

HAVING A HIGH OPINION OF OURSELVES

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(All quotations from Scripture are taken from the King James Version).

HAVING A HIGH OPINION OF OURSELVES

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE: WHO CONDEMNS US?

How do we see ourselves? What do we think of ourselves?

At different times, in different moods, in different states of mind we may give a different answer.

Of course what really matters is not how we see ourselves, but how God sees us.

Has the following ever been a summary of how you have considered yourself at some point?...

“Oh I am fed up with myself. I am useless, I am pathetic as a Christian. I am so far from what I ought to be. I don’t pray enough, read the bible enough, witness enough, or praise You enough Lord”

Whether we realise it or not this can be one of the subtle forms of condemnation.

At other times we may find it ‘hard’ trying to come into the Lord’s presence: -
“I feel so unclean, so unworthy, how could the Lord look on me?”

Later we will look more at these examples of these condemnation, but let me first ask ‘who actually condemns us (the Christian)?

God does not condemn us: - “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.” (Romans 8:v1).

So we see that the Lord does not condemn us. Do not be unduly concerned about the bit that says “Who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit”, this does not mean that there is a condition attached i.e. that God does not condemn us when we are walking after the Spirit, but he does condemn us when we are walking after the flesh. No, this ‘who walk after not the flesh but after the Spirit’ in this context is a description of every believer as shown in Romans 8:v 4.

It is actually the devil that condemns us: -

“...For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. (Revelation 12:v10). See also 1 Timothy 3:v 6. So we need to resist the devils accusations in the name of Jesus (James 4:v7). When the devil condemns us let us remember he is a liar through and through (John 8:v44).

The devil is not the only one that condemns us, sometimes we may make the mistake of condemning ourselves. (1 John 3:v20). Finally, sadly sometimes other people may condemn us. When doing so they are obviously speaking what the devil wants them to say not what God wants them to say.

Now that we have looked at who condemns us I want to dig a little deeper to consider forms of condemnation we may encounter and what our response should be.

Identifying Condemnation

Perhaps when we identify more clearly how the devil accuses us, we will recognise his lies and overcome him with God's truth.

Condemnation is not to be confused with conviction. Condemnation is from the enemy, conviction is from God. Condemnation seeks to pull us down and bind us, conviction has the end purpose of lifting us up and setting us free.

When there is sin in our lives God convicts us so that we can once again get right with Him and continue walking with Him. The Holy Spirit shows us we have sinned in order that we should repent and be forgiven.

In contrast condemnation doubts God's forgiveness and wants us to make us feel unclean. The intention of condemnation is to keep our eyes off the Lord and on ourselves where we despair.

Now I want to give four examples of condemnation each of which we will review in detail in the following four chapters. You will note that I have already referred to the first two examples at the beginning of this chapter as follows:-

1. When we feel that we are really bad. "I am so unclean so unworthy" Or the devil may accuse us... "you are proud....selfish....filthy....etc....", general sweeping statements with little supporting evidence.
2. Where we feel condemned that we are not doing enough for God, "not praying, reading the bible, witnessing enough, etc...
3. We feel that there must be something wrong inside of us that is not pleasing to God.
4. We may have committed a sin and we feel God will never forgive us.

God does not want us to be weighed down with statements like the above. He does not want us to live in shame. In the next chapter two we will start with example 1. above.

CHAPTER TWO: PERFECT IN CHRIST

Sometimes we may feel so bad.. so unclean..proud..selfish...etc. We feel as though God can't possibly look upon us and accept us.

But are we really bad in God's eyes? Does God see that we have a sinful nature?

What we need to do is dig deeper into the bible and get our theology right; See what God says about us.

The truth is we used to be bad, proud, selfish, filthy....all of those things, but now that we are saved we are no longer:-

We "... were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2v1). Our sinful nature, the flesh, could not please God. Our utmost best was tainted with sin. God loved us and wanted us to be reconciled to Himself, but for that we needed to be forgiven for our sins and we needed to become perfect. Then God could dwell with us. We could never achieve this ourselves we needed a Saviour. And so "The Father sent the son to be the saviour of the world."(1 John 4 v 14). Jesus suffered and died to forgive us and to deliver us from sin.

