

*Self-Love Versus  
Self-Occupation*

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*All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.*

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## INTRODUCTION

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Philippians 2:3).

Many people who are trying to be “good Christians” struggle with the problem of self-occupation. If they receive a sincere compliment that is meant to edify, they are quick to say, “Oh, it’s not me. It’s Jesus.” They know that pride is sin, so they try to cover themselves in a false humility that is not at all attractive to people who need to see Christ.

True humility or lowliness relates to how we live before men. It does not mean we compare ourselves with one another, thinking less of self or more highly of self—it means we do not think of self! Meekness, on the other hand, is how we are before God: Instead of being self-conscious, if we are meek, we are God-conscious.

“The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way” (Psalm 25:9).

This booklet reveals how Satan attacks self-love, which we must have to properly love God and others. Christians need to be saturated with this principle. In the details of the angelic warfare, it is “Christ in *you*, the hope of glory” Colossians 1:27.

## *Chapter One*

# THE IMPORTANCE OF A HEAVENLY PERSPECTIVE

“Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:36-39).

God's Spirit revealed His capacity to produce life when Jesus became a Man whose humanity was conquered by death. The God-Man, Jesus Christ, was raised from the dead and now lives inside of every born-again believer. Christians can derive the life of the Spirit of God moment by moment because we live in the Kingdom of God in the reality of the present tense. In other words, it is not “who Jesus was” but “who He

is” that makes the difference in us.

### *The Problem of Loving Self*

Yet, when the focus changes and a person becomes occupied with himself instead of Christ, his capacity to love God and to love his neighbor as himself is severely limited. Capacity speaks of capability, and it is vital for those who want to grow beyond living in the status quo of Christianity today. Our capacity will never grow beyond the divine ability that God imparts to us as we respond in faith to His Word.

Faith is derived by hearing the Word with an attitude of meekness and concentration through the Holy Spirit (Romans 10:17). When the Word first enters the receptive area of the brain, it is purely academic. Then, the letter of the Word becomes spiritual reality as it is processed in our human spirit, and the faith of Jesus Christ is imparted to our souls.

“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (1 Corinthians 4:7).

What do we have that we did not receive from God? And if we received it from God, why



would we glory over it in the flesh? What reason could there be for differences with one another? There should be *no* reason, because we all have the same divine provision to be able to think with the mind of Christ in the details of life—and His mind is not divided.

### *Full of Self or a Fool for Christ?*

“Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.

“For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto *the world*, and to *angels*, and to *men*.

“We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised” (1 Corinthians 4:8-10).

Today's Christians are talking about how to be full, how to be rich, and how to be successful in the terms of the world. But in 1 Corinthians 4:9, Paul said that the apostles were “set forth to be last,” to be a spectacle unto the world, to angels, and to men. Paul acknowledged that all Christians have been appointed to take the last place on earth. The believers who are willing to

be last don't consider their own rights, but they serve by love.

Completely distinct from others, this special group of Christians have been chosen to be spectacles to the world (the cosmic system), to the angels (both the elect and fallen), and to men. It is in those laid-down lives that we see the divine love of God on trial.

*“But What About My Reputation?”*

Paul goes on to say that not only are they despised, but, “Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace;

“And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

“Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

“I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.

“For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

“Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of

me" (1 Corinthians 4:11-16).

"And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less [you love me]" (2 Corinthians 12:15). Here we see two kinds of people in the Church of Jesus Christ. The first group is occupied with self and their reputation among men:

"What do people think of me?" is occupation "self."

"How am I doing in comparison to others?" Occupation "self."

"Do I look good, or at least, as good as I used to?" Occupation "self."

"Does my conscious mind tarry with negative energy that comes from the conversation of others? Am I listening to satanic remarks and foolish jesting from insensitive people just to preserve a relationship?" Occupation self.

The second group is occupied with Christ. They enjoy healthy emotions, even in the face of adversity. Are we willing to be as the filth of the world in the eyes of others, appointed unto death along with a few that will be the pivotal force to hold back judgment? In reality, except for a handful of *pleroma* believers who live in the fullness of Christ, there is no pivotal force today.

Do we really want to be the last? Do we

want to be the offscouring of the world? to go through persecution? to be reviled? Or, would that be the last thing we would be able to do because we are so preoccupied with ourselves?

