

Spiritual Self-Esteem

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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

When a person desires to become something he is not, it is very easy for him to be misled. For example, a Christian who desires to be more “spiritual” may look at another believer who has a low opinion of himself, call it “meekness,” and think that person is indeed more spiritual. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth.

You and I are so highly valued by God. He sent His only Son to die on the Cross for us—and that fact alone should make us see our real worth. Apart from Him, we can do nothing; but by His power, we can enter into the realization of His call, recognize our value, and receive His victory in our lives.

This booklet will show how believers can develop confidence that comes from heaven and godly self-esteem that cannot be defeated by the devil. When we finally recognize our worth, we can enter into true meekness. We can give up our

rights to ourselves so that the Savior can operate through us freely.

Chapter One

GUARDING AGAINST
THE ENEMY

“Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me” (Ezekiel 3:17).

“Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street” (Lamentations 2:19).

“So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands” (Judges 7:19).

“I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he

will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd.

“And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it” (Habakkuk 2:1-2).

All of the above verses describe watchmen who keep the watches of the night. These watchmen stood in the watchtowers. In the Body of Christ, we have prayer warriors who serve as watchmen. In our church, our morning prayer times are vital—highly valued because of the scope of all that our ministry does. People who cannot participate in person can pray anywhere at any time. Still, I want to stress that these prayer times are going to do great things for our ministry.

God, Himself, watches over the condition of His people. He has made Himself responsible for our souls. He is fixed in His place (Hebrews 13:5*b*). His throne is established in mercy, and His whole purpose is to watch over us (Isaiah 16:5). Therefore, He establishes watchmen whose purpose it is to warn us when there is danger ahead (Jeremiah 6:17; Isaiah 62:6).

The Watchman's Job

“Now unto him that is able to *keep* you from

falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

"Who are *kept* by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5).

The watchman's job is to guard against enemy invasions. The Greek word for "keep" is *phulasso*, which means to hold in close custody, to guard with your might. Don't ever get upset when a watchman cautions you about a danger and comes to you privately about something. Watchmen guard against enemy attacks as they hold up individuals in prayer. They must never invade the privacy of individual believers, but through the leading of Jesus, they are ready to go to battle for them, spiritually speaking.

Watchmen are called to protect and to keep the assembly safe from harm. A watchman protects the Body by setting up spiritual blockades—protective walls of friendship, fellowship, prayer, and doctrine—to guard against the enemy intruding upon our obedience to God.

A pure watchman is one who constantly prays during his watches. He observes trends that come up, never judging, never condemning, but never underestimating the wiles of the

enemy. For example, if someone began playing rock music on our platform, even with Christian lyrics, the watchmen among us would notice it. They wouldn't interfere physically, but they probably would write a letter to the pastor. That is perfectly in order.

The Value of Discernment

Watchmen possess discernment, having an understanding of what is going on beyond the surface. The pulpit does a tremendous job, exposing and guarding against trends that may seem harmless but are sent to be a distraction from the mind and purpose of Christ (Ephesians 2:2).

Real watchmen put aside personal preferences and deal with real attacks on the pulpit and the ministry. They are able to venture outside of their comfort zone when God leads them to do so.

This story comes from a state several hundred miles from here. A man went into a restaurant, and God led him to sit down at a table with someone he had never seen before. He had begun to share the Gospel, when the person spoke up and said, "I know those things you are talking about. I'm a Christian."

In fact, he was one of our pastors who was backslidden. He had stopped preaching and was not going to any church, so he reflected the spirit of the world, though his heart was pricked by the Spirit of God.

The first man continued, "You know I have been listening to this man on the radio, a program called *The Grace Hour*. I have learned so much through his tapes and his booklets. I have never met him, but that ministry has made such a difference in my life."

Stunned, the pastor began to weep.

"Do you know why I am crying? I am a pastor in that ministry, and I have been backslidden. Now God, in His unconditional love, has you come to this restaurant, sit at this table with me, and speak about the messages that I grew up on."

When the men finished their meals, they embraced.

"I have never done this before," the one man said. "I mean it is just not me to go to someone's table and ask if I can sit there. I am just not that kind of guy."

"Well, now you know why God told you to do it," the pastor replied.

