

CHRISTIAN SELF-CONFIDENCE

Phil 4:13

It was recently stated that we, as Christians, should not be looking in the Bible if we were looking for a positive self-image. This comment has been gnawing at me ever since. “The Bible is not the place to seek out what our self-image as a Christian should be?” I’ve been talking to God about this. Looking for the answer as to the truth of this statement.

Another statement was made recently. “The Fundamental Christian Army is the only army that shoots it’s wounded!” I have heard this before, and used it on more than one occasion. But when I think about this statement, in context with the statement that the Bible is not the place for Christians to go to find a positive self-image, I get even more curious. And, it makes me ask God even more questions.

Is there a correlation between these two statements? I believe there is.

Having been around Fundamental Baptist churches for almost 35 years now, I cannot count how many times I have heard comments like, “we’re nothing but dirty rotten sinners saved by grace”, or “even the best you can do is not good enough for God” and “all our righteousness is as filthy rags” and the most common, “even the Apostle Paul called himself a wretched sinner” (which he never said .. he said, **Romans 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?** as he lamented over the painful conflict he fought every day to keep his body under subjection. What he never said was that he was a bad person, or that he should give up trying just because he could not completely win the war. And he certainly did not berate others because he could not gain perfect victory of his challenge.

I’ve also heard it said that because we live in this sinful flesh, that we somehow can’t help ourselves. That sinning is inevitable. Really?

So to be clear, we will never attain the sinless perfection of Christ. Ever. But we can control sin in our lives. We can make the decision to NOT SIN. In John 8 the Pharisees and Saducees brought the woman caught in adultery to Jesus to entrap him. After Jesus got through putting these self-righteous men in their place, he instructed the woman to “go and sin no more”. He told the same thing to the man with the infirmity of 30 years. “Go and sin no more”. So, while we cannot attain sinless perfection, we can attain a position where we simply don’t sin. But when we’re told countless times that we’re just sinners saved by grace, the implication is, “go ahead and sin....you can’t help it anyway!” You’re then told of the repercussions of that sin. It’s a vicious cycle. Like a parent continually telling their child what a good for nothing child they are during their formative years, and then berating them because they end up just like they said they would. Doesn’t do much for their self-esteem does it? Neither does the way sin is dealt with at times.

It is important that I stop here just for a moment and separate “self-confidence” with “self-esteem”.

If you examine an abridged dictionary, or consult a simplified thesaurus, it may list these words, self-confidence and self-esteem, as being synonyms. Although closely related, a fine difference does exist between these two concepts. In fact, many internal conflicts are generated by confusing and merging these two ideas.

Just look at the words: Self-confidence and Self-esteem. "Self-confidence" would indicate an attribute of security and assurance in oneself. It is an answer to the question, "What can I do?" However, "self-esteem" is not so much concerned with the confidence of one's abilities as it is concerned with answering the question, "What am I worth?" It is an analysis, measurement, and evaluation of one's own personal worth.

Personal and internal conflict arises when we confuse the two. If we value, or esteem ourselves by our abilities or potential, then we will fall subject to great depression when our abilities fail and our potential appears dark. It is when we fail that our self-confidence is tested. Successive failures cause us to question our ability. Eventually, our self-confidence itself fails, and our self-esteem crumbles. "After all, what is a loser worth?" "How can such a worthless person ever hope to succeed?" The low self-confidence depresses our self-esteem. The depressed self-esteem further hammers our self-confidence. A vicious cycle ensues, trapping us in an ever deepening and downward spiralling free fall into a pit of depression and despair.

What causes these paralyzing problems? We all, at some point in our lives, realize that our self-confidence is built on a flawed foundation. Like a house of cards, or the foolish man's house built on the sand ([Matthew 7:24-27](#)), our self-confidence comes tumbling down. What was the problem? We probably confused our worth with our abilities, using our self-confidence as the basis of our self-esteem. Additionally, we likely used a combination of false standards to bolster our self-confidence, thereby "hyping up" our own worth on this flawed foundation of unrealistic self-confidence.

If we are told enough times that nothing we can do is good enough (in and of ourselves) or that we're just rotten sinners anyway, what's the point of even trying. Then, while we are wallowing in the muck and mire of low self confidence, we lash out and want to bring someone down with us because as we all know, "misery loves company". And who is the closest to us and easiest to attack? Why, weak defenseless wounded Christian soldiers who may be struggling with sin in their own lives, or going through some personal debilitating challenges that are holding them down. Or, a young Christian trying hard to overcome his or her own challenges.

Let me illustrate with a true story:

When I was young our family unit was very strong. My Dad, Mom, two sisters and I were living in West Seattle. All was good. Dad owned a very successful Service Station, Cline Brothers Service with my

Uncle Bill next to the YMCA. Oh, the times we had. I remember when I was old enough to go duck hunting with Dad and my sister Star. We'd go out with our dog Duchess to a little island in the Skagit River just outside Mt. Vernon at Lundeen's Farm. We'd park our car, grab our gear and guns and Duchess would lead the way. Oh, she loved to hunt. And could she ever hunt. We'd ride the little skiff over to the island and trudge on up to the dikes or through the corn fields. We'd sit in a blind and dad would open his thermos of coffee and Star and I would hit the hot chocolate. What a time.

