

Chapter One – Sermon 2

“God has equipped every believer to be useful and productive in Christian living. His Spirit enables us in whatever task God gives. But we must fulfill our responsibility by **continually granting his Spirit freedom of expression.**”¹

"The command of one's self is the greatest empire a man can aspire unto, and consequently, to be subject to our own passions is the most grievous slavery. He who best governs himself is best fitted to govern others. He who reigns within himself and rules his passions, desires and fears is more than a king." See: Proverbs 14:12; 16:32; 25:28; Acts 24:25; Romans 6:12; 1 Corinthians 6:12; James 3:2; 2 Peter 1:5-7."

“Erwin Lutzer, in his book *Managing Your Emotions*, writes:

"We all know that Alexander the Great conquered the world. But what few people know is that this mighty general could not conquer himself. Cletus, a dear friend of Alexander's and a general in his army, became intoxicated and ridiculed the emperor in front of his men. Blinded by anger, quick as lightning, Alexander snatched a spear from the hand of a soldier and hurled it at Cletus. Though he had only intended to scare the drunken general, his aim was true and the spear took the life of his childhood friend. Deep remorse followed his anger. Overcome with guilt, Alexander tried to take his own life with the same spear, but was stopped by his men. For days he lay sick calling for his friend Cletus, chiding [to express disapproval of; scold]² himself as a murderer."

“Lutzer concludes by saying, "Alexander the Great conquered many cities. He conquered many countries, but he failed miserably to conquer his own self."³

See: Proverbs 14:17; 29:22; Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 9:27; Ephesians 4:26-32.

2 TIMOTHY 1:7

For God did not give us a Spirit of fear but of power and love and self-control.

Lack of confidence was a problem for Timothy. It is probably the same for many of us.

¹ Knute Larson, *Holman New Testament Commentary – I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, ed. Max Anders (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 266.

² Brackets added.

³ *6,000 Plus Illustrations for Communicating Biblical Truths*, (Omaha, Nebraska: Christianity Today, 1997), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Self-Control".

1 Corinthians:16:10-11:

Now if Timothy comes, see that he has nothing to fear among you, for he is doing the Lord's work, as I am too. ¹¹So then, let no one treat him with contempt. But send him on his way in peace so that he may come to me [Paul].⁴ For I am expecting him with the brothers.

Today we might give the following instructions concerning Timothy. *“Be gentle with Timothy. His feelings are easily hurt.”* The advantages and gifts that God had provided Timothy needed to remember God's gift so that he would not lose sight of the fact that God had generously equipped him for this ministry, and Paul had made that fact clear to Timothy at the time by laying his hands on him. God had given Timothy the ability to teach and the willingness to teach as special evidence of God's mercy. Therefore Paul felt it his responsibility to remind Timothy of the responsibilities that came with these kinds of special gifts; as it had been transmitted to Timothy through the laying on of Paul's hands at the time of his ordination. Timothy had at that time been given the special ability in every respect for the administration of the office of pastor. Timothy was to stoke the fire of the gift of grace God had given him and allow it to become a blazing fire, the fire of faith, of love, of confidence, and of courage to speak the truth of God's Word in its purest form. The gift God had given Timothy was still in him, but he was strongly being tempted by the enemy (Satan) to neglect it. Timothy needed to call upon the **Holy Spirit** acknowledging that by and through His **power** Timothy could stand strong.⁵

The Holy Spirit that God has placed in every pastor is not one of timidity, or lack of courage. He has provided pastors with a Spirit of power, love, and self-discipline. “The true Spirit that should actuate all believers and especially the ministers of the Word is the Spirit of strength and power, of an energy firmly planted in the omnipotence [all-powerful]⁶ of God, that knows no fear; the Spirit of love which enables a person not only to offer work freely, but also to make sacrifices for the cause of the Lord;” the Spirit of self-discipline that enables the Christian pastor to use sound common sense under all circumstances, to employ that good judgment which can make the right choice in all situations making people hungry for the truth that was so lovingly given to us by Christ. **This is a gift of grace**, through the Holy Spirit, and should therefore be found in all men and women that are engaged in the ministry of saving souls, as well as in all believers that recognize their duty of placing their strength and abilities in the service of the **triune God**.⁷

Now God's gifts do not come to us fully developed such as a bouquet of roses. That beautiful bouquet of roses that might be received from that very special guy in her life begins with a few seeds. God's gifts to His children are also given as seeds. They are given by God through the Holy Spirit as seeds to grow through use. They also need to be fed, watered, pruned and under the watchful eye of the planter. When a person comes to believe in Christ as their personal Savior, **the seed of a spiritual gift** is planted within them. If they do not develop it by using it, it will remain just a seed. If, however, you water it, nourish it, and place it in a location where it gets plenty of light [(SON-light) I couldn't resist), they will find that eventually it will have

⁴ Brackets added.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Brackets added.

