

Problem: The Christian industrial complex has given us Christian knockoffs of everything from pop-music to “testa-mints” it has also given us celebrity pastors known because their name or fan base- 1 Cor 10:10-18 we have allowed the world to tell us the church who is great- who has authority who we should listen to and why. we need to listen to whom the Lord commends

Text:
Brotherr
James,

*James father of Judas (not Iscariot)/son of Alphaeus not prominent enough -acts 1:13
not the brother of John - Matt 10:2->acts 12:2 -killed by Herod;
another more prominent James Acts 12:17; 15:13, 19
Head of Jerusalem church and Paul's ally - Acts 21:17-19; Galatians 2:2, 6, 9
brother of Christ -> Gal 1:19; -Mark 6:3*

The ancient church historian, Eusebius, describes the events leading up to James's final confrontation with his opponents happening around AD 62.

But after Paul, in consequence of his appeal to Caesar, had been sent to Rome by Festus, the Jews, being frustrated in their hope of entrapping him by the snares which they had laid for him, turned against James, the brother of the Lord ... Leading him into their midst they demanded of him that he should renounce faith in Christ in the presence of all the people. But, contrary to the opinion of all, with a clear voice, and with greater boldness than they had anticipated, he spoke out before the whole multitude and confessed that our Savior and Lord Jesus is the Son of God. But they were unable to bear longer the testimony of the man who, on account of the excellence of ascetic virtue and of piety which he exhibited in his life, was esteemed by all as the most just of men, and consequently they slew him.¹

Josephus reports that James was simply stoned,² but Eusebius recounts that he was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple, and then beaten to death with a club.

Slave

a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

another reason-> Mark 3:21, 31-35 (were not totally on board with Jesus) ; John 7:1-6 (in fact didn't believe)

he saw Him?

1 Cor 15:1-7; Acts 1:14 -saw His true status

Why slave - no autonomous freedom -slaves of righteousness Himself - Rom 6:15-23

*James learned from His brother's humility about real greatness - Matt 20:25-28 - point of his book
—> James 3:13-17*

James witnessed this for himself - Phil 2:1-11 - example of Christ

Messenger

To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: ¶ Greetings.

what do we see?

The half brother of the Lord of the universe presents himself as a slave bringing a message to a displaced people facing persecution. why should they listen to Him?

->James has no presumption -no claim to authority but one -and it is not one many of us tend to wear proudly. slave. He comes to us boasting not of his pedigree but of his posture.

Real greatness is seen not in our pedigree but in our posture

Moses learned this the hard way

miraculous birth Ex 2:1-9; royalty Exodus 2:10; he spent his first 40 years learning he was a somebody and when the time came to deliver his people he came with his status Ex 2:11-14

Ex 3:1-11 - he learned over the next 40 years he was a nobody

Deut 34:5-12 - so in the last 40 years God could show the world what He could do with a somebody who knew they were a nobody

James comes wearing the greatest title any Christian can claim -slave of Christ

Numbers 12:1-9 -> God's servant, His slave -> Title from Abraham all the way to the apostles and James -> gal 1:10; Rom 1:1; Phil 1:1

Main Idea:

The greatest title any Christian can wear is slave of Christ

Implication:

Real greatness is seen not in our pedigree but in our posture

Application:

never forget that the symbol of Christianity is the cross not the crown - embrace it really and truly. because the only crown we have been promised this side of eternity is the crown of thorns— here is my question? ARE YOU WILLING TO LIVE AND WORK FOR ANOTHER'S GLORY?

Action:

look around you -what is the job no one wants to do? seek it out and do it - set up, prayer, children church, signs.

