

Are We Lovers of Self More than Lovers of God?

by Chaplain Frank Wm Nagy

2 Timothy 3:1 Know that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2 Tim 3:2 Men shall be **lovers of themselves**... 4 ... **lovers of pleasures** more than lovers of God.

Lovers of Themselves

Ezekiel 16:49 See, the iniquity of your sister Sodom, pride, *fullness of bread*, and abundance of idleness was in her and her daughters. She did not strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. 50 Haughty, they committed abomination before me, so I took them away as I saw fit.

Hosea 10:1 Israel is an empty vine, he *brings forth fruit unto himself*: according to the multitude of his fruit he has increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made a goodly number of images [**idols**]. 2 Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty. He shall break down their altars. He shall spoil their images.

2 Timothy 3:1 Know that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2 Men shall be *lovers of their own selves*...

Selfishness is now approved in our culture. Some forty-five years ago a commercial touted *Three Musketeers* brand candy: "So big, you could *share* it with two of your friends." In the late 1990's ads for *Twix* exclaimed, "Two for me, *none* for you!" Not to be out-done by Mars, now Hershey's has its own selfish ad running in 2009. *Reese's Peanut Butter Cups* also regularly comes two to a package. Their ad reveals a pair of their chocolate confection out of their wrapper. A message forms over them: "Sharing is a nice gesture." These words dissolve, replaced with another phrase: "Stupid, but nice. Reese's -- perfect." And so, the buying public is again treated to the idea that in this day and age selfishness is to be preferred over sharing.

Steve Sampson writes about God's alternative:

God desires to bring us to *selflessness*, wherein our life becomes a blessing and strength and 'food' for the benefit of many.

So many times I have heard people justifying themselves, claiming that they don't need to go to church, that they can seek God at home, or be spiritually fed from the electronic church. But church attendance is not merely for what you can *get*, but rather the cross-pollinating and the *giving out* of what the Lord has given you. Maintaining an idea that 'I can be fed at home' is nothing but pure ignorance and *selfishness*.

'A man who isolates himself *seeks his own desire*... (Proverbs 18:1).'

'From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love (Ephesians 4:16).'

Self-centeredness is nothing but blatant immaturity. Spiritual maturity means that we grow out of that **selfish** state into being mindful of the **needs** of others.

-- **I Was Always On My Mind**, Steve Sampson, p.13

Care for Our Self is Basically Good

Jesus said, "Love your neighbor, as **yourself** (Mark 12:30)."

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, **love** your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it... 28 So men ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated **his own flesh**, but nourishes and cherishes it....33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so **love** his wife even as **himself**...

(Please don't try to **love** others if you do not love yourself. You will surely hurt them when you express your **self-loathing** in what you do for them. We need to love ourselves and others out of the love that God has shown us.)

Yet, Care for the Self Easily Gets Out of Hand

Let's take a lesson from the grape vine.

At first we might think the more branches and leaves on the vine the better. But this holds only when **seeking what the plant enjoys** and not looking for the most and best **fruit** it can produce. All this additional, wild, **selfish** outgrowth of branches and leaves will feed the plant, but hinder **fruitfulness**. When we reach out to serve ourselves, we turn from the Lord to seek other sources to gain our fruitfulness. Our life is spent like a grape plant sprouting more leaves to feed itself:

Hosea 10:1 Israel is an empty vine, he **brings forth fruit unto himself**...

John 15 presents one of the best pictures depicting how the Lord cuts across our **self-seeking**. See what God does in response to our foolish branches' best attempts. God, The Vinedresser, knows better. He must cut away all branches merely producing leaves. Vitality flows from the Vine to those well-pruned fruitful branches remaining. This is the only way to bring about the abundant harvest the Lord has in mind. It's the Vinedresser's plan to produce fruit whatever the cost to the individual branches:

John 15:1 I am the true Vine, and my Father is the Husbandman. 2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit He takes away: and every branch that bears fruit, he prunes it, so it may bring forth more fruit. 3 Now you are [pruned] clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit. For without me you can do nothing. 6 If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and withers. Men gather them, cast them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in

me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done for you. 8 Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples.

John 15:16 Jesus also told his disciples, “You have not chosen me, but *I have chosen you*, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain...”

Vitality flows from the Vine making well-pruned branches bear more fruit. Those branches sprouting only a lot of leaves sought out the sun’s energy for themselves, rather than relying on the Vine as their source. As this wild growth hinders fruitfulness, God, our Vinedresser, cuts away and discards those *worth-less*, *selfish* branches lacking fruit.

