

Fresh Light on Self-Esteem

“The second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

(Mark 12:31)

Jesus brought forth the kingdom perspective of the issue of self. For the scripture clearly taught, “love your neighbour as yourself,” not the twisted, carnal interpretation: “First learn to love yourself, and then love your neighbour.” Rather, the Bible is instructing us saying, “It is obvious you already have love yourself. Now, learn to love your neighbour in the same way and same degree as you have loved thyself.”

When you love self above your brethren, it was an expression of lust. On the other hand, if you loved your brethren above yourself, it is a genuine expression of divine love: “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us: And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” (1 Jn 3:16) The world put self on the limelight, on the showcase. The promotion and obsession with self often get the Christians into trouble. We don’t need greater self-esteem. And we certainly don’t need more self-love. We are in critical need of Calvary love and the revelations of His redemption for our total salvation including the healing of the wounds of the old self inflicted by past afflictions.

Jesus uphold the moral principle of the kingdom: “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” (Lk 9:23) This kingdom instruction has never taken root in Christianity. For we never want to deny our soulish desires issuing from our self-life. Notice Jesus did not say, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him esteem himself.” Or “let him love himself.” Rather, He advocates the denial of self. In the original language, the word ‘deny’ means to repudiate, to disdain, to disown, to forfeit, to totally disregard.” It was never an easy thing to obey but very few saints matured in this narrow way of life.

In reality, the basic problem in our lives is not our spouse. It is not our pastor or boss. It is not our neighbours. It is not our upbringing. It is not low self-esteem. Neither was it due to poor self-image. It is the refusal to mortify the works of the flesh (Rom 6:11-14; 8:13). It is the subtle overwhelming love of ourselves. We care for our reputation, what others think of us. So we rather please men and offend our God.

Hence, to walk in the practical discipleship conduct, we will always be confronted with the ultimate choice in life between pleasing ourselves and pleasing God: “...not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.” (Col 3:22,23).

Honouring His Name