That is the providence of God taking care of

His people through the ministry of watchmen. This pastor was languishing in his identity as a sinner. It took a simple man who was able to be led by God to impart a word in season. As a result, a man of God received the opportunity to be restored and reestablished with spiritual self-esteem. He recognized the great value God had placed on his soul, and he could go forward as a victor—not as a victim.

Chapter Two

FROM WISDOM TO
REALIZATION

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy [Spirit]” (Jude 1:20).

“According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Ephesians 3:11).

As we begin to move and grow with God, we enter into spiritual self-esteem. Self-esteem occurs when we begin to respond to the call of God. We hear and receive the Scriptures categorically, and we enter into God’s eternal purpose. Through the Holy Spirit’s power and dominion, we begin to receive grace as our teacher; and as we comprehend it, we begin to be transformed by it.

The only way we can enter into any transformation is by grace. We can gain higher knowledge, but transformation only comes as we go from glory to glory by the Holy Spirit through grace.

This means that even if I am not a patient person, I can allow the transformation of grace to lead me through the Word and through categorical doctrine, into the nature of patience. The spirit of patience then rests upon me, and it possesses me and becomes mine. That is the principle of going from glory to glory. It means that I finally arrive at a place where a part of God's nature is resting upon me. This part of His nature is ready to be used at any moment because I now possess it through the Holy Spirit.

Recovery and Rebound

A person can develop human self-esteem through moral uprightness and integrity; however, this kind of self-esteem can be torn apart very easily. Spiritual self-esteem allows us certain provisions for rebound and recovery. We fall and we get right back up. These opportunities are very precious to me because of what I have been through. Spiritual self-esteem derived from the Word of God and the Holy Spirit lets

you know that you are as good as anyone else in the world. There is no one any better than you are.

This is where spiritual self-esteem starts: you don't think highly of yourself, you don't think lowly of yourself, but you think of God in relationship to yourself. As the precious Word of God enters into your soul, you begin to reflect its nature and communicate its substance. The first thing it produces is self-confidence. I started out with zero confidence in my youth. Now I have confidence, plenty of confidence in God, but less confidence than ever in my self.

Wisdom and Understanding

“He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good” (Proverbs 19:8).

Wisdom and Understanding: Again and again, especially in the Book of Proverbs, these two are paired as separate but inseparable. Understanding is the application of wisdom (Proverbs 2:2).

We know that the essence of sin is self-realization. But wisdom brings us to self-realization in Christ as it gives understanding to the soul. Understanding is revealed when the character of

God motivates our actions. A person who loves wisdom also loves all the applications of that wisdom to his soul, and this gives him appropriate self-realization.

First, I must develop self-confidence. When God gives me a vision, I must learn to trust Him to do whatever He has given me to do. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, I have self-confidence in Him, not in the flesh (see Philippians 3:3). I also enter into a godly realization that, yes, I am able to experience all that God has for me. This godly self-realization is so good for marriages, for families, and for businessmen.

Next comes godly self-direction. The Word of God being resident in my soul helps me to make right decisions. With the Holy Spirit continually filling me, I walk God's road with momentum. If I am a Bible college student, I will continue to make right decisions in response to the call of God. At one point, certain men and women realized God's call for them to go to Bible college. They had confidence in God to do it and be blessed. So now, just as they responded to the call of God to enter Bible college, they must continue to operate in godly self-direction, not influenced by people but motivated by the love of God for people (John 3:16).

This all adds up to form a beautiful self-identity as one who is always under grace (Romans 6:14). I realize that I am what I am by the grace of God (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Chapter Three

MOTIVATED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy [Spirit]” (Jude 1:20).

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Many people lack motivation because they lack a godly self-image; therefore, they also lack spiritual self-esteem. They try to operate on the same level they perceive in other believers, but they are running on natural strength that runs out. Yet, when a believer lives in a self-identity of grace and spiritual self-esteem, he is motivated by God. Specifically, he is motivated by the Holy Spirit, by love, by doctrine, by people’s needs, and by prayer. Godly fellowship and

compassion move him.

As Christians, we can operate in godly self-motivation because we have a godly self-image and spiritual self-esteem. We can use the word “self,” knowing that it is no longer “I” but Christ who lives in me. *He* is the source of my motivation. God moves in, I move out, and self-motivation begins to reveal objective love for people *through* me because of my focus on Christ.

