

A Christ-centred Self?

The Self-Interested Way of Today

The world of today promotes strenuously the value of self-interest. This is reflected in business, the economy, politics, entertainment, popular psychology and self-help books. The primary personal thrust today is all about promoting oneself one way or another. Improving one's self-image, strengthening one's ability to succeed, feeling better about oneself, thinking better of oneself, projecting a better image of oneself, being better able to sell oneself to potential employers or clients, gaining greater self-satisfaction in one's life and like endeavours are the multifarious ways of this thrust. Whether it is for personal benefit or business profit or professional advantage we are all encouraged and counselled to advance ourselves.

In this environment, self-seeking is a matter of common sense. The pursuit of personal satisfaction is only natural. Profit-making, pleasure-seeking and promotion of self-interest are what make the world go round. Creativity and human enterprise are strongly encouraged to flow freely to satisfy these goals. Success is measured in terms of the quantum of profit, the degree of pleasure, the level of achieving self-satisfaction and the scale of the enterprise.

Many Christians have taken these perspectives on life as givens for today. There is frequently no sense or concern or examination of whether these may clash against the biblical perspective on life. Yet for the perceptive Christian who is serious in studying and obeying the Bible much of this would look and sound contrary to the values of self-giving, self-sacrifice and putting God and others first. This realisation raises a series of questions that needs some answers. Is this world anti-christ and to be rejected *in toto*? Is a Christian to reject all of these selfish values? What would be in its place? What is Christian life like as a life based on putting God first instead of oneself? What happens if one puts others before oneself? Is there any place for the self in following Christ? If so, what is it?

A Christ-centred Self - Paradox or Contradiction?

The Christian is called to Christ-centredness instead of self-centredness. Therefore there is an obvious difference between the way of the world and the way of Christ. We need to explore and understand what these are and what they mean for Christian life in the here and now. Are these differences paradoxes that have meaningful resolutions or contradictions that are mutually exclusive? What does it mean to live a Christ-centred life and be a Christ-centred person? How does it work in the face of the self-interested way of the world? Would success mean the same thing for a Christ-centred person as for a self-centred person? What is the place of profit-making, pleasure-seeking and self-promotion when Christ comes first? These are the challenges, contradictions and paradoxes of living as a true disciple of Christ in the world of today. These are what this book would seek to explore with you the reader.

This book aims to lead you to study, compare and contrast many of these differences and present a Christ-centred path of self-development that is selfless

and self-giving which is based on the Lordship of Christ. The way of the world today is indeed hostile to biblical values and truths. Yet the issues and areas of actual conflict and contradiction are often subtle and what may initially seem obvious are often misleading. For one thing, the healthy human self of the Bible is drastically different from the self-centred and self-seeking self of the world. These distinctions are vital yet subtle. It is the difference between the self-made person whose life is built on self-centred interest and self-effort and the godly person with the Christ-centred self whose life is based on the Lordship of Christ and the surrender of the self to Him.

The Path to a Christ-centred Self

This book is written to address the issue of how a Christian is to base and build his or her identity and character on the Lordship of Christ. It is a development that follows from having preached many sermons on differentiating the Christian life from the self-seeking life that is prevalent today. The Christian life is built on the true basis of the human self that is founded on the Bible. It is how we may grow to be wholesome persons in Christ. It presents a path of growth and a way of life that a Christian may draw upon to help him or her walk closer with God as a disciple in this fallen world. It covers how we are to be controlled and guided by the Word of God and by the Holy Spirit. It aims to help us be His salt and light to counter the darkness that is in this world and to draw men and women to Him.