

Centered On Self or Lost In God?

By George Davis

Someone defined salvation as "salvation from self." If we carefully consider this statement in the light of scripture, we can do no less than prove it true.

At initial conversion, we are enabled by the Spirit of Love to see beyond ourselves. Love is not self-focused. It seeks not its own. And we begin, however haltingly to walk in the reality of this great love. Even with this radical shift away from egocentrism we still bring our old self-relating reflex, which we inherited from Adam, with us. What do I mean by "self-relating"? It is that fallen condition which we inherited for Adam, who after he sinned no longer lived unto his Creator, as the glory of the Creator, but instead became acutely self-consciousness and self-serving. After eating the forbidden fruit, his eyes were opened, his focus shifted onto himself and, spurred on by the shame of what he saw, he hid among the trees. Adam's first reaction was shame. He covered himself (indicating a shame-based state of self-awareness). Adam turned into himself and began to judge all things from this new position and motivation. Even his Creator became a threat to him. While hiding from the presence of the LORD God among the trees, God asks Adam the question, "Where are you?" Adam, now hopelessly blinded by self-focus, answered, "I", "I", "I", "I" ... "I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself" (see Genesis 3:10-11). And man has hidden from himself, God and others, ever since. We were all born into this conflicted state, hiding from the presence of the LORD God among the trees, tightly clutching our fig leaves.

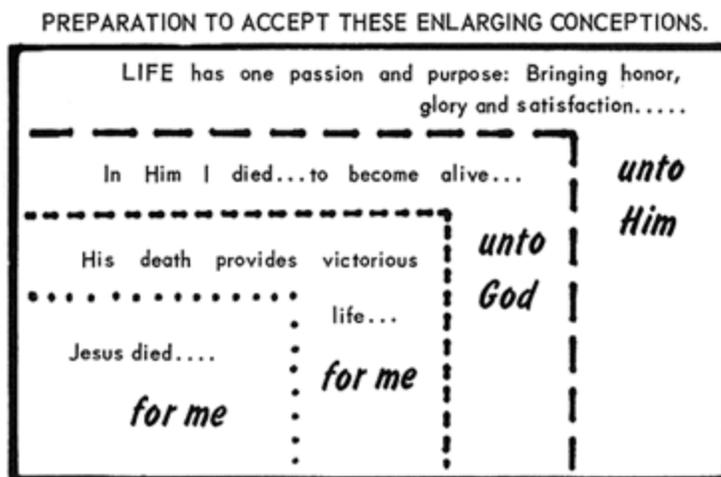
In his book *Ashes into Gold: The Journey of Spirituality*, Martin M. Davis described this fallen nature in man as,

"...an infantile, selfish despot that tolerates no frustration, brooks no delay of gratification, and reverences no master—including God. Sigmund Freud descriptively labeled this inner highchair tyrant "his majesty the baby," the metaphorical embodiment of our innate egocentricity, grandiosity, and false sense of omnipotence. His majesty's latent cries resound within each of us as he pounds his spoon upon his highchair and screams, 'I want! I want! I want!'

In his boundless egocentricity, his majesty the baby views himself as the center of a personally constructed universe. He regards himself as the principal actor in the unfolding drama of life and all others as mere extras who exist solely to support him in his starring role. . ."

From the moment we first drew air we were lost, self-relating and utterly lacking consideration for others. This ingrown state IS the condition commonly called "sin." From this perspective we can easily see why anything short of *salvation from self* falls far short of full salvation, because we still carry with us the self-fixation that we are supposed to be saved from. Consequently our spiritual lives consist of a pilgrimage away from carnality unto the full dawning of the Daystar in our hearts.

The following example from DeVern Fromke's book, "No Other Foundation" may help us make our point.



I recommend that you buy this book! It is a life-changer!

You see the progression. When I was first saved I was limited in vision due to a lifetime of viewing everything through a self-relating lens. My first response to Christ's death and provision of grace was to view it nearsightedly, as something purely "for me," to make life better "for me", to save me. "Christ died for me." "His death provides victorious life for me."

You see where this is going. The further along we go on this journey the more we realize that it is all "UNTO HIM". The more we are tried and come forth as pure gold, the more our lives have one passion and purpose--bringing honor, glory and satisfaction UNTO HIM. This is the big difference between slaves, children and mature sons.

Paul measured maturity by the absence or presence of carnality. "[Are you not carnal? Are you not babes?](#)" Conversely, by that same standard, maturity is self-forgetfulness. I am not casting stones at anyone here but simply point out that we

are in the process of growth and that that growth is measured by the degree of selflessness we walk in. And that, should we return to our fig leaves God, from time to time, will ask us "Where are you?" Or rather, call our attention to where we are at because the heart is desperately wicked and is capable of making saintly the most evil desires and activities by dressing them in robes of piety. We like to think of ourselves as noble, truthful and selfless, embodying all the best human characteristics. But we vacillate between narcissism and self-oblivion.

We feel the call of destiny; to rise above all that is merely carnal and an inner strength that promises the realization of it, and yet we remain divided within ourselves and among ourselves.

We are capable of great love and self-sacrifice and at the same time, when the right trigger is pulled, capable of engaging in the worst forms of self-protection and self-aggrandizement. If we are honest with ourselves, this describes the experience of most of us. He who says he has no sin in this matter has indeed deceived himself. Even seemingly noble activities fall short when they come from the wrong tree. ["If I give my body to be burned and have not love, I am nothing."](#)

If that inner highchair tyrant is not dethroned in our lives we will inevitably lay down our crosses and hang our shingles. Even something as seemingly selfless as serving others soon becomes "my ministry." This despot doesn't give up his throne without a fight and he will use every trick in his bag to keep it. He will even be "holy" if that is a requirement of keeping his throne. However, his excitement in things holy is all about what is happening to Him and how people are relating to Him in what God is doing in HIS life. Every conversation is about what "God is doing in Me" and how "God is using ME." Though it sounds great it reaches no further in goal and objective than the outer skin. It is Adam relating to God with himself at the center.

What is the answer?

A shift as radical as Galileo's discovery that the universe is not *geocentric* is required. We must move from our self-relating perspective, where the Son revolves around us, our desires, our "needs" to a Christocentric life where our earth revolves around Him and all that we are is the outgrowth of basking in His light, life and love.

Christ the last Adam came to call us out of hiding and remove our fig leaves and cover our guilt and shame with a new covering. By His death on the cross He deposed our I-ness (*shame-based self-focus*) from the throne of our lives and put our focus back where it belongs. Through our crucifixion with Him we are delivered from a self-centered existence to a God-centered life. "He died for all, that they who live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:15).

It is Adam's "I" that continues to hinder true fellowship between God and men and between man and men.

O Father make your salvation complete! Perform a miracle tantamount to the crossing of the Red Sea! Deliver us from ourselves! Produce in us a holy self-oblivion. Wake us up, grow us up and swallow our identities up in your great Love, that we might live in your sight! Not doing our alms before men to be seen of them but before you, in your sight and for your glory! Amen!

After two days will he revive us: on the third day **he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.** (Hosea 6:2 KJ2000)