

The Lie of Self-Love

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves ...”
II Timothy 3:1-2

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

Introduction:

1. Jehovah is love, created love, and knows more about it than all psychologists and psychiatrists combined.
2. Our first goal is to explode the modern heresy and profanity of the self-love and self-esteem movement.
3. Our second goal is to apply the truth of the Bible about loving and serving others, the opposite of the heresy.
4. We have made a covenant before the Lord to improve our relationships more than ever before in 2004.
5. Since we studied I Corinthians 3 this morning, tonight will be a lesson in wood, hay, and stubble ministries. But as the apostle Paul warned, Jesus Christ will soon bring fire to test what is being taught in churches today.
6. Take Robert Schuller. The man is has no clue about the Bible, thinking hell is living with low self-esteem. His idea of preaching is to grin like an idiot and tell his audience they are beautiful, beautiful, beautiful people!

God Warned Against Self-Love

- A. Paul specifically warned Timothy that men would be lovers of their own selves (II Timothy 3:2).
 1. Please observe that this list of character traits describes the perilous times of the last days.
 2. Please observe that the trait of self-love is listed first in identifying these dangerous days.
 3. Please see the enemy is a new brand of effeminate, carnal Christian teachers (II Tim 3:1 – 4:4).
- B. Look out for these and related expressions: “feeling good about yourself,” “you are someone special,” “you are somebody,” “liking yourself,” “being true to yourself,” self-love, self-worth, self-esteem, self-image, self-confidence, self-acceptance, self-regard, self-concept, self-satisfaction, etc.
 1. This obsession with self may be summarized: “I am loveable, therefore I should love myself.”
 2. Of course, it includes this corollary: “I am loveable; I love myself; so you should love me, too.”
 3. Then we see another lie, that of unconditional love, “And you should love me unconditionally.”
- C. It is so accepted today that it is beyond question for many Christians, who should know better.
 1. It is assumed with the same arrogance men rejected Noah’s warnings and Columbus’s opinions.
 2. If some Christian PhD has said it, then most simple Christians quickly assume it as gospel.
 3. A popular song that exceeds even profane imaginations is “The Greatest Love of all.”
 4. How in the world can these perverts sing about self-love being the greatest love of all? Have they never heard of the love of God for His Son or for His elect, or our love of God and our neighbor?
- D. Assuming an evolutionary origin of life without a personal God, man is left without hope in this world and falls easy prey to making himself god through Rationalism, Deism, and Existentialism. The latter is applied in the self-love movement. The specific culprits were Alfred Adler, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and Eric Fromm, pagan thinkers every one of them!
- E. According to its advocates, self-love is absolutely vital to the proper functioning of human beings, and we are presently experiencing an epidemic of low self-esteem with terrible consequences being realized and with even greater ones being expected.
 1. Consequently, most all child training today assumes the fragile-child heresy about children.
 2. And most all marriage improvement instruction focuses on these absurd psychological needs.
 3. Our national criminal justice system is heavily influenced by this humanistic theory of need.
 4. Several states have organized commissions for promoting self-esteem in the state.
- F. Thankfully, a few men like Jay Adams, Martin Bobgan, and Paul Brownback have published books and other media exposing the heresy and those quasi-Christian teachers promoting it.

GOD EXALTS PROPER LOVE

- A. The Scriptures plainly show a great premium God put on love (Mark 12:28-34; I Cor 12:31; 13:13).
- B. Though not the purpose of this study, love is the greatest Christian virtue and emphasized above all.
- C. It is stated for New Testament saints as the bond of perfectness and royal law (Col 3:14; Jas 2:8).
- D. There is more written about love in the New Testament than any other Christian virtue or grace.
- E. Since love is so important in Christ's religion, we should be able to tell easily if self-love is right.

