

SELF-ESTEEM'S ADVANTAGES AND DRAWBACKS

WHOEVER WILL CAREFULLY study the matter we believe will agree that a moderate amount of self-esteem is a great aid to success in the present life. It gives a self-confidence in respect to all of life's affairs, great and small. It impels its possessor to do and to dare to the full extent of his ability – if caution be lacking it may lead on to disastrous folly. But the lack of self-confidence, self-esteem, has held back thousands who otherwise might have been brilliant leaders in the path of progress.

Having pointed out some of the advantages of reasonable self-confidence we should point out some of the disadvantages of over-confidence – too great self-esteem. Its arrogance, its pride, its snobbishness, are disgusting and continually interfere with the progress of the unfortunate possessor. He never learns except by bitter experiences, because he always thinks he knows, and exposes his ignorance.

Some of the best people, the saintly, have small self-esteem, depreciate their own talents and exaggerate their own blemishes. Their humbleness of mind is a blessing when it leads them to God – to the Throne of Heavenly grace for forgiveness and for grace to help in every time of need. As between *too much* and *too little* self-esteem, therefore, our choice should be the latter.

"LET A MAN THINK SOBERLY"

Whether born with too much or with too little self-esteem, those who come into God's family are put into the School of Christ to be taught, corrected – made right, in harmony with Divine standards. Those naturally self-conceited must learn meekness – by instructions if they will – otherwise by experiences. And they should learn to rejoice even in *humiliating experiences*. They are evidences that

God's providence is supervising their affairs and preparing them for the Kingdom; for without meekness and humility none will be fit for it.

As the self-conceited must learn humbly to trust God and not rely on themselves and thus secure balance, so the naturally self-depreciative must learn a lesson of confidence. Not *self*-confidence, not *self*-reliance is the most desirable, but rather confidence in God and reliance upon His promised "grace to help in every time of need." This maintains the desirable humility and meekness, yet gives the courage and force suggested by the Apostle's words: "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4:13.) As St. Paul again declares, "Our sufficiency is of God!"

Thus inspired by faith in God and in His promises those "taught of God" become marvelously "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." (Eph. 6:10.) The righteous is strong as a lion, saying, "I will not fear what man may do unto me." (Psa. 118:6.) I will not heed what man may say of me or do to me. So long as I have the Almighty Creator for my Father and the Redeemer for my elder Brother I shall be content, relying on their "exceeding great and precious promises."

Thus, whether by nature self-conceited or humble, God's Word and providences in Christ tend to bring all followers of Christ to oneness of heart and mind. The one is humbled, the other exalted. Both learn not to trust **[R5114 : page 319]** in self or the arm of flesh, but in Him who is able to do for them exceedingly, abundantly, more than they could ask or think, according to the riches of His grace in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Here note the Apostle's exhortation that a man "think of himself not more highly than he ought, but think soberly," according to the measure of God's *grace* bestowed on him. (Rom. 12:3.) If any man has received none of God's grace, favor, mercy, forgiveness, surely it is not because he did not need it. Let him therefore feel his poverty without it. If any man has received much of God's grace it was because

he needed it. He therefore may boast, but not of himself. His boast may well be in God who is thus working in him "to will and to do of His good pleasure." – Phil. 2:13.

LACK OF SELF-APPRECIATION

This deficiency operates in many ways not generally suspected. Many a man is a beggar or a thief simply because of a lack of self-appreciation. He thinks, I am nobody – and everybody knows it. He hangs his head in self-shame. He has a guilty look without having committed crime. He is treated according to his estimate of himself as expressed in his acts and looks, all of which reflect unconsciously his mental picture of himself.

When some, measuring him by his looks, declare: You are a mean man, a rascal, a thief, a scoundrel; I can see it – I can read you through and through! the effect is to thoroughly discourage him. Accepting the rating of his own brain and its reflection in the words of others he becomes rascal, scoundrel, thief. Few there are of benevolent heart to see the trouble of this class and sympathetically to give an encouraging word – to turn the scale and help bring forward the better qualities of the mind and heart.

It is here that the Gospel of Jesus does for such what nothing else could do. The Master's voice rings out in **[R5114 : page 320]** contrast with all other voices saying: Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and discouraged; I will give you rest. Ye shall find rest unto your souls!

Ah, the change! The discouraged one says, Then I am not beyond hope; not so mean, not so degraded that Jesus would pass me by. The very suggestion inspires new hope. If followed, it leads on and on to the riches of God's grace provided in Christ for the penitent, the willing, the obedient.

By the time such a man receives the begetting of the Holy Spirit and is able to cry, "Abba, Father!" old things pass away and all things become new. However, his fleshly weaknesses and unworthiness may still continually cry, You are unworthy; however, still in humility, he may acknowledge this with groans and tears, he is not cast down! He has God's assurance that he is a *New Creature* in Christ, whose perfect spirit body awaits him in the First Resurrection. He has the assurance that God knows of his fleshly weaknesses, and has made provision for his forgiveness through Christ, the Advocate. He has the assurance that it is not the flesh that God expects to perfect, but the New Creature, the heart, the will. He has the assurance that he is a son of God and a joint-heir with Christ in His great Messianic Kingdom, which soon is to bless the world. He has the assurance that all present trials of faith and patience and loyalty to God, to the Truth and to the brethren are permitted to test his heart-loyalty, without which he could not be a joint-heir in Messiah's Kingdom. These Divine assurances make strong the weak and give courage not only in respect to the future life, but also in the affairs of the present. No wonder the Bible speaks of the followers of Christ as *transformed* and *mind-renewed!* – Rom. 12:2.

IN RESPECT TO PHYSICAL HEALTH

It may surprise some to learn that lack of self-confidence affects physical health as well as morals. Physiologists are agreed that the mind has much to do with the operation of all the human functions. The man deficient in self-esteem not only feels mean in respect to other affairs of life, but he lacks physical *tone*, snap, energy, so necessary to our best success in any avenue of life. How hope, joy, peace, content can affect the liver, spleen and stomach none can explain; but the fact is conceded. How despair and hopelessness can and do affect not only the various functions of the brain but the heart, stomach, liver, gall, etc., we cannot explain; but the fact is conceded.

The person lacking self-esteem is disgusted with himself and ready to imagine any disease, and is proportionately predisposed to diseases.

Wisely, therefore, physicians and philosophers are advising people to hold up their heads; not to become discouraged; not to imagine every sensation a symptom of a dangerous disease. This salutary advice is good for such: to look on the brighter side of life; to think of being strong – to imagine themselves strong, healthy, happy, and to feel and to be as nearly perfect as their imperfect minds and bodies will permit. This anti-bilious view of life is sure to bring encouragement and blessing to some.

But nothing will so thoroughly offset the burdens of life as the grace of God. Whoever receives the "wedding garment" no longer is so overwhelmed by the appearance of the filthy rags of his own unrighteousness. Whoever realizes that as a son of God and follower of the Savior he is an *ambassador* for God has no time specially to pamper and coddle his flesh, nor to make its care his paramount thought. He must be about his Heavenly Father's business! He must make use of his ambassadorship! He must "show forth the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light!"

The effect of these new ambitions, hopes, aims, upon his physical health is often marvelous. It serves as a spiritual nerve-tonic. It stimulates the mortal to service Divine. The new mind does not suggest carelessness of the mortal body – nor yet carefulness, except to the extent that necessary care may obtain the larger results to God's glory from the consumption of the human energies. Hence, as St. Paul says, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come." – I Tim. 4:8.

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