

SERMON OUTLINE

SERMON TITLE:	Freedom from the Performance Trap
SERMON REFERENCE:	1 Corinthians 15:9-10
LWF SERMON NUMBER:	#1770

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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) Many people have the problem of trying to make themselves acceptable to God.
 - i) They have gotten into this thing called perfectionism.
- b) Galatians 3:3
- c) 1 Corinthians 15:9-10
- d) “Perfect” is a beautiful word, but “perfectionism” is an ugly word.
- e) Perfectionism is the disease of judging ourselves by our achievements.
- f) A psychologist described perfectionism as:
 - i) Having standards that are beyond reach or reason.
 - ii) Straining compulsively and unremittedly toward impossible goals.
 - iii) Measuring self-worth entirely in terms of productivity and accomplishment.
 - (1) If someone judges themselves by how they perform, then they must perform.
- g) These are key words for the perfectionist:
 - i) I must
 - ii) I should.
 - iii) I ought.
- h) There are perfectionists around us.
 - i) They are miserable.
 - ii) They are caught in a trap.
 - iii) They do not understand the grace of God.
 - iv) They are compulsive and driven.
- i) In this message, we will discuss the effects of perfectionism and how the grace of God can liberate us from it.

2) THE RUIN OF PERFECTIONISM (GALATIANS 3:1, 3)

- a) Perfectionism is a thief.
 - i) It promises rewards, but it steals joy and satisfaction.
- b) Perfectionism is an unattainable goal.
 - i) There are no perfect people in this present world.
 - ii) A perfectionist will constantly be faced with frustration and failure.
- c) If we have the idea that God is going to accept us on the basis of our performance (our quiet time, Bible study, giving, witnessing, etc.), then this is a trap.
 - i) We will never know if we have done enough.
 - ii) We will never truly feel accepted by God.
 - iii) If we could achieve perfection, then we would not need a Savior.
- d) We may end up angry with God because things do not work out just right.
 - i) Everything is not neat, and everything is not perfect.
 - ii) We might be afraid of God.
 - (1) We could not please our parents, and now we cannot please God.

- (2) We get the idea that God is in Heaven sitting on a throne judging us, and He is like an angry parent.
- iii) We think we will never be able to live up to the demands that we have placed upon ourselves.
- iv) We began in the Spirit, we were saved, and now we are trying to prove to God just how good we can be.
- v) Perfectionists are not the most productive people.
 - (1) Perfectionists typically earn less money than others.
 - (2) They spend so much detailed time on their work that they never really get down to what really counts.
- vi) Perfectionism harms us and takes the joy out of our lives.
 - (1) Perfectionists never really feel accepted before God.
- e) Perfectionism harms other people.
 - i) A perfectionist is intolerable of failure in other people; therefore, that person is intolerable to live with.
 - (1) Pity the person who is married to a perfectionist.
 - (a) They will never please their mate because their mate is not pleased with himself or herself.
 - (2) Parents who are perfectionists want their children to be perfect so they can prove that they are perfect parents.
 - ii) Perfectionists hold standards that they do not reach for themselves, and they judge others for not reaching those standards.
 - (1) One of the finest things that we could learn to do would be to let others know that we are not perfect, and they will relax a little bit.
 - (a) It is not because they learn that we are not perfect, but because they learn that we have learned it.
 - (i) They already knew that we are not perfect.
- f) Perfectionism can ruin a church.
 - i) There are no perfect churches.
 - ii) A church is a fellowship of sinners saved by grace who understand that's what they are.
 - iii) Don't get the idea that a perfect church is a church filled with perfect people.
 - (1) If everyone in a church were all Spirit-filled and walking in perfection, then that church would be a miserable failure.
 - (a) It would be like saying that the perfect society is one where there are no babies or children.
 - (2) A perfect church is a church where there are people who are in all stages of progression and who are growing.
 - iv) A perfectionist in a church is a miserable person, and they make everybody else miserable.
 - (1) The fellowship is never sweet enough for them.
 - (2) A teacher is never prepared enough for them.
 - (3) The sermon is never good enough for them.

