LOVED, IN ORDER TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT MYSELF.

GOD’S SOLUTION: JUSTIFICATION:

This article will discuss God’s solution to *perfectionism*; a biblical doctrine called **JUSTIFICATION**, which declares us righteous through faith:

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of glory of God.” (Romans 5:1-2 NIV)

To overcome perfectionism, we must believe the TRUTH; that we are deeply loved by God, and that this is **NOT** based on our **PERFORMANCE**. This is illustrated in the following scripture:

“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8 NIV)

DECLARED RIGHTEOUS:

In short, **Justification** means that we are declared righteous when we place our faith in Christ and confess our wrongdoings. We can overcome the FEAR OF FAILURE by knowing that we are fully pleasing and unconditionally loved by God, despite our failures and sins.

TAKING EVERY THOUGHT CAPTIVE: THE THREE C’S

I see people in my counseling office every day who are suffering from depression, anxiety and anger problems. Much of this pain can be relieved by applying the following scripture:

II Cor 10:3-5: *“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish **strongholds**.*

*We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and **we take captive every thought** to make it obedient to Christ.”*

What Causes Painful Feelings?

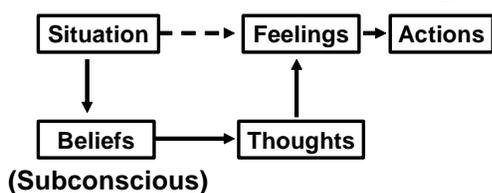


Figure 1

Figure 1 illustrates that it is not just the situation that causes painful feelings, but **WHAT WE THINK** about the situation. Our thoughts and beliefs have a powerful influence

over our feelings and actions. The PERFECTIONISM LIE is a stronghold, an argument that challenges God's truth. When this LIE contaminates our thinking, our feelings become much more painful and intense which can lead to destructive actions.

For example, if we lose a job (situation), we might tell ourselves it was because of our poor performance, that we *should* have done better, that we're not good enough, and that there must be something wrong with us. We would feel worthless, angry and depressed (feelings), and then might act in a counterproductive way (withdrawing, giving up or lashing out).

Instead we must learn to **CAPTURE, CHALLENGE AND CHANGE** our thinking and beliefs to conform to GOD'S TRUTH. These are the **THREE C'S** that are advocated in the above scripture.

Taking every thought **CAPTIVE** and comparing it to the truth (making it obedient to Christ), helps us to quickly recognize the lie and become more aware of how it affects our feelings and actions. This brings freedom from painful emotions and destructive actions.

Let's break it down. First we must **CAPTURE** the lie, for example; 'I'm worthless since I lost the job.' Next, we must **CHALLENGE** it; 'How do I know I lost the job because of my performance? And even if I did, that doesn't mean I'm worthless.' Next, we **CHANGE** the thought to reflect God's truth; 'God loves me even if I fail, and he doesn't think I'm worthless. Plus, God may have something even better in store for me.' Suddenly our painful feelings are reduced dramatically, and we are able to now act in a more constructive way (networking to find another job, updating our resume, looking forward to how God can use this situation for good).

IN CLOSING:

The healthy individual strives for excellence, not perfection. They seek to strike a balance between setting realistic standards and adjusting their level of effort with the importance of the task. They resist obsessing and procrastination, knowing that sometimes it is better to do than to do well. This is good. But it doesn't solve the deeper problem; removing the PERFECTIONISM LIE from our hearts.

We must go further. By practicing the **THREE C'S** advocated in II Cor 10:3-5, we can learn to renew our minds with God's truth. When struggling with perfectionism we must constantly remind ourselves about **RECONCILIATION**. Since Christ died for us, we are deeply and unconditionally loved, completely forgiven and fully pleasing to God. His truth sets us free from perfectionism lie; we do not have to PERFORM in order to be valuable to God. This allows us to be more effective for Christ.



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