GOD CONDEMNED SELF-LOVE

- A. God alone is the only Being with value and worth by existence – true independence (Exodus 3:14).
 - 1. Scripture's theme from beginning to end is the glory of the Creator Himself (Pr 16:4; Rev 4:11).
 - 2. Men exist by God, through God, and to God (Rom 11:36). Man has no other destiny than this.
 - 3. John Baptist, greatest man ever born, said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).
- B. The Psalmist humbly questioned, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (Psalm 8:4.)
 - 1. Many today would condemn such ignorance and declare that man is somebody very important.
 - 2. God is so high, He must humble Himself to behold things in heaven and in earth (Psalm 113:6).
- C. David declared, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14).
 - 1. By the profane self-love emphasis, we should say, "I will praise me, for I am wonderfully made."
 - 2. A typical testimony by a Christian athlete sounds like this: "I want to thank the Lord for making me so special and giving me these extraordinary abilities that allow me to be the best there is!"
 - 3. Since everything we have is a gift from God, we should only esteem Him (I Corinthians 4:7).
- D. God wants men to love, to esteem, to have confidence, to glory, to boast, and so forth; but He wants them to do these things toward Him, not toward themselves (Ps 34:2). What a travesty of confusion!
- E. Man's efforts to glory in himself rather than glorying in God are not new at all (Romans 1:20-23).
 - 1. Self-love advocates like to deny man's total depravity, since it will surely reduce his self-esteem.
 - 2. Consider well that when a man professes himself to be wise that he will surely lose his mind.
 - 3. When man becomes proud in his imagination, God is about to darken his mind even further.
- F. God chooses men in His sovereignty to bring them all to a state of nothingness (I Cor 1:26-31).
 - 1. God chooses those who are nothing in the flesh to shame those who are something in the flesh.
 - 2. God rejects those who are something in the flesh to reveal they are truly nothing when exposed.
 - 3. God has arranged the universe in a way that no flesh shall ever glory before Him at all.
- G. God's holy and inspired prophets were severely deficient in self-esteem and self-image therapy (Gen 6:5; Job 11:12; 25:6; Psalm 62:9; Isaiah 40:17; 41:14; 45:9; 57:15; 66:2; Jeremiah 9:23-24; 13:1-10).
- H. Jesus was severely deficient in self-love and self-acceptance theory (Matt 5:3; 12:34; 15:10-20; 23:27,33; Luke 9:23-24; 14:26; 16:15; 18:9-14; John 3:5; 8:44; 12:25; 15:5).
- I. Paul was severely deficient in self-worth and self-confidence theory (Rom 7:8,24; 8:7-8; I Cor 3:18; 13:1-3; 15:9; II Cor 3:4-5; 12:9-11; Gal 6:3; Eph 3:8; I Tim 1:15; 6:20; II Tim 3:2).
- J. God commands our love and esteem of others, which requires lowering ourselves without conceit.
 - 1. Paul teaches us to esteem others and their things more than ourselves with a lowly mind, which is the very opposite of the selfish mindset of those worshipping self-esteem (Phil 2:3-4). Amen!
 - 2. We must get down to the level of others by ridding ourselves of superiority conceit (Rom 12:16).
 - 3. The Bible strongly sets forth giving to others as superior to receiving ourselves (Acts 20:35).
- K. God has clearly condemned in Scripture the proud and haughty spirit basic and essential to self-love.
 - 1. The raging pride of fallen man does not allow for any nonsense as low self-love or self-esteem.
 - 2. Low self-image, low self-esteem, and inferiority complexes are all nonsensical words attempting to describe an inherent obsession with humility in fallen sinners. I trow not! I don't think so!
 - 3. Scripture deals extensively with man's personality and emotions and relationships, but why is it totally silent as to the presumed crucial subject of self-love and higher self-esteem?
 - 4. With frequently repeated warnings of pride, why is Scripture so silent about the danger of men having low self-esteem and debilitating inferiority complexes?

