

Here Is Your Security
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Romans 8: 26-39 (Genesis 29: 15-28)

From the moment we enter this world, two significant pieces of self begin to take shape: identity and security. Identity is self-explanatory and parts of it shift throughout life. Though we may not come to know it for years, there is a core identity, a true identity, all people share: child of God. I am a child of God. Each of you is a child of God. Again, it may be years before some people come to know this truth. For them the other parts of their identity come first: child, spouse, parent, teacher, lawyer, doctor, sports player. These things do help identify us and give us a place—but as we grow, we realize that our deeper identity, child of God, is the most important.

As we live into our identity as a child of God, before all other identifying roles, our lives take on a different shape. Priorities often shift and the motivations behind the things we do and the ways we choose to be known are all centered in God. These are wonderful moments!

But oftentimes maintaining that perspective, holding onto the truth that our truest identity is instilled in us from God, is an ebb and flow situation; there are days when we know fully our identity in God through Christ and allow that to carry us through our days without hesitation. Unfortunately, there are also days

when we dig as deep as possible and can't find the person God created—in no way do we feel we can confidently identify as a child of God. What is it that causes us to question, and sometimes even lose, the confidence that our identity as a child of God is permanent?

The culprit is the other piece of self that begins taking root the moment we're born: security. Just as identity, security is instilled in us by our Creator and sealed by our Redeemer. In Christ, we are adopted children of God (identity) who cannot be lost from God through grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit (security).

In our world today, security has taken on other names: self-assuredness, confidence, self-esteem. Love of, acceptance of, respect for one's own self—I'd say it this way: knowing that you, just as you are, have value. Security, self-esteem: knowing that you are who you are no matter what comes your way. Do you see the connection? When our security is shaken, we question whether our identity, as a child of God, can truly be. When our security is shaken, we are open to believing the lies Satan tells us. I'll come back to that in a moment.

Jacob's story is fraught with identity and security. Stealing a birthright through deception and then being deceived into marrying the wrong woman. And it all began because he did not feel as fill-in-the-blank as his brother. Listen to how the NLT summarizes it: "Isaac loved Esau because he enjoyed eating the wild

game Esau brought home, but Rebekah loved Jacob.” Now I know the furthest a parent will go is to say they love their children differently, not one more than the other, just differently; unfortunately, I think the way these translators capture it is sometimes how it is instead experienced. Jacob’s identity was weakened and his own view of self was challenged because he knew how he measured up, from his dad’s perspective, against his brother.

And what about Leah and Rachel? Listen to how the NLT translates the comparison of them: “There was no sparkle in Leah’s eyes, but Rachel had a beautiful figure and a lovely face.” 2017, AD or BC, and things are no different; the worth of each woman set upon nothing other than their appearance. We’ve made strides in this 2017, but as a private practice therapist who works with teenage girls, I can assure you self-esteem is still under fire for this very thing; young girls who can’t begin to understand their identity in Christ because they don’t feel valuable enough to be loved by peers/parents/etc, so how could they be loved by God.

By the time we turn the faith of our parents into a personal faith, we are fighting so many contrary messages that we don’t know where to begin. How often have you thought, not for another but for yourself, how can God love me? No one else may know about ____, but God does. Can forgiveness truly cover *that*?

Does the cross actually see beyond that and restore me? Listen carefully to these words:

Your past does not define you. Your past merely informs you.

Enter back in the lies of Satan I mentioned earlier. We live in a culture of shame. Underneath all of the ignorance, hatred, oppression, division, is shame. Everyone defined as “other” is left with a sense of shame for not measuring up to an invisible standard God never intended to exist in this world. Shame is a lie of Satan. It takes root and eventually leaves people feeling so trapped and so lost that though they want to cry out and ask God for help, they can’t find enough self-worth to do even that.

The opening of our passage in Romans reminds us that, especially in those deepest and darkest moments, our identity as a child of God is secure and the Holy Spirit is with us, praying for us.

Your past does not define you. When you don’t have the words or when you feel you’ve turned too far away, the Holy Spirit is there crying out, groaning, on your behalf. And to who? To the one who formed you, the one who created you, the one who loves you with a love that is more lasting than anything we experience here.

Each and every day we hear/see/feel the many ways we do not measure up. Whether among family members, at your job, at school, even at church—sometimes it is worst in the churches. We feel stripped down and found lacking of what is needed to be worthy of our love, acceptance, attention, etc. It's no wonder that people are so lacking in security that they don't find themselves worthy enough to identify as they've been created to be.

The current state of our country, the number of people reaching depths of darkness leading to self-harm and so much more; where does the darkness end? How does the light break through so that all can stand confident in their identity as a forever child of God and then stand firm in that self-worth through all that life entails?

Your past does not define you. Here's how I know: "For I am convinced, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ.

Not your weight, not your struggles, not your brother or sister, not the powers of this country, not your height, not your status, not who you love, not your gender expression.

NOTHING can separate you from the love of God in Christ.

Not your years in the foster care system, or the streets, or prison; not your past judgments of others or hateful acts; not your addiction or your secret or your deepest fears.

Not one thing can separate you from the love of God in Christ.

Satan loves fear and shame and hopelessness. Paul writes to remind us that in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God we have a firm and unshakeable identity. We are children of God and because of that we can go forward in life fully able to love, to fight against injustice, and secure in our own value—so secure that we can help others find it when they feel lost.

Your past does not define you. Hope remains. Nothing, not one thing, not even the thing that came to mind just now, can ever, EVER, separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So stop seeking your security, your self-worth, your esteem in the temporary things in this world. It can't be found in having the "right" anything or even in the most loving human relationship. These things are fleeting. Your identity in Christ, however, and your worth as a child of God, is permanent. It cannot be shaken. No one can steal it from you, not even your own self. Because

nothing, not even you, can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Go forth assured in that love. Receive it down to your core, coursing through your veins. Share it. Ask to be reminded of it and let the Holy Spirit pray for you when you need it most. You are loved as you are, a created child of God. Know it to the depth of your soul, then go and make sure every single person you meet knows it too.