When we have this kind of motivation, then comes godly self-vindication. Godly Christians have been attacked all over the world. Persecution and hatred have been directed at individuals and entire ministries in the newspapers, on the radio, and on the television.

Do those ministries decline?

No, not if their identity is established in Christ and they are motivated by the love of God for the lost. That kind of ministry continues to grow without stopping. Our ministry is just one example of the strength of God in us, as we overcome the one who only wants to divide and conquer—to rob, to kill, and to destroy (John 10:10). We have buildings, schools, and missionaries serving all over the world. We have been able to build a brand-new gymnasium to make difference in young people’s lives. We have a

new parking lot to accommodate all the cars. Recently, we haven't had one seat open in our Sunday services. That means we are going to need more parking spaces, and we have a plan to expand our present chapel to make room for more people.

Vindicated by Faith

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

“For by it the elders obtained a good report.

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:1-6).

“And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.

“And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

“Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?

“That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

“And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

“And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes:

“Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.

“And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake.

“And he said unto him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.

“And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty’s sake.

“And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten’s sake” (Genesis 18:22-32).

Those who are vindicated become members of the Faith Heroes’ Hall of Fame. Heroes of the faith simply practice faith—all the time. They may not have a great ministry in terms of sight, although God may very well allow that to happen. A hero of faith carries godly self-vindication with him. He knows that forever he is a changed person, from God’s viewpoint.

Changed people make a difference in the world.

Ten righteous people could have saved Sodom and Gomorrah. But I have often wondered if one person—Lot himself—could have been enough to spare the cities if Abraham had been motivated to keep asking the Lord to spare

the righteous. What might have happened if he had said, "Lord, if there is just one righteous person, will You spare the cities?" Anyway, Abraham stopped asking at ten, and you know the rest of the story. Though Lot and his family were rescued, the cities were utterly destroyed.

Overcoming Weariness

We live in cities and countries that are not unlike Sodom and Gomorrah. We are in the midst of the greatest times of warfare that have existed in human history.

This is warfare, though it is not against flesh and blood. Our warfare is against powers that will make us so weary, unless we are careful to put on the whole armor each and every day. Sometimes we blame others for our weariness, when in fact it is the warfare that we have not discerned, defined, and identified that is robbing us of strength and spiritual self-esteem.

How do we overcome? We need to begin to see our identity as one who is established in Christ. Someone once said to me, "I would give anything to start my life over again." That is a wide-open statement. Still, God does make *all* things new. "You can have a brand-new life and start living as if everything is brand-new right

now," I responded (Lamentations 3:23).

Every single morning I can have a new measure of spiritual self-esteem. Every morning can bring me a new identity in Christ. No longer do I have to suffer from the plagues of my past and the plagues of people who have wounded me. Hallelujah! I have been delivered from all of that. I am what I am by the grace of God (1 Corinthians 15:10) and by the power of Jesus Christ. That is where I derive my spiritual self-esteem.

CONCLUSION

Don't accept what the devil says about you. Do not accept it, because you are just as good as anybody else. More than that, you are the apple of God's eye—the object of His desire (Zechariah 2:8). I didn't have anyone to tell me that when I was getting picked on in high school. I was so insecure that when I played guitar and sang in talent shows, I would play so softly that no one could hear me.

There are those who are blessed with having a good, natural self-image. Because of my circumstances, I would have pity parties for myself, and I depended on them to get by, but it just wasn't enough. Soon, I found I couldn't make it like that, and for a number of years I worked my heart out to overcome my poor self-image. As a result of my own efforts, I became a successful salesman. But that still wasn't enough.

I thank God that one day, I received Jesus Christ and got saved. Over the years, I have re-

ceived the Word of God and I continue to be filled with the Holy Spirit. My human self-esteem has been transformed into healthy spiritual self-esteem—godly self-esteem that will never let me stay down when I fail. By it, I have learned the power and privilege of rebound and recovery. I no longer have to prove myself every day; I just receive His new mercies every morning. Beyond all that, I have spiritual self-esteem, and I am relaxed and at rest in the power of Christ.