

#53 “A Proper View of Self”

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We live in a culture and society that is consumed with self. Self-help books sell left and right, and they even have their own section in the local bookstore. Many are preoccupied with helping themselves to become all that they can be. Yet their error and the error which the books propagate is that the answer to change and growth can be found in us. The Bible doesn't teach this at all, and it takes quite a different approach to dealing with self and how we grow as human beings.

The Biblical solution to self's struggles and failures is for self to die. *The Bible doesn't hold out any hope that self can be helped enough to be what God desires it to be, which is holy.* According to God, self is corrupt, evil, deceitful, destructive, and beyond able to please God and be all that God desires for it to be (Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:23). We, left to ourselves, are hopeless cases. We need divine intervention, and we need to be born again (John 3:7). We need to have our old selves die with Christ so that new selves can be raised with Him unto new life in Him (Romans 6:4). This is what happens when we come to Christ in saving faith and as we receive His forgiveness for our sins.

Colossians 3:9-10 says, “Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.” The beauty of being born again as a believer in Jesus Christ is that the old nature which was enslaved to sin and unable to please God dies, and we are made new, able then to be renewed into conformity with Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” Christians are new creations, consisting of a new self made in Jesus and indwelt by Jesus. It is then through His power and presence that we are able to please God and change in a way which is in conformity with Christ and His desires. The world does not have this help, this hope, or this power because they are still controlled by their old nature. As believers, however, we can grow and change rightly. We do still have the flesh to reckon with, and we still stumble into sin. We are not fully what we will one day be, but we have been freed from sin's bondage and control. We have the resources in and through Christ to walk in purity and holiness. The old self was incapable of this, and thus a world which is trying to patch together the old self is running a hopeless race. The old self is riddled with sin, and it will never be able to please God, which is the ultimate need of man. Self needs more than help; it needs to die with Christ.

As we live the Christian life, we, and the world as well for that matter, do not need to grow in our self-esteem. We do not need to have high regard for our flesh, which is weak and vulnerable (Mark 14:38), but we need to find our confidence and hope in Jesus. It is in and through Him that we have life, joy, satisfaction, worth, and a whole new identity,

being adopted into God's family. We should have a high regard for Jesus Christ, Who is exalted above all things, including ourselves. *When we seek to esteem ourselves highly, we will struggle to worship God rightly.* This is not to say that we are to look down on ourselves or hate ourselves; neither is it to say that we are to be consumed or preoccupied with ourselves. We are but dust (Genesis 2:7), a jar of clay (2 Corinthians 4:6-7). God is the glory, and it is Christ in us Who gives us worth, dignity, glory, and confidence. *In Christ, we don't need to concern ourselves with our own esteem level, for our worth and dignity come from knowing Christ and being one with Him.* Colossians 3:3-4 says, "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." Galatians 2:20 adds, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." The message for our hearts is this: life is not about us, but it is about Christ. In fact, our lives are actually said to be one with the life that Christ lives as He lives out His will and desires in and through our hearts and lives. *So life is not about us becoming all that we can be, but it is about Christ being all that He already is in and through us.* When we yield to Christ, reckoning ourselves dead to sin and alive to God, Christ can have His way in our lives. Then, and only then, do we find our fulfillment, our greatest source of happiness, and the true culmination of the human experience. The old self is a disaster that must die. The new self is being renewed into the image of Christ for His glory. Yet the new self is not what we are to glory in. Rather, our worth, identity, dignity, purpose, and glory is Christ in us. Jesus is our life, and our wholeness can only be found in His unconditional love. If we are struggling with self-hate or self-loathing, we need to see our lives in light of Christ's love for us. We are but jars of clay, but He lives in us and loves us. Therefore, we have worth, dignity, and honor in and through Jesus. Rather than try to increase our self-esteem, we need to further embrace Christ's love for us. Only this will give us what we seek.