Our old sinful nature was beyond reforming, it could not be patched up and made better it had to be done away with altogether. Romans 6 says that God destroyed this sinful nature. He did so by crucifying us. Let us look at the scripture:-

"Knowing this that our old man is crucified with him that the body of sin might be destroyed that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6 v 6).

We were crucified when Jesus hung on the cross, at this time we were placed in Him. This is stated in Romans 6 v 3,4 & 5. This is quite incredible to think that we were in Jesus when He died and our old nature which was totally submerged with sin was destroyed. We do not necessarily have to understand this, but just know that's what the bible says. (See also Galatians 2 v 20).

So the bad part of us has been taken away, destroyed.

JESUS OUR LIFE

But God didn't just deliver us from sin and leave it at that. If He had done we would have been in the position that Adam was in before he sinned, innocent, but nothing more. No righteousness, no holiness.

What God did is He gave us Jesus. Now Jesus lives in us (Colossians 1 v 27). Because we have Jesus we have His life (1 John 5 vs. 11 & 12).

Not only does Jesus live in us, but we also live in Him: -

"But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus...." (1 Corinthians 1 v 30).

So now when God sees us He sees Jesus in us and us in Jesus. He sees Jesus as our righteousness. He accepts us and receives us because He sees us in Jesus. Jesus is very happy to present us to the Father, forgiven, cleansed and faultless. (Jude v 24)

We are told that we should consider ourselves as God sees us:-

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord". (Romans 6 v 11).

When we realise that Jesus is our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1 v 30) the foundation of our thinking changes. We understand that our righteousness is not obtained by doing good things and refraining from bad things, but Jesus is our righteousness. (Philippians 3 v 9)

But one might question “If the old sinful nature has been destroyed how is it that Christians can still sin (as shown in 1 John 1 vs 8 & 9)”? The answer to this is that although we have been delivered from the old nature, sin, which is ‘alien’ to us, can abide in our souls if we allow it to. Back to Romans ch 6:-

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof,” (Romans 6 v 12).

Let us not yield our members to sin, but yield ourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead. (Romans 6 v 13). For sin shall not have dominion over us (Romans 6 v 14).

FOOTNOTES:-

“God sees us in Christ Jesus and therefore we are perfect in His sight”:-

We can know this truth in a form, but sometimes it takes revelation from God to see it clearly. And when we have seen it may take another while before we understand it so that it becomes part of our experience. It is no good striving to acquire this knowledge in our own strength.

Finally, wonderful and important as this truth is let us not place too much emphasis on it at the expense of all other truths and doctrines in the bible; a mistake which I have made in the past.

Incidentally the Holy Spirit does not tend to make sweeping generalised statements like “You are proud”. When He convicts us He reminds us of some specific incident when we acted or thought proudly, so that we repent of that wrong thing we have done.

CHAPTER THREE: STRIVING TO DO MORE

Now let us consider the times when we examine ourselves and we may think:-
“I’m not doing enough for the Lord. I’m not reading the bible enough, praying, witnessing enough...etc. etc.”

What we are doing here is concentrating on our performance. We may feel fed up with ourselves because we are not very holy. We feel we must do more to be like Jesus. Before I continue let me clarify what I mean.... Yes I agree that as Christians we should desire to do more for the Lord.... But whilst that is true we should not fall into condemnation when we compare our present state to how we know we ought to be. I am not for one moment suggesting that we should be self-satisfied and not be interested in doing our best to serve the Lord.

If we blame ourselves severely that we are not doing enough then we may try harder to do more. We might try doing great works in order to show that we love the Lord. We may strive to be better and better, but all the time we feel that whatever we do is unsatisfactory. And so then we get more and more frustrated with ourselves.

What we have to appreciate is that our right-standing before God is not based on the works we do. God accepts us and receives us by His grace because we are in Christ Jesus. Jesus is our righteousness and makes us holy before God.

What we also have to understand is that in our own strength we can do nothing. (John 15 v 5) We need Christ’s strength to do all that we need to do. We can’t pray or serve or anything without Him. But as we recognise Jesus freely gives us everything we need we will do lots of good works.