- (4) The music is never spiritual enough for them.
 - g) Matthew 5:48
 - i) In this passage, the word for “perfect” does not mean “without fault.”
 - (1) It has the idea of being complete or whole.
 - (2) It has the idea of wholesome and maturity.
 - h) Jesus supplies the only perfection that we will ever obtain until we get to Heaven.
 - i) It is not perfection that God is looking for from His children.
 - (1) It is excellence.
- 3) THE REVELATION OF PERFECTIONISM (1 CORINTHIANS 15:10)
- a) Not everyone is a perfectionist, but many people have a strong tendency toward it.
 - b) Here are tests to know if you are a perfectionist:
 - i) Are you an idealist or a realist?
 - (1) The perfectionist is an idealist.
 - (a) The person who has excellence is a realist.
 - (2) Jesus was not an idealist; He was a realist.
 - (a) He knew human nature.
 - (i) John 16:12
 - (ii) He knew that Simon Peter was going to deny Him.
 - 1. John 13:36-38
 - (b) Jesus was not surprised at what was in human nature.
 - ii) Do you set impossible goals for yourself and for others and then fail to fulfill them?
 - (1) The perfectionist does this.
 - (a) Perfectionists constantly set unattainable goals for themselves.
 - (2) Notice the wisdom of the Bible:
 - (a) When God told the children of Israel to go and take the land of Canaan, one would have thought that perhaps He would have told them to take the land all at one time.
 - 1. But this is not what He said.
 - a. Exodus 23:29-30
 - i. God said that the children of Israel would take the land of Canaan little by little.
 - ii. The perfectionist would not like these verses.
 - iii) Do you try to be the best or to do your best?
 - (1) A perfectionist has to be the best.
 - (a) He has to be number one.
 - (b) A perfectionist is unsatisfied if someone has attained more or does a better job than they do.
 - (2) Perfectionists cannot accept themselves.
 - (a) 1 Corinthians 15:10
 - (i) Paul had accepted himself.

- (b) Romans 12:3
 - (i) Do not think with such lofty thoughts that you can never attain to them.
 - 1. But on the other hand, understand that by the grace of God, we are who we are.
- (c) The grace of God exalts a person without inflating him, and it humbles a person without debasing him.
- (d) The person who has excellence says, "I am what I am by the grace of God."
 - (i) 1 Corinthians 15:10
- (e) The person who is a perfectionist says, "I ought to be what I am not and perhaps never could be."
- (3) Do you value yourself by what you do or by what you are?
- (4) Luke 10:38-42
 - (a) Martha was a perfectionist.
 - (b) Jesus said that Mary had chosen the better part.
 - (i) Mary had accepted who she was and who Jesus was.
 - (ii) Jesus was more pleased with Mary's devotion than with what Martha was doing.
- (5) We do not have to be the best.
 - (a) We have to just simply do our best and be what we are by the grace of God.
- iv) Are you project-minded or process-minded?
 - (1) A perfectionist always has goals and is always striving to reach those goals.
 - (a) They are discontent until the project is done.
 - (b) But when the project is done, they are never satisfied with it.
 - (i) And they always start another one.
 - (2) A perfectionist is afraid of success.
 - (a) Success to them would ruin everything.
 - (i) So, they keep on pushing.
 - (ii) They may not even start a project because their procrastination says that it has to be perfect, and they know that they can't obtain it.
 - (3) A perfectionist is very project-minded.
 - (4) Matthew 6:33
 - (5) Psalm 127:2
- v) Do you dwell on failure, or do you simply learn from it?
 - (1) Perfectionists cannot let go of their failures.
 - (a) They feel that they have to punish themselves because they failed.
 - (b) They think that God will not forgive them, so why should they forgive themselves?
 - (2) 1 Corinthians 15:10