Read the following articles for discussion topics and ways to tangibly apply this message in your lives

<http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god/church/features/28236-when-jesus-meets-tmz>

<http://skyejethani.com/the-rise-fall-of-celebrity-pastors/>

<http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/2014/03/18/9-thoughts-on-celebrity-pastors-new-calvinism-etc/>

here is a relevant paper i wrote some time ago that might spark some discussion:

*But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.
For men will be lovers of self...2 Timothy 3:1-2*

*For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly
of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has
allotted to each a measure of faith. Romans 12:3*

Introduction

The modern movement in our church towards self-esteem and 'me' centered theology is evidence of the Satanic worldview invading our churches today. Self help books bombard the shelves of Christian bookstores and even Bibles are being marketed and organized with self-help in mind. Many lessons taught in churches today are gearing towards the *felt needs* of congregants, sometimes brutally taking Scripture out of context in its application. While it is necessary to point out that this paper does not argue against having a positive view of oneself, it does argue that this self-emphasis, as seen in our churches today, distorts the basic truths about Christianity. The words of Anthony Hoekema, are an excellent way to begin this discussion:

The Christian self image is never an end in itself. It is always a means to the end of living for God, for others, and for the preservation and development of God's creation. It leads us outside ourselves. It delivers us from the preoccupation with ourselves and releases us so that we may happily serve God and others.¹

¹ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 111.

This proper view of ‘self’ however seems to be at odds with the rest of the modern world and most recently the Christian culture at large in America.² This paper makes the argument that a proper Biblical view of ‘self’ will always be in the context of an outside relationship; whether it is with God or fellow man, it should always be viewed in the context of grace to be acted out with others. In other words, self-esteem is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

Biblical Self Image

Man’s relationship to himself is one that underlies all others, and makes possible the proper performance of relation toward God and others.³ This concept is rooted in Creation and is seen in man’s image bearing responsibilities. At the beginning point of Creation, before the Fall, man must have had a positive view of himself. This can be seen in the fact that he was without guilt and was naked with his wife without shame (Gen. 2:25). Man was in perfect fellowship with woman, God, and creation. The Fall happened when man and women esteemed themselves worthy, without God, to be like God himself. This temptation was one of pride, and is the trademark sin of Satan, where man is told to esteem himself more highly than he should. Satan himself demonstrates this in his own fall when he says:

I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.

Isaiah 14:12-14

This fall should remind us of the danger of esteeming ourselves worthy without God.

² www.issuesetc.org/resource/journals/v2n1.htm

³ Hoekema, 102.

After the Fall there was a two-fold perversion of the self-image, says Hoekema.⁴ This manifested itself in either an inordinate heightening or lowering of man's view of himself. This meant that man, at this point on, either viewed himself with hatred, ignoring the image he still imperfectly bore, or he viewed himself with the sinful pride that caused his fall in the first place. In the first case, man's negative self-image began immediately after the fall when Adam and Eve realized that they were both naked and their eyes were opened (Gen. 3:7).

Adam and Eve must have quickly read the self help book entitled, *Making Your Own Sin Covering: Using What You Have to Be like God*, because they tried to cover up their shame and sin with fig leaves. This is the religion of man and is man's futile way of self-improvement that is so prevalent today. Man's positive self view, from that point forward, could only properly be viewed in light of God's all sufficient grace as pictured in the animal skins He made for them. D. G. Lindsay, in his work, *Foundations for Creationism*, has this to say regarding this subject:

God's clothing of man with animal skins symbolized His desire to mend the broken relationship between Himself and man. The covering or clothing of our sin has always required a garment paid for with the shedding of blood. By giving Adam and Eve skins for clothing, God gave them a physical symbol of spiritual salvation. This was the first blood sacrifice made as a covering for sin.⁵

This act is one that should cultivate true humility while at the same time freeing one to have a positive self-image within the bounds of God's grace. Here it is precisely the context of relation to God that is the source for self-esteem. This is fulfilled in the New Testament through the shed blood of Christ where in the redemptive process we see the perverted image of God in man being progressively renewed.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Lindsay, D. G. (1998, c1990). *Foundations for creationism*. Dallas: Christ for the Nations.