When Self is Left Uncontrolled, This Wild Growth Produces Evil

2 Peter 2:9 The **unjust**... :10 ...walk after the flesh in the **lust** of uncleanness and despise government. They are presumptuous, *self-willed*, not afraid to **speak evil** of dignities.

Other Sinful Attitudes and Behavior that Cluster with Aberrant Self-Love

2 Timothy 3:2 Men shall be *lovers of themselves*, **covetous**, **boasters**, **proud**, **blasphemers**, disobedient to parents, **unthankful**, **unholy**, :3 **Without natural affection**, trucebreakers, **false accusers**, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are **good**, :4 **Traitors**, heady, high-minded [**proud**], lovers of pleasures more than **lovers of God**.

Notable Failures of Love Toward God

Luke 11:42 Woe to you, Pharisees! for you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and *the love of God*. These you ought to have done, yet not to leave the other undone.

Matthew 24:3 ...The disciples came unto Jesus privately, asking, “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? :4 Jesus answered them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 24:5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.... :9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. :10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. :11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. :12 *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of God in many shall wax cold.* :13 But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved.

2 Timothy 3:1 Know that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2 Tim 3:2 Men shall be **lovers of themselves**... 4 ...more than *lovers of God*.

Jude 1:18 ...They told you there will be mockers in the last time, who walk after their own ungodly lusts. Jude 1:19 These are those who separate themselves, sensual [lovers of themselves], devoid of the Spirit. :20 [*outside*] *the love of God*.

Do a Self-Diagnostic Regarding Your Love of God

Some Are Content to Love God at a Distance, But God is Not Pleased with This

Isaiah 29:13 The Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near to Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor Me. Yet, they have moved their heart far from Me and their fear of Me is taught by the precepts of men.

1 John 2:3 Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 1 John 2:4 He that says, I know him, and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 2:5 But whoever keeps his word, *truly in him is the love of God perfected*: hereby know we that we are in him.

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that does not love his brother abides in death. 1 John 3:15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 3:16 Hereby perceive the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. :17 *But whoever has this world's good, sees his brother in need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how does the love of God dwell in him?* :18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. :19 Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. :20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

1 John 4:20 If a man say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar. For if he does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 1 John 4:21 And this commandment have we from him, That *he who loves God loves his brother also*.

1 John 5:1 Whoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and everyone that loves him that birthed us also loves him that is begotten of him. 1 John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. 5:3 *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.* :4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.

God Knows How Much Love We Hold Toward Him

1 Corinthians 8:3 But if any man *love God*, the same is known of him.

1 John 3:18 My little children, let us not *love* in word, neither in tongue; but *in deed and in truth*. :19 Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. :20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

Revelation 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; He that holds the seven stars in his right hand who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks says these things; :2 I know your works, your labor, and your patience, and how you cannot bear those which are evil. You have tried them which say they are apostles, but are not and

have found them liars: :3 You have borne troubles, and have patience, and for My name's sake have labored, and have not fainted. :4 Nevertheless I have something against you, because *you have left your first love [toward God]*.

See How Even Committed Christians Have Failed in Loving God as He Wants

We note that the Ephesian church was still doing works, but they were not the first works, that God desired of them. God was not first on their agenda. They were not seeking first the kingdom of God.

The Cure is to Love Self Less and God More (See Self-Control)

Luke 9:23 [Jesus] said to them all, "If any man will come after me, let him deny *himself*, take up his cross daily and follow me."

Revelation 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write... :4 Nevertheless I have something against you, because you have left your first love. :5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and **repent. Do the first works**; or else I will come unto you quickly, and will remove your candlestick out of his place, except you **repent**.

Make God first on your agenda. Seek first the kingdom of God.

Get God's Help

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: Rom 5:2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 5:3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation works patience; :4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: :5 And hope does not make us ashamed; *because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us*.

2 Thessalonians 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil. 2 Thess 3:4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that you both will to do and do the things we command you. :5 And *the Lord [will] direct your hearts into the love of God*, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Obey God

1 John 2:5 Whoever keeps his word, *truly in him is the love of God perfected*: hereby know we that we are in him.

Jude 1:20 *But you, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost*, Jude 1:21 *Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*.

The Proof of Proper Love of God is in Total Self-Denial

Revelation 12:11 [The Christians] overcame [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. *They loved not their lives unto death*.