### *The Greatest Sin*

The greatest sin in all the world is not about drugs, as serious and destructive as they are. The greatest sin is not immorality, as bad as that is. The greatest sin is for a Christian to go his own way, preoccupied with self. This person presumes that he is okay with God, and presumption is the great transgression (Psalm 19:13).

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way” (Isaiah 53:6a). The people who don't get victory over self-occupation will fight with it for the rest of their lives. They violate the Finished Work.

*Tetelestai*—“*It is finished!* It has come to its end in completion. It is over.” This is the declaration of a confession because of a conversion through Calvary and communion with God that enlarges our capacity to be governed by God in every detail of life (John 19:30).

As God allows situations in our lives to create greater capacity for Him, we develop divine adaptability because we are teachable. Adapt-

ability is when the letter of the Word becomes spiritual life applied in circumstances as they occur. Teachability is a result of meekness (God-consciousness instead of self-consciousness) because we are Spirit-taught (Psalm 25:9). As we derive God's life through God-consciousness, we have divine ability to handle difficult situations skillfully, which is prudence (Proverbs 1:4).

People who are preoccupied with self are so caught up in superficial details that they easily overlook real areas of concern. "How do I look?" "How did I speak?" "I wonder what they thought. Do they really love me?" This is not charity. It is false humility which reveals a lack of meekness, and, therefore, a lack of teachability. It is preoccupation with self and getting caught up in all the ramifications of impulses that dictate to the unconscious, subconscious, and conscious state of the mind.

## *Chapter Two*

# PREOCCUPATION THAT LEADS TO DISASSOCIATION

Satan was preoccupied with himself when he privately analyzed the essence of God on the basis of his opinions regarding the plan of God. As the chief angel guarding the throne of God, he became angry when he overheard the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit discussing the plan of redemption that applied to fallen men but not to the angels (Acts 2:23). That anger turned to pride, which led to his destruction (Isaiah 14:9-19).

In Nehemiah 2, we see how Satan consistently disassociates from God's love. For example, Sanballat and Tobiah were exceedingly grieved "that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel" (Nehemiah 2:10). In verse 19, they openly mocked the men who were rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem.

Sanballat and Tobiah took on four aspects of

Satan's attitude against God's authority. First, they separated from the Source; second, they disassociated from God's love; third, they rejected what love does; and fourth, they declared God's love unholy because it is given to sinners.\* In Satan's opinion, if God's love can't be trusted, then people will be preoccupied with evaluating themselves.

In Genesis 3:5, Satan was saying to Eve, "Please see things my way, because I have facts." And with his facts, he tried to open their eyes to the "truth" about God so that Adam and Eve would disassociate themselves from God's love.

"Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked" (Proverbs 2:14). Can you imagine what is going on in the spirit realm? The devil rejoices with those who do evil. He celebrates and has parties against love. The verb "rejoice" reveals that he is happy doing evil, infecting the capacity of the saints. Satan wants to have people agree with him through human reasoning, based upon sight and feelings. Satan gets Christians to confess, "This is how I *really* feel," as they uncover people and open old wounds, all in the name of being released.

## *The Attack against Love*

Furthermore, Satan loves to celebrate his victories against God's love. The devil can infect many husbands and wives as He attacks an entire city, targeting them with a specific approach. Without their knowing it, he concentrates on getting couples to disassociate from Calvary *while* they continue going to church. They use the Scriptures as a defense but without power. They have only a form of godliness (2 Timothy 3:5) without the power of God's Kingdom (1 Corinthians 4:20).

So here comes Satan attacking love, promoting disagreements, and celebrating when each side takes on a party spirit. He watches as people develop support groups of those who will surrender their ears to hear why they should support one side in the problem. Satan comes in with a hostile attitude. The chief priests attacked Jesus (Luke 20:1-2). The Sadducees attacked Peter and John (Acts 4:1-3), and the Jewish people who would not believe attacked the house of Jason (Acts 17:5).

This is such a necessary message, because the thoughts that run through the minds of some Christians often attack love. Oh, not all the time,



and perhaps not with the true *pleroma* Christians who have gone beyond maturity to live in the fullness of a life that is seated above. In Romans 16:17-18, however, Satan deceives others about God's love with misleading viewpoints. "By good words and fair speeches" he causes some Christians to err regarding the pure, unadulterated love of God.