I’ll finish this chapter with an illustration which I remember reading in the book ‘The Normal Christian Life’ by Watchman Nee (re-told in my own words: -):-

A man who could not swim fell into a river. He was spluttering and crying for help as he kept disappearing under the water. All should have been well, because a friend who was a strong swimmer, was close by on the riverbank. But this friend did not jump into the water, but just stood on the bank and watched the man struggling in the water. Several long moments past by and it looked like the spluttering man was going to drown. Then at the last minute the strong swimmer jumped into the river and grabbed his friend and pulled him to safety. But why had this man waited so, so long before he came to the rescue? The answer – when the man fell into the water he was panicking and struggling wildly: If the friend had jumped in then the man would have fiercely grabbed hold of him and dragged him under the water with himself. So the friend waited until he was worn out. When he had ceased struggling he could be reached and lifted out.

...This is how we can be as Christians, we can strive trying to do our best, but all our efforts can be in vain. Only when our own strength is exhausted do we cease struggling. Then the Lord is able to reach down and lift us up... and we lean on His strength.

CHAPTER FOUR: SELF ANALYSIS

The next example of condemnation I want to consider is when we think that there is something wrong with ourselves personally. Let me explain this by way of an example of what we might be thinking:-

“I’ve prayed for the Lord to move mightily in my place of everyday work, but I haven’t seen what I’ve been wanting....Or ...I’m not walking in the victory I should be walking in. I am not seeing people challenged, souls saved....OR...I’m not like the Christian in this book I’ve just been reading....The reason I’ve not seen the Lord moving and using me must be because of me. I am the problem, I’m all wrong and so the Lord can’t use me.....I must not be so much like ‘this’ but I should be more like that....”.

What I am saying is that although it is good for us to desire to see the Lord using us we should not condemn ourselves when we don’t see Him using us. Just the same as condemnation is not the starting place to cause us to do more for the Lord so condemnation is not the thing that motivates us to be used more by God. Condemnation is not one of Gods own devices which He uses to make us better. The ways that God uses are grace, love and encouragement. There is a difference between having a burden to see God moving, which comes from the Holy Spirit and feeling condemned because we are not seeing God moving.

When we feel that there is problem with ourselves (and that we are not in Gods will) we may turn to heavy self-examination in order to find the problem in us and sort it out.

Initially our self-psychology may appear to bring release and help, but after a while we can get bogged down and reach a point of despair. We may search within, then we find something....so we pray about it and we think “That was the solution now I’ll be okay”. But later we find we’re not okay so we have to keep searching until we find something else.

Let us not try to sort ourselves out. Let us not try to reach the place where the Lord wants us (so that He can use us) without the help of the Lord. Let us not try to beat God in dealing with sin in our lives and areas in our lives where we need to change. Let us rather let the Holy Spirit do it. We can just rest and allow the Lord to chasten us and correct us and work in us for His good will and pleasure (Philippians 2 v 13).

We should not lean on our own understanding (Proverbs 3 v 5), the Lord will show us what He wants us to see:-

“In Thy Light shall we see Light” (Psalm 36 v 9).

God has given us brains which He wants us to use, but we should allow Him to lead us in our thinking, rather than run ahead of him.

The Lord would say to us that we are ‘alright’, until He tells us of an instance where we have gone wrong. The following is a nice quote:-

“I’m in the will of God until He tells me I’m out of it.”

He is well able to show us when we step out of His will. The Lord keeps us (Jude v 24), He keeps us in His will....if we are willing to be kept.

And if you are concerned that the Lord is not able to use you to do mighty things, have patience. Wait on the Lord and He will strengthen you to do His will.

Once again I'd like to finish with an illustration, this one is about self-analysis... you may have heard it before:-

A man was sitting in his house one day and the Holy Spirit said "come on lets go down into the cellar." The Holy Spirit led the way holding a torch into the pitch-black cellar. The sharp beam of light from the torch picked out some bags on a shelf, one bag at a time. Each bag had a label on it. The beam remained on one particular bag which was the one the Holy Spirit had decided to pick. The Holy Spirit lifted it off the shelf and carried it up the steps and into the light. The bag was opened and the Holy Spirit showed the man what was to be done with the contents inside. The man enjoyed the episode and so the next day decided to pay another visit to the cellar. The Holy Spirit wasn't around, but rather than wait the man decided to go down on his own. He didn't have a torch so he took a candle. Unlike the torch the candle did not have a sharp beam that shined on one bag brightly, however it did allow him to see lots of bags at the same time, albeit only very dimly. He saw a bag which he wanted to investigate and so started to carry it upstairs. But the bag was too heavy and halfway up he fell backwards off the stairs and the bag fell on top of him and pinned him down.