5. If self-lovers verbalized all their feelings about themselves, what would others think of them?
 6. Whatever happened to the sin and vice of narcissism? Now it is considered a successful virtue!
 7. Arrogance, conceit, pride, selfishness, and self-will are no longer condemned as they once were. When was the last time you heard anyone at any level condemning these forgotten sins?
 8. While Scripture speaks of hating others in our depraved state before regeneration (Titus 3:3), why is it silent about self-hate and its presumed dire consequences for the human race?
 9. How will you build greater self-esteem when it is wrong to try (Prov 3:7; 12:15; 13:10; 14:16; 16:25; 25:27; 26:12; 27:2; Rom 12:3; II Cor 5:15; Gal 6:3; James 4:1-6; etc., etc.)?
 10. Love by its Scriptural definition precludes ambition or occupation with self (I Corinthians 13:5).
 11. Scripture teaches self-denial and self-death, rather than self-love and self-esteem (Luke 9:23-24).
 12. If you are obsessed with self, then learn about self-denial, self-mortification, self-rejection, etc.!
- L. Men with corrupt minds have tried to pervert and twist the word of God to support their humanistic philosophy and psychology borrowed from atheistic educators.
1. They claim self-love is necessary before being able to rightly love your neighbor (Mat 22:34-40).
 - a. These wicked persons use Jesus' words to teach that we must learn to love ourselves first.
 - b. This is a horrible and profane corrupting of a simple commandment of God and Jesus Christ.
 - c. Playing games with the summarizing commandments of the law is both foolish and profane.
 - d. The text has only two commands – love of God and neighbor. There is not a third command.
 - e. Love of self is universally assumed just like a man's love of his own body (Eph 5:28-29).
 - f. The "golden rule" is to treat others as you already know you want to be treated (Luke 6:31).
 - g. Jesus dealt with action here rather than mere feelings (Luke 10:25-37), since love is proper action. This becomes quite obvious when loving enemies (Matt 5:43-48).
 - h. The intensity of love is Christ's exhortation in the words "as thyself." Consider that the love of God should be with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength; and that love of neighbor should be with the great love a man already has for himself.
 2. Since God created us in His image, we must be very special beings very much like God.
 - a. These wicked persons presume that God created us for us and thinks we are mighty special.
 - b. They forget that since the fall of man we are born in the depraved image of Adam (Gen 5:3).
 - c. They forget that the worth of an image depends on the worth of the pattern, not the image.
 - d. God did not create for us; He created us for His own glory and pleasure (Pr 16:4; Rev 4:11).
 3. Since God redeemed us by His own Son, we must have an incredible degree of worth to Him.
 - a. These wicked persons presume God conceived and executed salvation for man's sake.
 - b. To think that God has redeemed us because of our great worth is ridiculous blasphemy.
 - c. God sent redemption for the display of His own glory (Eph 2:7; 5:25-27; Rom 9:22-24).
- M. If you want to be happy, then focus on God and others, and forget how you feel about yourself.
1. To believe that a positive self-image and high self-esteem is necessary for a happy life is to miss the point of this lesson and believe a ridiculous lie.
 - a. Unhappiness is caused by too much self-esteem, for others do not treat you nearly as well!
 - b. Depression is often caused by (1) punishment of others for not esteeming you high enough, (2) frustration for failure in light of excessive self-esteem, (3) guilt and frustration because your self-will conflicts with God's law, (4) unforgiven guilt due to more pride than can confess sin, (5) frustration against God for having given others advantages over you, and (6) pain and loneliness caused by others not loving you as much as you love yourself.
 - c. Unhappy people are depressed people; depressed people are often melancholy temperaments; and melancholy temperaments have an obsession with themselves and their own thoughts.
 - d. Suicide, the ultimate act of self-murder, is a selfish act of high self-love and self-esteem that seeks to punish others for not treating them as well as they think they should be treated.