What's more, he has a special army of convincers called *ekledonizeteo*.\*\* In Jeremiah 29:8-9, these demons convince the believer that Satan's viewpoint is valid. With four particular phases, *ekledonizeteo* is the most powerful of Satan's armies. These demons are not in the seven-army conspiracy against cities, families, and individuals, but they are above them. As planners for the seven armies, these demons have the power to break people. They establish a plan by convincing a person to be preoccupied with thoughts outside of God's purpose. These people become convinced by hypnosis through demonic impulses, which produce feelings and rationalization against the Word of God.

### *Beware of an Evil Eye*

In 2 Chronicles 32:15a, the Word of God says, "Let not Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade

you on this manner, neither yet believe him.” Satan convinces Christians by using this powerful army of demons. At times they split up into small segments. Then, when the plan is to destroy marriages or a group of families in an area, they go to that city united. As in Galatians 3:1, these demons use hypnosis to bewitch people, which literally means “to charm by an evil eye.” Once their victims are effectively hypnotized and well-prepared to carry on in a lie, the demons are free to leave them alone. Because of a busy schedule (plus the fact that they are *not* everywhere present), this army moves on to promote Satan's interpretation of love (which is limited *and* conditional) in the angelic conflict.

What do they do? They come in to convince an individual to go his own way in self-occupation. When this happens, many people do not guard their lips. They will say things like, “I came to this church with my gifts, and I haven't been used.”

If you want to be used, become available to evangelize and win souls. Find people who are going through deep trials and who need to be comforted. Become preoccupied with others, and you won't worry about whether you are being used or not.

When self becomes possessive and engages time and attention upon self-preservation, it is idolatry. When someone is always reflecting a need, Christ does not change that person from glory to glory, because He doesn't have access to their soul. That person will have a victory for a day or two, but then will go right back into self-occupation.

When self-occupation becomes part of a cycle, a deadly demon has hypnotized the memory center. The frame of reference will reflect on the temptations of the cosmic system toward Christians in general. The memory center will become hypnotized again. These people may be fine for a week, but then they will be right back at it again, going through something. Of course, they need to connect with others who are sympathetic to support them in their sin.

### *Weighed Down in Self-Absorption*

When a person becomes occupied with the self-life to the exclusion of others it is called "self-absorption." This is a process that involves receiving a wrong thought, admitting it in the mind, retaining it, and finally reflecting it in the attitude and countenance *before it is ever confessed*. That is self-absorption.

Unless it is dealt with and resolved, self-absorption produces self-defense, which prevents self from being crucified. Every believer must go through a personal Cross, or they will live in denial, trying to protect self from the consequences of wrong decisions. These people react at the same truth that tries to help them.

“Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the *error of the wicked*, fall from your own steadfastness” (2 Peter 3:17). Remember that a person who is deceived is being led away by a group of spirits, not people. “The error of the wicked” is referring to a spiritual battle—the conflict against grace. Notice that the eighteenth verse says, “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

*\*In the Septuagint (a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament), the prefix apo before the verb staeo defines these four aspects of Satan’s attitude.*

*\*\*For more about the demon armies, read the following booklets from Grace Publications by Pastor Carl H. Stevens: Can Anyone Overpower the Power of Demons? 1997; Dealing Precisely with Demons, 1998; Exposing Satan’s Armies, 1998.*

### *Chapter Three*

## THE QUALITY OF LOVE

“[Love] doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil” (1 Corinthians 13:5).

Love “seeketh not *her* own,” referring to the Church Body, the Body of Christ, now being prepared as the Bride of Christ. The world is a spiritual battleground, and two kingdoms are always initiating to people. Because God designed us to be responders in the spiritual realm, we submit either to Jesus Christ (the Head of the Body), or to Satan (the god of this world) and his armies. If the Body is responding to the proper initiation, she “seeketh not her own.”

Christians who “seek not their own,” simply live as unto the Lord. We receive conviction which leads to conversion, conversion to have communion, and communion so that we can communicate eternal life. That life is derived from grace principles we receive as we acclimate

to a living Word and become living epistles who manifest a living Christ—the reflection of God’s work being performed inside of us.

### *Vanity*

“Love seeketh not her own.” Every need we could have is met in Him.

Our part is to edify one another in love and not walk as the world does, “in the vanity of their mind” (Ephesians 4:16-18). They are alienated from the life of God through ignorance, because of the blindness of their heart.