- (a) The Apostle Paul had persecuted the church, but he was able to let go of his past.
 - (i) Philippians 3:13-14
 - (3) Have you been able to let go of the past?
 - (a) We can fail and not be a failure.
 - (b) The perfectionist cannot let go of the past.
 - (4) Do you resent criticism, or do you learn from it?
 - (a) The perfectionist deeply resents criticism.
 - (i) Criticism only affirms and confirms their most painful thoughts that they are not perfect.
 - (ii) The perfectionist wants to be loved above all things.
 - (b) 1 Corinthians 4:3
 - (c) A healthy person is not shipwrecked by criticism.
 - (i) He will learn from it.
- 4) THE RELEASE OF PERFECTIONISM (1 CORINTHIANS 15:10)
- a) Perfectionism is in all of us.
 - i) Sometimes it is put there by overdemanding parents.
 - (1) We get our concept of God from our concept of our parents.
 - ii) Perhaps we came from a background of a very narrow and strict type of preaching.
 - (1) Maybe someone motivated us by guilt and not by grace.
 - iii) It could just be the way that we're wired psychologically.
 - b) Freedom is found in God's amazing grace.
 - i) 1 Corinthians 15:10
 - c) Learn by God's grace that He has already accepted you.
 - i) Ephesians 1:6
 - ii) We do not have to earn acceptance.
 - (1) That acceptance comes by grace.
 - (a) When we learn this grace, we want to praise God for this grace.
 - (2) Don't get the idea that God is making a list of how many quiet times we have had or how much Bible study we have done.
 - (3) Some people feel defeated because they think that they should do more, work harder, or pray more.
 - (a) God is not the God of push and shove.
 - (b) God is not the God of more and more, faster and faster, and harder and harder.
 - iii) Grace is God's acceptance of us.
 - (1) Faith is our acceptance of God's acceptance of us.
 - iv) Some people do not have the assurance of their salvation.
 - (1) They are always saying that they just do not feel saved.
 - (2) It is not a spiritual problem; it is a psychological problem.
 - (a) They cannot accept the fact that God has accepted them.
 - d) In 2 Samuel 9, we find the story of a man named Mephibosheth.

- i) David and Jonathan had made a blood covenant.
 - (1) 1 Samuel 18:1-4
 - (2) It meant that they would love one another.
 - (a) Everything that David had belonged to Jonathan, and everything that Jonathan had belonged to David.
 - (3) This covenant pertained not only to David and Jonathan but to their offspring, as well.
- ii) Jonathan's father was King Saul, who hated David and tried to kill him.
- iii) Saul and Jonathan both died, and David became king.
- iv) Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth.
- v) David asked if there was anyone left from the house of Saul, so that he could show the kindness of God to him for Jonathan's sake.
 - (1) A servant told him about Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth.
 - (a) Mephibosheth was crippled in his feet and had fled out of fear of David, thinking that David might kill him.
 - (b) All of his life, Mephibosheth had been afraid of David.
- vi) David sent for Mephibosheth.
 - (1) David wanted to restore Mephibosheth's inheritance and wanted him to eat at his table like one of his own sons.
 - (2) Mephibosheth could not understand why David would do this for him.
 - (a) 2 Samuel 9:8
 - (b) David did this for Jonathan's sake because of the covenant he had made with Jonathan.
- vii) Mephibosheth had to accept or reject the covenant.
 - (1) He could not understand or explain it, until he saw the scar on David's wrist where David and Jonathan had made the blood covenant.
 - (a) Then, he understood it was all because of the blood covenant.
- viii) What does this have to do with us?
 - (1) Ephesians 1:6
 - (2) Ephesians 4:32
 - (3) David, for Jonathan's sake, received Mephibosheth.
 - (4) God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us.
 - (a) The devil will tell us that we are not good enough, we haven't done enough, and we don't deserve it.
 - (i) Don't argue with him; he is right.
 - 1. Just point him to the blood covenant and step out of the way.
 - 2. Let him argue with God.
- e) We are not accepted on the basis of who we are but what He did.
 - i) This is grace.

5) CONCLUSION

- a) The Apostle Paul said that he had made havoc of the church of God, but he was what he was by the grace of God.
 - i) Acts 8:3

- ii) 1 Corinthians 15:10
- iii) When you understand this, it frees you, not to do less but to do more.
 - (1) Now, you do what you do as unto God.
 - (2) You have been freed from the performance trap.
- b) Learn to accept God's grace, and then learn to accept yourself.
 - i) If God has accepted you, then you can accept you.
 - ii) You can say, "I am what I am by the grace of God."
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 15:10
 - iii) You will be able to accept others, and you will stop being demanding, critical, and judgmental.
 - iv) You will begin to be more loving.
 - v) You will have a lot more joy.
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 15:10
 - (2) Galatians 3:1, 3
 - c) The standard is excellence, but you are what you are by the grace of God.
 - d) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
 - e) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) Acts 16:31
 - v) John 3:16