But Dad would never play favourites. Neither Star nor I felt that Dad "loved" the other better or more. And all Star and I wanted to do was make dad proud of us. But we would not compete to do so. We loved each other as much as Dad loved us.

Then later when we'd get home, we'd gather up Mom and Sunny and head for the Duwamish Drive-in for a double feature. We'd get there early enough to play on the swing sets and slide down the big slide. Then the movie would begin and we'd lay out in the back of Dad's Mercury station wagon. I don't think I ever made it through a full feature without falling asleep. But we three kids never fought for Dad's attention. We just loved each other too much. We still do. Our two younger brothers were added a bit later .. and the five of us loved each other enough to never want to harm one another, and still do.

One day Star, a cousin and I were playing hop-scotch. My cousin made a really good throw and I let out with the F-word. Star gasped in horror, but my cousin just couldn't wait to go tattle on me. I got the "wait till your father get's home" .. and then couldn't sit for a week when he did. I remember vividly Star crying as hard as I did because she felt so bad for me. Our cousin just laughed, relishing in my suffering.

What was the difference between my cousin and my sister? We were all family. Well, my cousin had a very low self-image due to negative parenting. Always being told how rotten she was (which she was) and how she would never amount to anything. Constantly, day in and day out. All she wanted to do was bring down those who seemed to be enjoying their life, to her level and she would do whatever it took to make that happen. Many times she would tell lies about us just to get us in trouble. Fortunately my Mom and Dad saw through these lies. But the point is, her negative self-esteem led to low self-confidence and a negative image of herself that that lead to her having a bitter desire to bring down those around her to her level, thereby building herself up (in her eyes).

We are still children. We just happen to be God's children. Read the writings of the Apostle John. He is constantly calling us "my little children". Donnie and Tami will always be my little children, no matter how old they get physically. They'll always be my kids.

Too many of God's children have had bad Spiritual parenting. Too many times being told how they can't accomplish things, dirty rotten sinners that they are. Too many times being told that even the best

they can do really isn't good enough in God's eyes. Always having to do more to try and "measure up!" Oh, and then go and do all thing through Christ who strengthens you.

How we look at ourselves, our self-image, is a cornerstone to how we look at everything else. The Apostle Paul teaches that we should "love" ourselves: **Ephesians 5:28-29 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:** How we think about ourselves filters our thoughts on everything, and determines whether we will react bravely or shrink timidly. It determines if we will initiate our own activity or criticize the efforts of others. Look at the book of Proverbs: **Proverbs 4:23-27 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.** This teaches us that a man's heart is the center of the issues of life; consequently, how we view or esteem ourselves is of profound importance in recognizing and answering the issues of our lives. Therefore, the topic is worthy of sincere pondering. **Proverbs 4:26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.**

Have you had the pleasure of being around a cheerful, optimistic, confident person? A merry heart is partially produced by a proper sense of confidence and self-esteem.

1. It manifests itself in our outward attitude and disposition: **Proverbs 15:13 A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.**
2. It affects our physical health: **Proverbs 17:22 A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones**
3. It influences the attitude of those around us: **Proverbs 18:14 The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?**
4. It is critical that we have a proper view of ourselves because an improper view leaves us vulnerable to the attacks of the enemy **Proverbs 27:8 As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.**

So, why do we have such a problem in our churches with Christian on Christian crime? Might it be because we have so many people who fit the description of those with bad Spiritual parenting? It is the primary cause of church splits. Cookie and I were the victims of this very thing.

So I would challenge us all today. Take a good long look in the mirror. Can you, with all honesty and a straight face, tell that person you see staring back that they are a beautiful person? That they deserve the blessing that God bestows upon them? That other people can love them because God loved them first? That they can truly do ALL things through Christ who gives them the strength? And, can you say to that person in the mirror; "I love you because of who you are...."?

Similarly, can you go to a Christian brother or sister, look them in the eye, and say, "I appreciate you!" Can you go to Pastor George and say, "Thank you for the work you are doing with RU!" Have you sought out Michelle, Mia and David and thanked them for the work they are doing with our Wednesday music ministry? When was the last time you thanked Pastor Dave and Marie for the sacrifices they have made over the past 30 years? If you have a difficult time complimenting and thanking others for the work they are doing, you need to take a good look in that mirror and ponder your own self-esteem.

Just as my Dad loved all five of us kids, and we never had to compete for his love. So God loves ALL of his kids equally. We as Christians and members of The Olde Tyme Baptist Church should never have to compete with others for God's love. Nor for this Pastor's love. There is not now, nor should there ever be any reason to have to "bring others down", so that we may look better in the eyes of God. This is of the Devil himself, and he has used the tactic with precision in our churches.

As born again Christians, we are children of a living God. We are joint heirs with Jesus, as we travel this sod as the song goes. If you are lacking in self-confidence because of a low self image in Christ, I challenge you today. Seek God's face, and wisdom. Start believing in God's ability to mould you in the image of His Son. And do it today.

Finally, let me be clear. It is not through our own strength or confidence in ourselves alone that I am talking about. **2 Corinthians 3:4-5 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Ephesians 3:16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;**

I believe it is a great sin when born again Christians thinks so little of themselves that they must bring down those around them that they might be built up in the eyes of others. For it is not in and of ourselves that we can do anything, but .. we can DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST, WHO STRENGTHENS US!