⁷ Ibid.

grown to what it was created to be.

Do not let the gift within you remain undeveloped; that would be **an insult to God**. Find out what your spiritual gift is and begin using and developing it.

2 Timothy 1:6 (NASB)

⁶ For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

Remember Jesus' parable to the three servants.

Matthew 25:14-30:

¹⁴ "For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them.

¹⁵ "To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.

¹⁶ "Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents.

¹⁷ "In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more.

¹⁸ "But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

¹⁹ "Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.

²⁰ "The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.'

²¹ "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

²² "Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.'

*²³ "His master said to him, '**Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.**'*

²⁴ "And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed.

²⁵ 'And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.'

²⁶ "But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed.

²⁷ "Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest.

²⁸ "Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.'

²⁹ "For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away."

³⁰ "Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

A Christian psychologist has said, if a prescription could be written for the **people** of the world that would provide each of them with a healthy dose of **self-esteem** and personal worth it would fill their greatest need. Do you think that is true? There is little doubt that wrong thinking about ourselves is at the heart of a lot of **misery, fear, doubt, loneliness, and withdrawal**. But looking a little deeper we may well find that the problem is one of **low self-esteem** or self-centered thoughts rather than biblical, God-centered thoughts about who we are and how we fit into the plan of God.

Do we find that we are perpetually trying to lift ourselves up onto a pedestal, or are we capable of finding our own self-worth by attempting to lift God onto the pedestal? If we cannot lift God up then we will never find what we are looking for. If you question your own self-worth and long to be at peace with God, yourself, and others, you can begin the process of change by realizing that you will not find that peace through the self-help programs offered by the world alone. The very first thing you can do is to establish God as the foundation on which to build. Now God may lead us to use certain of these techniques along the way, but we must not begin with something worldly and try to incorporate God as part of that system. We must also guard against becoming caught up in the self-centeredness of the world around us. In order to achieve the spiritual maturity that will provide us with a positive sense of who we are, and an effective ministry, "we must develop a biblical self-concept of thinking properly about ourselves in the light of God's

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Romans 12:1-21 (MSG):

¹ So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: **Take your everyday, ordinary life**—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—**and place it before God** as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.

² Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. **You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily** recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

³ I'm speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace,

it's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to

⁸ <http://bible.org/seriespage/mark-4-biblical-concept-oneself> Study By: J. Hampton Keathley, III Share.

understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.

⁴ *In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around.*

⁵ *The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. **Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body.** But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn't amount to much, would we? So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body,*

⁶ ***let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't.** If you preach, just preach God's Message, nothing else;*

⁷ *if you help, just help, don't take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching;*

⁸ *if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don't get bossy; if you're put in charge, don't manipulate; if you're called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face.*

⁹ *Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good.*

¹⁰ *Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.*

¹¹ *Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master,*

¹² *cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder.*

¹³ *Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.*

¹⁴ *Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath.*

¹⁵ *Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down.*

¹⁶ *Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. **Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody.***

¹⁷ *Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone.*

¹⁸ *If you've got it in you, get along with everybody.*

¹⁹ ***Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "I'll do the judging," says God. "I'll take care of it."***

²⁰ *Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he's thirsty, get him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness.*

²¹ *Don't let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good.*

It may seem contradictory, but it is true that the Bible-believing Christian knows that he/she is a sinner, that in himself/herself he/she has no merit (character or conduct deserving reward, honor, or esteem) with God; yet, at the same time, he/she also knows, as a creation of God, created in

God's image and redeemed by His grace, **he/she has value and purpose in life.**⁹

So how do we find a proper balance? How do we avoid the self-centered approach and focus of the world and at the same time have a biblical concept of self, a proper viewpoint of our own value and purpose that sets us free to serve God, that sets us free from those thoughts and feelings that tie us in knots and ruin our personalities and ministries?¹⁰

If we go back to the NASB translation and look at verse 3 in the passage we just read, we will see the word, "*think*:"

Romans 12:3:

