



Lively Stones

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Holding forth the word of life

ISSUE 14, 2006

23 JULY 2006

For Private circulation only

"I Am Weak, But Thou Art Strong!" *~ The Victorious Loser's Theme ~*

"Don't Say You're a Loser!"

The parent looks at her forlorn child, who had failed to make it into the junior basketball league, reassuring him with the words, "Son, you're not a loser. Remember, you can do anything when you put your mind to it!" This kid, the most recent generation of a family of short people, looks up with hopeful eyes, dreaming of the day when he can shoot hoops competitively with the big guys.

"Aiya, you gotta feel good about yourself! You're never gonna be successful if you're always so negative! Right, Ah Lau? Oi! Tell her! She's never gonna have good self-esteem with your kind of support!" the portly woman, hands on hips, quips to her daughter as the father is forced to nod silently in agreement.

"If you don't study hard, you'll be a road sweeper next time! No one will respect you! Don't you want to become a professional? See all the professionals in church? They're so well respected! I dunno where to hide my face if you don't get into a good primary school!" pleads the anxious father as he tries to coach his K2 daughter in her differential equations.

Must we feel good about ourselves (or for that matter, our kids)? What's with all the talk about self-worth? Why all this emphasis on self-esteem?

From where does our worth come? Naturally, for the world, it comes from a variety of sources – it comes from pleasant physical appearances and abilities, intelligence and talents, and worldly success. Those whose worth is tagged onto these things would naturally feel unworthy if they resembled trolls with two left feet, have enough cognizance of their mediocre intelligence, and have little success compared to others.

The world's philosophy on the worth of a

person, as seen from all the emphasis on various human(istic) rights, is that all persons should see themselves as good and worthy and able to do good and are therefore worthy of respect and equal opportunity. But the first step towards this is the plain fact that people *must* see themselves as good and worthy, and any negative self-image must be repudiated. This kind of thinking pervades even the thinking of Christians. And that's so loser.

Psalms 139:14
I will praise thee; for I
am fearfully and
wonderfully made:
marvelous are thy
works; and that my soul
knoweth right well.

But We Are Losers!

But naturally, this is not what the Bible teaches. We aren't to see ourselves as good because we aren't. Neither are we to think we are deserving of good, because we aren't. Nor are we to believe there is any worth in us, because there isn't. Romans 7:18a says, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." Paul here was saying that there was nothing good in him. He did not proclaim his own goodness but instead proclaimed his own wickedness.

We are to see ourselves in this manner. There is no basis for seeing ourselves as anything good in and of ourselves. Mark 7:21-23 says, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man." If we think we have any worth and ability and should be given respect as a result, all we have to do is take a look at Isaiah 64:6 which says that any worth that we think we have is compared to a menstrual cloth – and anyone who would treasure such an object certainly has a megalomaniacal view of himself.

No, the proper view of oneself is that of Job's

(Continued on page 2)

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(Continued from page 1)

in Job 42:1-6, "Then Job answered the LORD, and said, I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

It is to have the mind of Paul who says in Galatians 2:20 says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." **The only worth that he had as a person was not something that was within him, but it was something he gained when he became a Christian – a worth he had only because of Christ.**

We Really Aren't Losers!

While there is nothing good in us that we should be proud of, the Christian should still have a proper understanding of his true worth. The Bible states that we are chosen by God and that we are God's precious children. The Bible states that Christ shed his blood for our souls. The Bible states that we are heirs of God's kingdom, being indwelt by his Holy Spirit.

But the only way to an understanding of our true worth is firstly by a self-abasement. As the Beatitudes state, we are to see the poverty of our spirit, to mourn for our sinfulness, and to come meekly to Christ. Only then will we have worth. We are to echo with John the Baptizer, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). As the hymnwriter states, "May the love of Jesus fill me, As the waters fill the sea; Him exalting, self abasing, This is victory."

The Bible also states that since God has saved us, we are no longer guilty nor worthy of condemnation. The Bible tells us that we are holy and that God sees us as such. The Bible tells us that no matter what our circumstances, we shall never be separated from the love of God, and that it is indeed God who has planned our every step. And while we may see our sinfulness, we must also see ourselves the way God sees us now – with all the worth in the

universe!

"Just a cLoser Walk with Thee!"

The parent looks at her forlorn child, who had failed to make it into the junior basketball league, reassuring him with the words, "Son, you may not be good in basketball, and that's okay. God made you perfect, even with your height. Remember that Psalm 139:14 tells us that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. And remember that our weaknesses are strengths. Christ said to Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.'" The kid stares at himself in the mirror, looking at his stunted height and praising God for such a marvelous work destined for great spiritual maturity.

"Aiya, you gotta see yourself the way God sees you! It's sinful to feel sorry for yourself. God loves you and wants you to recognize that you are his child. You're never going to be successful if you don't believe his Word. Remember Joshua 1:8? Your father and I are praying that you realize this wonderful truth." the portly woman counsels, hands gently placed on her daughter's shoulder, as the father prays for a spirit of tenderness in his daughter.

"Dear, you must study hard – this is God's will for you. But even if you study hard but don't do so well, it's okay. Papa will still love you and Jesus will still love you. Just remember to love Jesus – and then everyone will respect you and your wisdom. That's what I'm praying for you..." pleads the loving father, "now, take a break from your studies and we'll go out to play."

*I am weak, but Thou art strong;
Jesus, keep me from all wrong;
I'll be satisfied as long
As I walk, let me walk close to Thee.*

*Just a closer walk with Thee,
Grant it, Jesus, is my plea,
Daily walking close to Thee,
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be.*

~ anonymous ~

Preacher Mark Chen