We can be like this man. We can go down into the cellar of our hearts without the Holy Spirit, but if we do so we will only get into a muddle.

CHAPTER FIVE: FORGIVENESS

And then there are the times when we sin.

When we sin we need the Lord's forgiveness and mercy. We must humble ourselves and ask Him to forgive us.

Sometimes when we have sinned we may say.... "Oh, I've done it again." (But God would say to us.... "Done what again?") We feel bad that we've let the Lord down again.

Or sometimes we may do such an awful thing and we feel so ashamed. We find it hard to believe that the Lord could actually forgive us for doing such a rotten thing. We feel that the sin has not been washed away and forgotten.

Well, let us not rely on our feelings, what does the bible say?:-

"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 v 9)

When we sin let us really hold on to this verse. Let us really believe that God does forgive us according to this promise.

Remember the Lord is so merciful (Psalm 103 v 10-12...+ v 3) God is greater than our biggest sin. He can forgive and cleanse us from the biggest sin.

Thank and praise the Lord.

Summary of Part One

God does not condemn us. It is easier for us to believe this in theory, but sometimes harder to accept in practice.

Let us really believe Romans 8 v 1:-

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

At times we may live as though this verse was not true. Let us rather take this verse deep down into our hearts and minds and believe it is true.

"For if our heart condemn us God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things." (1 John 3 v 20)

"... Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."
(Romans 14 v 22)

I hope you will join me in part two.

PART TWO

Part one outlined that God does not condemn us and so we have peace with Him. The chapters in this second part cover a selection of thoughts which loosely follow on from this.

CHAPTER SIX: ACCEPTING OURSELVES.

It may be that we have trouble accepting and loving the 'natural' things about ourselves. For example... "Sometimes I feel fed up with myself as a person. I Dislike aspects of my personality. I'm fed up with my particular faults and weaknesses. I wish I was more like 'this' and less like 'that'. I wish I was more talented. Nobody else seems to have the hang-ups I have, everybody else seems just fine."

Some of us at times may have an inferiority complex, having a really low opinion of ourselves. This can lead to us feeling unhappy.

But on the other hand if we felt completely satisfied with ourselves and we had no weaknesses whatsoever, we might get proud and start glorying in ourselves: - the bible tells us we are not to glory in ourselves: -

"That no flesh should glory in His presence."(1 Corinthians 1 v 29)

"That according as it is written He that glorrieth let him glory in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1 v 31)

Actually the reason we may feel low may well be because of pride in us. We feel hurt because we want to be able to glory in ourselves, but can't. Surely if we only wanted to glory in the Lord we wouldn't care what weaknesses and faults we had anyway, because we would not be interested in glorying ourselves.

So what does the bible tells us about accepting ourselves? Here's some scriptures: -

"Know ye that the Lord he is God: It is He that hath made us and not we ourselves." (Psalm 100 v 3)

"Nay but O man who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it why hast thou made me thus?"(Romans 9 v 20)

God has made us. Let us not criticise His handywork and say that He should have made us different to the way He has. Let us be content with the strengths and weaknesses God has given us: -

"...And be content with such things as ye have,"(Hebrews 13 v5)

So let us accept without regret our faults and weaknesses. Stop allowing your faults to be so important in your thinking. Don't be so interested in what you haven't got, but be more interested in who you are and what you have got.

Here follows an illustration of this point: -

Tommy was really happy with all his presents he got for Christmas. A few days later he saw his friends who told him all the things they got as well. Then he began to feel fed up when he realised all the things they got which he didn't get. He began to sulk at the thought of the things which he might have had, but didn't. His mum got a little annoyed at his ingratitude and said, "Tommy I wish you'd concentrate more on what you did get for Christmas rather than what you didn't get."

We can be like this. We can be so wrapped up with our shortcomings that we forget the things God has blessed us with.

Maybe we have weaknesses to keep us humble. There is a difference between being humble and having an inferiority complex.

As for our talents... whose glory are those? Did we achieve our abilities in our own strength.?:-

“... And what hast thou that thou didn't not receive? Now if thou didst receive it why dost thou glory as if thou hast not received it?” (See all of 1 Corinthians 4vs 6 & 7).

