

Do You Like Yourself? **10-17-21**

Christian's need to love themselves. We see this through a number of commands and necessary inferences. For example, Paul's admonition to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:23 suggests the need to take care of ourselves. The commands for husbands and wives (Ephesians 5:29-33) demands that we care for ourselves. Consider the parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1-8) where Jesus commended us to consider those who want the best for themselves. Why shouldn't we love ourselves? We are made in the image of God, and if we are in Christ, we are remade in the image of Christ. We should love those things that God loves, and we who are in Him are beloved of God.

Why then do so many of us dislike ourselves? It can be seen when we are not taking care of physical or spiritual needs. We are ashamed and unable to act in accordance with the will of God. We have no confidence or trust in the love of God. Such feelings lead us to succumb to the temptations around us.

The bible tells us of a great many people who failed to have the proper care for themselves that ultimately led them to sin. Consider the lack of confidence in action of Moses, or the self-destructive and sinful behavior of King Saul. We see in Genesis 4 the depression and anger of Cain, or the blame and victimhood of Esau. Consider that these people failed in part because they did not have the proper mindset of themselves in love.

Of course, the main point to consider first is that often we don't understand the meaning of love. In the Bible, love means seeking the best for someone. We would all agree that the best thing we can seek is to be pleasing to God, and to seek eternal life. Paul spoke of seeking these things for ourselves in Romans 2:7. To love yourself means to want eternal life. However, often what we actually love is the flesh, or the worldly self, and in serving that self are actually not loving ourselves (1 John 2:15).

Another common reason that we fail to do what is right is when we measure ourselves by worldly standards of success, beauty or goodness. Consider what God told Samuel in 1 Samuel 16:7, or what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10:7-12. Comparing ourselves to others in outward appearances is foolish, and leads to a lack of true love for ourselves.

Sometimes we do not love ourselves because of internal strife caused by a divided allegiance. Elijah told the people that they needed to choose between God or Baal in 1 Kings 18:21. Jesus tells us that we cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). If our dedication is divided, we will be unhappy and angry with ourselves.

Sometimes our self-rejection is because we cannot respect ourselves, and this comes from a position when we won't hold ourselves accountable. King Saul was great at playing the victim, and seeking to avoid responsibility as seen in 1 Samuel 15:20-22. If we don't see ourselves as responsible or in control, we will begin to despise ourselves.

What about when we allow the guilt of sin to overwhelm us? Consider the suicides of two men in the Bible: Ahithophel (2 Samuel 17:23) and Judas (Matthew 27:5). Both men were spiritual men who became involved in sin, and when they faced it, their guilt was something they could not live with. Sometimes our unrepaired guilt defiles our conscience and we despise ourselves for it.

But sometimes that guilt is not appropriate, especially when it is the feeling of guilt for sins we have already repented of, or guilt for things we ought not to feel guilt. Perhaps Paul struggled with guilt from his past life (1 Timothy 1:13). Yet he had been cleansed and forgiven, and could rest on that confidence. The feeling of guilt is not useful.

Sometimes it is hard to see ourselves in perspective. That is why it is important to look into the mirror that is the Gospel and examine ourselves. *“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does”* (James 1:23-25).

What does the Bible remind us? First, that God knows you are not perfect. *“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin”* (Hebrews 4:15). Second, God desires to forgive your sins. *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). Finally, God sees you as valuable to His purpose. *“But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased”* (1 Corinthians 12:18).

Not loving yourself the proper way is dangerous. You will not succeed if you feel unworthy; you will succumb to sin if you feel weak. But you will meet God’s expectations if you **try!**