

Am I My Own Savior? - Josh Roland

Am I liked? Am I needed? Everyone knows what it is like to ask these questions and ones similar to them. We all want to feel needed and accepted. The father wants to feel loved by his children. The college student wants to have the admiration of his teachers. The teenager wants the approval of his friends. However, the motivation does not just stop at the surface appearance of a desire to be liked or needed. There is something even deeper driving these questions. For me, it has been a painful and humbling experience to understand what really drives me.

While in school, like a lot of kids, I took music lessons. I did well in fine arts competitions, and enjoyed the promise of being able to bless others with my music. I went to college and studied Bible and music. I learned how to preach, how to teach, and then how to effectively use my music in ministry. However, as I began to use these talents and tools for "ministry", I began to realize a lot of fear in my heart. I began to see that I really feared failure. What if my counsel did not help a student? What if I am not really useful? What if my music really is not that good and people don't like it? Fear began to have a control over my life. Or more realistic, I began to recognize its control - it had existed for as long as I could remember.

However, even the fear was not the root of the issue. God still wanted to further my understanding of my own depravity. So, in His graciousness He allowed me to actually start failing in many of my efforts to "serve" Him. I was dropping some of my responsibilities at work, not finishing projects, getting things late. I also began to see that I was not the musician I thought I was, and struggled with the fact that others were better than I was. I began to get really frustrated, even irritated at others and how I thought they perceived me! They were supposed to like me and need me! I had to fix it. So, I would work harder to prove my worth only to find my failing more frustrating.

On top of all this, God allowed the same thing to be happening in my personal life. My walk with God was a source of irritation. I would do well for a time, only to end up on my face a few weeks or months later. I wanted consistency and I wanted complete victory.

Here it was! Every fear now brought to the surface - I feared people knowing how much I struggled getting my work done. I feared them finding out that I was not really all that good in music. Most of all, I feared them knowing that I really struggled spiritually. Now, it was time for God to go one step deeper.

All of my frustration and irritation revealed something in

my heart that was most vile. The reason I was irritated, the reason I was frustrated and angry was that I felt I was not being loved, or needed in the way I desired. That was it – when I realized I wanted people to adore me – I realized my desire was to be the answer to everyone's problems. The reason I wanted complete victory in my personal walk with God was so I could feel good about myself. The reason I wanted to make my boss successful was so that he would realize how much he needed me – and would thus praise me. The reason I wanted to be a great musician was so people would realize how wonderful and talented I was – spreading my fame. The reason I wanted to have my counselees grow was not always for their growth, but so they would tell people where they got the life-changing information. I wanted people to adore me.

I remember when this first began to strike me. I was on my knees praying in my dorm room. I was asking God to make me like Jonathan Edwards, or like Charles Spurgeon – just wanted to be a man of God. I asked him to make me like Paul. I began praying for a successful ministry that would change the face of Christianity. While praying this, the thought crossed my mind. “You know, I would actually like to have more influence than Jonathan Edwards.” I found myself actually praying in all sincerity that I would have more of an impact than the Apostle Paul. Then I was immediately rebuked by the Spirit. “Go ahead,” he said, “continue with the train of thought.” I began to feel utterly sick when I realized, I really wanted to have more of an impact than Christ Himself. That begun the process of realizing my desire for love, adoration, acceptance, and usefulness was really a desire to be worshiped as God is worshiped. There it is – in black and white – as ugly as it looks. I wanted to be mine and everybody else's savior. I wanted them to adore and worship me because I was the answer to all of their problems.

My fears were driven by a proud and rebellious attack against God. I wanted to usurp God's authority and place myself on the throne, not just of my life, but of my universe.

So, is God going to give me grace to live victoriously if my motive for victory is to usurp His authority? Is He going to give me grace to be responsible in work if my motive is once again for my own praise? Will I be successful in any venue of private or public life if really my motive is to steal worship from the true Savior? No! God is a jealous God and will allow no one to take His rightful glory.

God wants to give grace to me, but only as I am showing my dependence on Him. “He gives grace to the humble.” He wants to be my Savior. He must be my Savior. Nothing else will give Him glory. I was created to find my true satisfaction – not in the praise of men – but in my acceptance in Christ. Because of my possessions in Him, I must be far more satisfied in Him, than if I had all the adoration of my friends.

Now I can say – although easier said than done – I am learning to want Christ more than victory over sin. I am learning to want Christ more than worldwide fame. I am learning to want Christ more than I desire to be needed by my boss. If I must always battle sin, be known by no one, and displease my boss in order that I might recognize my need of Christ, I want Christ. Because, as we read in Romans 5 – “Where sin does abound, Grace does much more abound.” I would rather have grace and all my problems, than to have no problems and no grace! That would be Hell for me.

This is all very recent in my thinking. I know more sins will arise, more attempts at fame, and more people to attract, but by God’s grace, I want to choose Christ.

Posted by Josh Roland