Let us therefore give our talents and our weaknesses back to God and ask Him to use them for His glory.

Be glad that God made you 'you'. Do not wish you were someone else. He is glad that He made you 'you'.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ‘AND HE LOVES ME’

Let us take time here to consider that God loves us.

Here are three reasons that we can know that God loves us: -

1. God is love (1 John 4 v 8)

2. God has demonstrated his love: -

But God condemneth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. (Romans 5 v 8)

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God. (1 John 3 v 1)

Beloved if God so loved us we ought also to love one another. (1 John 4 v 11)

3. God states His love:-

....Ye are of more value than many sparrows (Luke 12 v 7)

But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered (also Luke 12 v 7)

If the Lord is interested in such a trivial thing as how many hairs we have how much more interested He must be in more important things about us.

We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4 v 19)

...For He careth for you (1 Peter 5 v 7)

(See also John 14 v 21, John 13 v 34 and John 15 vs 9 & 10, to name but a few more)

It is good to be awakened to the importance of the Lords love towards us. His love for us is very very real and very very strong. Despite it all He loves us. Whether we see it all or whether we see very little He loves us. His love does not depend upon our performance, He loves us whether or not we are in His will.

We are important, precious and valuable in His eyes. Everything He does for us He does because He loves us. He only ever does anything for us because He loves us. God is not against us but for us (Romans 8 v 31). God is not trying to trip us up. He does not enthusiastically wait for us to get things wrong so that He can pick holes in us. He is not waiting for us to fall, He is not wanting us to fail; No He loves us, He is determined that we should get things right, He is determined that we should make it all the way. He encourages us on and brings us into that place of beauty.

It is important to God that He loves us. And so He wants this to be important to us. He wants us to appreciate His love and enjoy His love.

The Christian life is not just about “what I did for God” it is also (and more importantly) about “what God did for us”... as a result of His love.”

The only reason you and I have got this far and the only reason we are going to make it to the end of the course is because God loves us.

CHAPTER EIGHT: GLORIOUS

To start with this book was about 'No Condemnation'. I looked at how God accepts us and how we should accept ourselves. But God doesn't just accept us. As well as being 'justified' God has made us 'glorious'. We are absolutely wonderful in God's eyes. He sees us as being very precious and very important. He has a high opinion of who we are.

The bible describes us as being glorious: -

"....And whom he justified them He also glorified." (Romans 8 v 30)

"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 v 18)

We are glorious in Christ Jesus. We may not be able to see it with our own eyes, but let us believe it by faith.

Sometimes we may think that it is not 'Christian' to think of ourselves as being wonderful.

There is an argument that runs like this: -

"It is pride if I think I'm wonderful, only God is good. Only the Lord is worthy, wonderful and beautiful therefore He alone must have all the praise, therefore it is wrong to think that I am wonderful and to give myself attention.

Me - I'm nothing. I'm just a worm, I'm wretched. There is nothing good in me I must deny myself."

The above is quite a strong argument. However I would say that we are wonderful to the glory of God. We are due no praise in this matter as we have done nothing of ourselves it is all done by the grace of God.

If the Lord had made us drab He would be less glorified than if He had made us glorious. When the bible talks about 'denying ourselves' it is talking about denying our self will and our self-strength when it is not in harmony with the will of God, it is not talking about denying what God has created (us)for His glory.

CHAPTER NINE: OTHER PEOPLE

So we see that God has a high opinion of us and so we should each have a high opinion of ourselves.

All may be fine until we walk through the church doors! Suddenly we find that not all of our Christian brothers and sisters think so highly of us. Not everybody may like us. And so maybe we may think “They must be right about me, I’m not so wonderful after all.” But let us not be discouraged. Let us remember what God says about us.

If someone does not appreciate us we should not worry. There is not really much we can do about it. We should try to please God and just hope that we end up pleasing them.

Don’t worry about what other people think about you. ‘The fear of man bringeth a snare’ (Proverbs 29 v 25).

Here’s an interesting verse: - ‘Let no man despise thee.’ (Titus 2 v 15)

On our part we should treat all people as best as we can. We should try to view people as God views them. We should accept them and love them. We should treat others as we would like them to treat us (Luke 6 v 31)

God accepts us as we are and others should learn to do so also. If they don’t then that’s their problem.