The 'Me' Centered Church

Unfortunately however, man's perversion of healthy self-image can be seen in these last days invading the Christian culture. If Satan himself wrote a book entitled, *You Can Be Like God: 7 Steps to Being like God through the Champion Within*, it would blend flawlessly in today's top ten Christian best sellers. Here are four of the top ten most popular Christian books today, according to About.com:

Captivating: Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman's Soul, by John & Stasi Eldredge; this Christian-based view of feminine liberation encourages women to connect with their inner selves and discover the strength and beauty to live fully. **Wild at Heart**, by John Eldredge, is a daring, Christian perspective about men, encouraging men of God to accept the wild, sometimes dangerous - not destructive - person within. **Blue Like Jazz**, by Donald Miller, are short non-religious essays about an inward journey toward the Christian life. **Your Best Life Now: 7 Steps to Living at Your Full Potential**, by Joel Osteen is a self-help guide offering a seven-step program, based on spiritual principles, to leading a more meaningful and rewarding life on a daily basis.⁶

Not one of these books is written from a God centered theology but all seem to be written from a man centered one, where the focus is on self not God. At this point, Timothy Wallace's definition of a 'me' centered theology is appropriate.

It magnifies the gift and the recipient's possession and enjoyment of the gift, often forgetting the Giver altogether and sees the purpose of creation as largely for man's pleasure, and so often assumes some measure of perceived entitlement or "right" to some quality or possession in life. It sees one's good deeds as a dutiful effort to please God and earn favor or respect from God (and/or men) and adds to these (again) some measure of prideful self-congratulation (however well-hidden) for doing works for God. It tends to put the cross behind one and renders some measure of priority to nurturing one's self-esteem, self-image, and personal worth. It tends to assign legitimacy to—and justify—

⁶ <http://christianity.about.com/od/christianbooks/tp/christianbooks.htm>

selected thinking, feelings and intentions, in spite of any evident conflict with the God's Word.⁷

In light of this list of qualities, the previous list of top selling Christian books falls short of a Biblical perspective. It would be remiss to say that these books are inherently evil, but they do demonstrate a trend in Christianity today to want to focus on self. In many cases one's position in Christ seems to be de-emphasized while one's inherent attributes seem to be highlighted. Again, a positive view of self is not bad. In fact, a proper Biblical perspective will lend itself to this very thing, but it is a stark perversion of our position in Christ as people of worth to focus on ourselves as the end in itself.

As mentioned earlier, challenging self-emphasis flies in the face of popular Christianity.

Don Mazat, in his paper on self-image, demonstrates this fact beautifully. He says:

Focusing upon "self" and enlarging "self" appeals to our sinful, human nature. We love to esteem self, to boast of the integrity of self, to read "Christian" self-help books, to sing of how much self loves Jesus, to attend a church service that is dedicated to the improvement of self, and to follow Bible teachers and evangelists who make self feel very spiritual... There would be no problem with any of these "self" issues if Christianity entailed striving to attain a level of morality by following a set of rules and laws... If we succeeded in becoming committed, first-class Christians, we would have reason for self-esteem and feeling good about ourselves. We could praise the righteousness of self, and boast of the integrity of self.⁸

In effect, when worthiness is attained through even a little bit of self-effort, it gives credit to man not God. In the grace centered theology of the New Testament however, there can be no room for this exaltation of man for the Bible from beginning to end is about the exaltation of God not man.

