TEN LIES SATAN LOVES TO TELL
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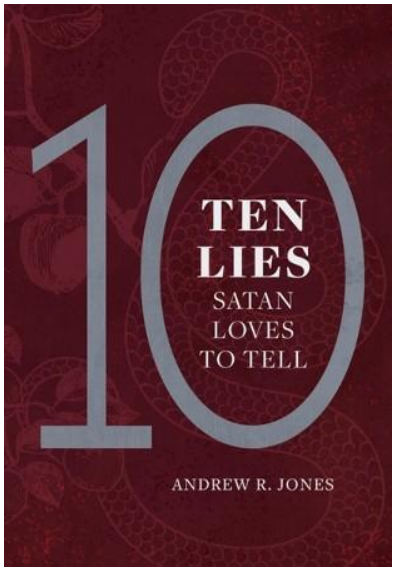

LIE 2:YOUR VALUE IS BASED ON YOUR PERFORMANCE (PP. 35-51)

There are realms in our world where our performance rightly plays a role, which makes it difficult to recognize what Satan is up to with this lie. As we begin this chapter, I would like to point out two things. First, in our relationships, we are in danger of dehumanizing people if we reduce them to their performance. Second, God does not view you or value you according to your performance. (36)

SATAN IN THE GARDEN

When Satan comes to Eve in the Garden of Eden, this chapter's lie is revealed in this line: "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). Who is the agent who must act to improve value? "You." Eve must do it herself. "God knows that when ***you*** eat of it ***your*** eyes will be opened, and ***you*** will be like God." Eve's value will increase to be like God's if she performs this one task. That is the lie Satan tells her.

In this lie, Satan introduces a concept that is entirely foreign to a perfect creation—scarcity. In the perfect, abundant, evergreen Garden of Eden, Satan makes it seem like two perfect people are lacking...

Satan invents a problem and then points God's people inward to find the solution. (36-37)

SATAN'S DESIRED OUTCOME

Satan loves this lie because it turns us in all sorts of directions, each away from God.

Through this lie, Satan seeks to curve human beings in on themselves. Satan wants us so concerned with our own value as judged by our performance that we do not care what God has to say about us... Satan knows the stable, loving identity we possess as God's people. Satan wants us to abandon that certainty and seek our identity and validation elsewhere. (37)

Satan's lie makes us look inward to improve our circumstances rather than to God. It also tricks us into looking at others through the lens of comparison for validation (that we are doing better than them) or motivation (that we need to do better) rather than turning toward God and looking to Him for our value and validation...

If you believe your value is based on your performance, you will feel insatiable pressure to keep trying harder. Nothing will be good enough. You will ever be chasing a better possible performance (because we are not perfect). You will fix your eyes on the mirage of having a higher value than you have already been given in Jesus. (38)

Satan's desired outcome by telling us that our value is based on our performance is to get us to sin to gain people's praise and to get us to despair when that praise is absent.

Satan wants us to place the meaning in our lives in the wrong things because when those things are inevitably taken away, meaninglessness and hopelessness are quickly at hand. (39)

THE FEAR BEHIND THE LIE

The fear I see lurking behind this lie is that we are not valued or admired. At the extreme, we fear we are worthless. (39)

We see in this lie (as we will see in many others) that part of Satan's strategy is to use lies and fears to create chaotic, tenuous situations that lead us to extreme, yet opposite, reactions. We fawn, and we resent. We become workaholics, and we give up. We think we are absolutely brilliant, and we are convinced we are worthless. Satan wants us at these extremes because, at these extremes, we are curved in on ourselves more and more. At these extremes, we are made more impatient, more arrogant, more demanding, more fearful, and more susceptible to more lies. (40)

THE LIE REPEATED IN THE BIBLE

- Mephibosheth: Mephibosheth is prized, valued, loved, fed, cared for, and adopted into the family without any merit or worthiness in himself coming into the equation. It is all given, not earned. It is all gift, not wage. Like Mephibosheth, we find that our place at King Jesus' table is not based on what we can give to Him, not earned by our performance. Our place is made possible only by Jesus' performance, by Jesus' love, by Jesus' kindness. (42)
- Simon Peter Denies Jesus: Peter insisted he would not fall away or deny Jesus, but he did. His performance was a complete failure. And as Peter looks into the Lord's eyes and remembers their conversation, he weeps bitterly. He grieves his failure. He grieves his sin. But as we will see below, Peter is not defined by his performance. (44)

THE LIE REPEATED IN OUR WORLD

Rewards and punishments affect relationships with those giving and receiving them. Every time people receive a reward or punishment for their performance, this lie seeks to infiltrate relationships where it does not belong...

When we are deceived by the lie that our value comes from our performance, we become more susceptible to applying that lie to other people and relationships. We may wrongly value our friends and family based on their usefulness to us. We may wrongly value fellow Christians based on how much time, energy, and money they give to the church. But the economy of the church is not in what we produce or how we perform. The economy of the church is entirely one way. Our value is based only and ever on our identity in Jesus. The eight-month-old who cries through every sermon is of just as much value as the pastor delivering that sermon. (45)

When we judge the people in our life based on performance, we may experience and assume they do the same to us. We might wrongly extend this assumption toward God, believing that He judges us based on our performance. So, to make things fair, we return the judgment back on God. We judge God based on His performance. We use the ease and extravagance of our lives as the measuring stick by which we grade God's performance...

Prosperity gospel is rooted in this very lie: your value is based on your performance. The logic of prosperity gospel is that the only way out of suffering and challenges is to further burden oneself, swallowing lies such as "If I had more faith, God wouldn't do this to me." (47)

THE TRUTH

Your value is based on God's love. Your value is based on Christ's actions of death and resurrection for you. Your value is based on Jesus' performance for you. Your value is given as a gift. You cannot change your value to God. You are His pearl of great price. He has given everything so that you can be His own...

If you look to yourself and your own performance for any assurance, you either risk pretending you are better than you truly are or risk despairing at the reality of how poor your performance is compared with the perfection required for salvation.

Paying attention to your performance is helpful only insofar as it drives you back to God's grace and mercy. (48)

GOD'S DESIRED OUTCOME

God's desired outcome is that we find our value in Jesus. God brings this outcome about in many ways. Some of us begin to learn our value is in Jesus through a series of massive personal failures that force us to realize our own performance is pitiful. Some of us learn our value is in Jesus through the failure of relationships where we invested too much of our identity. Some of us learn our value is in Jesus through the unconditional love of another who had already learned the lesson.

Any one of us who learns our value is in Jesus ultimately learns this because the Holy Spirit calls us by the Gospel, the Gospel of Jesus' love for us shown in His incarnation, death, and resurrection. Jesus values us so highly that He chooses to leave the heavens and come down into this world of suffering. He chooses to take on not only our humanity but also our very sin. He takes our sin to the cross and crucifies it there. He lays our sin down, dead in the tomb with Him. And then He rises from the dead, but our sin remains forever parted from us. We are forgiven. That is how much Jesus values you. He willingly dies for you. He gives His life for yours. (49-50)

THE LOVE THAT CASTS OUT FEAR

God created the world and filled it with abundant life. He loves all His creation purely because it is His. He made it. Yes, God's good creation fell into sin, but God did not require the creation to save itself. God did not require Adam and Eve to save themselves. God sent Jesus to save Adam, Eve, all humanity, and all creation. Why? Because He loves us. Because our value to Him is not based on our performance; our value is determined by His love for us.

In his theses for the Heidelberg Disputation, Luther writes, "The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it."7 The love of God does not judge us based on how deserving we are of love. The love of God creates and re-creates us, forms and transforms us. (50)