There is so much hidden vanity in the Church today. Beyond the definitions of “emptiness” and “worthlessness,” several times in the Bible vanity means “affliction.” In God’s eyes, vanity toward one’s self is sickening.

But, the Christian who is filled with God’s love does not seek his own, trying to satisfy himself. He realizes he will only be on earth for a very short time; therefore, his purpose on earth is not to be fulfilled by what the world offers nor satisfied with what the world gives. Nor is he a “people’s person” who seeks to satisfy other people’s flesh by compromising his convictions. With proper teaching and communication, every one of us can become Christians who love our-

selves and others because we let God love us first.

### *Provoked? Edify!*

Love is not easily provoked. One army of demons called *Epeseisen* has a specific purpose, which is to provoke the Christian and sow seeds of negativity, reaction, and irritation by provoking. These demons will provoke a parent or a teacher to react to a child who is causing problems. Though the adult's initial response may be right, he must not be provoked to the point where the love of God does not rule in his heart. We need to deal with our wrong reactions at the Cross so they don't become a root of bitterness.

Being provoked is the opposite of being edified. Through the divine stimulation of thoughts inspired through the Holy Spirit, we can be a provision for people who are having problems caused by self-occupation. Instead of reacting, we begin to edify them to create a capacity for self-love or to penetrate the veil that obstructs it.

The power of God is released through human vessels—that is part of our eternal purpose on earth: We are being conformed to Christ's image as we glorify God and build up the Body of Christ (Romans 12).

“Not easily provoked” means that instead of becoming irritated with people and releasing negative energy in any form of reaction, we can privately edify them in our hearts through a prayer of intercession, and remain sincerely oriented in God with a communication of love.

Remember, we can be a channel of communication for God, a manifestation of His presence. As agents of His spiritual Kingdom, we can be used to produce a life that isn’t otherwise known or experienced on earth—God’s risen life that rests in the Ascension.

*“Whatsoever Things Are Lovely...  
Think on These”*

Love “thinketh no evil.” Romans 16:17-18a speaks of people who are filled with self-occupation. It says to avoid those who cause divisions and offenses “contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned....For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly.” But verse 19b says, “I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.” That means, don’t think of evil but only divine good.

Don’t be occupied with evil even when it is going on. Deal with evil biblically in your heart,



but be occupied with divine good (which is the provision) instead of being occupied with the problem. Love thinks no evil.

*“And Again I Say, Rejoice!”*

Love “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth” (1 Corinthians 13:6).

We must be filled with subjective love for people, even when we cannot have objective relationships. There are times when we are tempted to become sentimental in our relationships when we ought to be biblical. That means if Satan is controlling the person who is the object in our relationship, all we can do is give them mercy (by not giving them what they deserve). But we cannot have fellowship, because if they are involved with evil, there is nothing in them to fellowship with.

Self-occupation is often reinforced by relevant righteousness, comparing self with others. “Am I as spiritual as they are? Am I *more* spiritual?” Eventually, we develop a form of self-righteousness because of pride, the root of Satan’s deception. And pride comes before a fall (Proverbs 16:18)—all because we did not love ourselves as God loved us. We did not see our value as broken vessels.

Self-love is wonderful when it isn't filled with self. Self-worth is precious when it repeats what God says about our new life and our new potential. Self-affirmation is not self-deceit when it honors the Word of God. And self-awareness is not self-absorption when it's done because we hunger and thirst after a divine provision. Let's have God's estimation of our value: Each one of us is worth the price God paid with the Blood of His Son.

## CONCLUSION

Relevant righteousness. Preoccupation with self. So many Christians are completely outside of God in their experience—outside of the Spirit and outside of truth that sets us apart to grow and become mature in the Kingdom of God.

The only way we will be firmly established in our position as beloved sons and daughters of the King is by hearing, receiving, and believing what God says about us in His Word:

“Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee” (Song of Solomon 4:7). “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jeremiah 31:3*b*). “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Keep going forward. Remember who you are. When you fall, get up, shake off the dust,

and go on. A person who loves himself as God loves him is far more available to the plan of God for his life because he is secure. He is not caught in the snare of self-preservation that follows his attempts at trying to die to self. Remember? "It is finished!" Now, agree with God and go forward in His plan.