⁷ <http://www.timothywallace.com/worldview/theology.asp>

⁸ <http://www.issuesetc.org/resource/journals/v2n1.htm#What>

Tell this to Pastor Robert Schuller, author of the book *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation*. In it, he makes the audacious statement that, “any creed, any biblical interpretation ... that assaults and offends the self-esteem of persons is heretically failing to be truly Christian no matter how ... undergirded it might be with biblical references.”⁹ In explaining this theology of the self, he goes on to deny the very sinfulness of man at all with this pronouncement:

I don't think that anything has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality, and hence counterproductive to the evangelistic enterprise, than the unchristian, uncouth strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition.¹⁰

If this were the only gentleman espousing such silly ideas that would be one thing but, Dr. Ray Anderson, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, tops even this with the following:

If our sin is viewed as causing the death of Jesus on the cross, then we ourselves become victims of a 'psychological battering' produced by the cross. When I am led to feel that the pain and torment of Jesus death is due to my sin, I inflict upon myself spiritual and psychological torment.¹¹

What Saith the Scriptures?

If Dr. Anderson is right, then Jesus must have been wrong when He told the parable of the two debtors in the seventh chapter of Luke. The main teaching is that a man that has been forgiven much will be thankful to the degree that he realizes his indebtedness to the forgiver. In many respects this brings up the notion of confession. The word, *homologein*, in Greek

⁹ Robert Schuller, *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation* (Waco, Word, 1983), 135-136.

¹⁰ Schuller, 159-160.

¹¹ Ray S. Anderson, *The Gospel According to Judas*, (Colorado Springs, Helmer and Howard, 1991), 99.

conveys the idea of seeing things as God does and literally means to confess.¹² The Bible expresses itself clearly in saying that a true picture of our depravity will lead to a truer appreciation for our position in Christ. The above quotes destroy this idea and, like Satan's temptation in the garden, lead man astray in the proudful sin of self exaltation. A true picture of self-image is pictured in the following prayer found in the Gospel of Luke:

And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' Luke 18:13

This prayer makes an unfortunate contrast to the best selling prayer of Jabez, contained in an obscure section of first Chronicles:

Oh, that You would bless **me** indeed, and enlarge **my** territory, that Your hand would be with **me**, and that You would keep **me** from evil, that **I** may not cause pain. 1 Chronicles 4:10

At first glance it is exciting that a book on prayer topped the best seller list, that is until one reads the prayer it's based on. It is no surprise then that a book based on personal blessings would be a hit in today's culture. After all didn't Paul warn Timothy that in the last days men would be lovers of themselves (2 Tim. 3:2)?

Conclusion

In spite of everything previously said however, it must be concluded nonetheless that the Bible leaves the justified believer abundant reasons for a positive self-image. Even though Man's self-image should always be that of a sinner, the Gospel defines him as a redeemed,

¹² Professor Rhom, Elementary Greek 2, 2006.

justified, righteous, heaven-bound saint and a new creation in Christ Jesus. It is not necessary, or even possible, for him to look within to see if these things are true because they are to be worked out in relationships with others. Thus, even though man's inner assessment, according to the Law, always ends in accusation, the Gospel calls him away from self and offers the person of Christ Jesus - the person he is not. While the Law produces accusation and causes man to confess, "I have no righteousness. I have no integrity. I have no goodness." The Gospel produces faith and causes him to declare with great joy - "I have Christ!"¹³

This is the ammunition by which the redeemed people of faith are to fight back, and it starts with an understanding of man's condition. Hoekema describes two basic perversions in man's self image after the fall. Man's new view of himself went either in the extreme upward direction or the extreme downward direction. In both cases pride is the root cause, seemingly due to a lack of relational awareness of one's position in the context of God. These are deviations from the self-image God intended us to have and are corrected in the shadow of the cross. When God looks upon those of us who are in Christ He no longer sees our sin and guilt, but instead sees the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. This truth is the foundation for a Biblically sound, positive, self-image and is the only basis for "self-esteem" at all. Paul sums this up well when he says:

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. Galatians 2:20

¹³ <http://www.issuesetc.org/resource/journals/v2n1.htm#What>

At the end of the day we are all simply beggars telling other beggars where we found bread. Let us bear witness then to this fact in our Christian culture so that we can change the modern day church of 'me,' back to the Bible based church of He.