- e. Rather than self-love and self-esteem teaching making ours a mature and resilient generation, consider (1) the neurotic condition of our generation as measured by new syndromes, pills, therapy, clinics, suicide, counselors, etc., (2) the inability of many war veterans to cope with their experiences, and (3) the almost complete breakdown of natural affection among other manifestations of a severe neurotic condition of the nation.
2. We are expressly told to think about others' things (Romans 12:10; Ephesians 4:2; Phil 2:3-4).
3. Love your children as the little foolish sinners they are (Psalm 51:5; 58:5; Proverbs 22:15).
 - a. Children want their own way from birth – they have too much self-love and self-esteem.
 - b. Put two children in a room with 100 toys and watch an exhibition of the sin of self-love!
 - c. Do not worry about their self-image – it is your job to conform it to Christ (Romans 12:1-2).
 - d. You deliver their souls from hell by beating rather than flattering children (Prov 23:13-14).
 - e. The rod and reproof build a child, according to God (forget Rogers and the rest of the humanistic fools), and you dare not leave a child to himself (Proverbs 29:15).
 - f. While fathers can discourage children through anger (Col 3:21), this danger is not due to their complex psychological makeup but rather due to obvious fatherly failure.
 - g. Despise and reject the lies of modern child training and let Scripture be your only guide.
 - h. Teach your children the essential lessons of self-denial and true charity and service to others.
4. Happiness and contentment are by-products of righteous behavior without regard to feelings.
 - a. You cannot produce self-satisfaction directly: it is confidence and peace through obedience.
 - b. God has subordinated satisfying feelings to the required action related to them.
5. The road to Utopia in the human race is to learn proper love toward God and others.
- N. Confidence is right; self-confidence is wrong. Faith and righteousness will give you true confidence.
 1. Self-confidence is sure to err, so the many warnings in Proverbs (Proverbs 15:22; 21:2; 26:12).
 2. Righteousness makes one bold by eliminating guilt and fear (Proverbs 28:1; Philippians 4:13).
 3. Faith in the promises of God will help build boldness (I Tim 3:13; I John 1:9; Hebrews 13:5).
- O. It is our highest priority and benefit to learn to love and serve others more than ourselves.
 1. Jesus Christ came into this world not to be ministered unto, but to minister to others (Mat 20:28).
 2. The greatest evidence of grace and the highest priority in the N.T. is loving and serving others.
 3. This must be taught to children by parental example and constant reminders to think of others.
 4. The greatest in the kingdom of heaven are those who are least and serve others (Mark 9:33-35).
 5. The golden rule is to treat others as you already know you want to be treated (Luke 6:31).
 6. Rather than thinking what others or your church can do for you, ask what you can do for them.
 7. The importance of this matter cannot be overstated for the conduct and training of our children.

Conclusion:

1. We have easily and totally exploded the heresy and myth of self-love and self-esteem commonly taught today.
2. We have soberly given ourselves a great project – to learn to love and think about others more than ourselves.

For further reading and study:

1. See the sermon outline, "I am Third": <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/Sermons/pdf/i-am-third.pdf>.
2. See the sermon outline, "The Definition of Love": <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/Sermons/pdf/definition-of-love.pdf>.
3. See the sermon outline, "Brotherly Love": <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/Sermons/pdf/brotherly-love-2.pdf>.
4. Internet article, "Love of self": <http://rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Letter/v2n2-1.htm>.
5. Internet article about Dobson: http://cnview.com/on_line_resources/james_dobson_and_the_gospel_of_self_esteem.htm.
6. Internet article, "Self-Esteem for Christians": <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/self-esteem-christians.html>.
7. Internet article, "Self-Esteem": <http://www.geocities.com/lords/sheep/self.html>.
8. Collection of verses debunking self-love: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/self-est/key.htm>.
9. List of recommended reading: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/recommen.html>.
10. Leading website combating the heresy: <http://www.psychoheresy-aware.org/bvself.html>.