³ *For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to **think** more highly of himself than he ought to **think**; but to **think** so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.*

"The basic Greek word for 'think' in this passage is *proneo*, which means 'think, form or hold an opinion, judge.' 'Sober discernment,¹¹ is *sophroneo*, 'be of sound mind.' It means 'to be in one's right mind, be reasonable, keep one's head.' But first, the apostle warns us against thinking more highly of ourselves than we should. The Greek word here is *huperphroneo*, 'to think too highly of oneself, to be haughty.' Ironically, quite contrary to our society today, the apostle does not warn against thinking too little of ourselves. Regardless, what the sound thinking Paul is calling for is grounded in solid biblical teaching and faith in the work God is doing in us through Christ. Paul is calling for thinking and personal evaluation based on the facts God has revealed to us about His grace. 'It means we are to look at ourselves through the lenses of Scripture.'¹²

Or to put it another way, **the Bible can be a mirror that reflects who you really are.** You then need not be hurt by what others say or do to try and put you down, or to the images in your mind that tell you that you are not important.

"To Timothy, whom some expositors have nick named 'Timid Tim' because he seems to have been having problems with his self-confidence (or confidence in God's gifts and ministry for his life). Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 1:7, 'For God has not given us a Spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline' (or sound-mind thinking). The Greek word for 'discipline' here is related to the word used for *thinking* in Romans

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Power to see what is not evident to the average mind.

¹² Op Cit., Keathley.

12:3.”¹³

A CONTROLLED LIFE, ONE THAT DEMONSTRATES SELF-DISCIPLINE, IS THE PRODUCT OF A SOUND MIND THAT COMES FROM KNOWING AND PUTTING INTO PRACTICE WHAT IS TAUGHT IN THE BIBLE.

In both passages, Romans 12:3 and 2 Timothy 1:7, the Bible deals with God’s gifts to us and using those gifts in ministry for the sake of the body of Christ (all believers). Thinking properly about ourselves comes as the result of right thinking about God, but then that extends to right thinking about others so that it results in a freedom to serve according to the grace of God.¹⁴

Now it is time for the quiz. Let us see how well you do:

- ☞ What am I worth as a person?
- ☞ Do I feel good about whom I am or do I wish I was someone else?
- ☞ Have I accepted who I am as a person, not my sin or sinful habits, but the uniqueness God has created in me as a person?

Psalm 139:13-17 (NLT) gives us a hint:

¹³ *You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother’s womb.*

¹⁴ ***Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it.***

¹⁵ *You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.*

¹⁶ *You saw me before I was born. **Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.***

¹⁷ *How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered!*

“How we answer these questions may play a key role in what we do with our lives, how we live our lives, in the joy we experience in life, in the way we treat others, and in how we respond to people and to God.

Research has shown that we tend to act in harmony with our mental self-portrait. If we do not like the kind of person we are, we think no one else likes us either. And that influences our social life, our job performance, and our relationships with others.”¹⁵

A biblical understanding of God and His grace as it relates to who we think we are and how we think about ourselves is important to our spiritual maturity, to ministry, to our ability to lead others, and especially to our ability to be servants. Without it we will most likely chase after those things which we think will bring us position, power, and praise, when **we should be**

¹³ <http://bible.org/seriespage/mark-4-biblical-concept-oneself> Study By: J. Hampton Keathley, III Share.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

getting these things from resting in God's grace.¹⁶

“Therefore, in order to effectively lead or minister to others we must think biblically about who we are. This means two key things: (a) we need to know our abilities and limitations while (b) always keeping in mind a biblical view of God, His grace to us in Christ, and knowing **our sufficiency** [satisfactoriness; adequacy]¹⁷ **is always in God regardless of our abilities or weaknesses.**”¹⁸

2 Corinthians 2:14-17 (NLT):

¹⁴ *But thank God! He has made us his captives and continues to lead us along in Christ's triumphal procession. Now he uses us to spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere, like a sweet perfume.*

¹⁵ *Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those who are being saved and by those who are perishing.*

¹⁶ *To those who are perishing, we are a dreadful smell of death and doom. But to those who are being saved, we are a life-giving perfume. And who is adequate for such a task as this?*

¹⁷ *You see, we are not like the many hucksters who preach for personal profit. We preach the word of God with sincerity and with Christ's authority, knowing that God is watching us.*

2 Corinthians 3:1-6 (NLT):

¹ *Are we beginning to praise ourselves again? Are we like others, who need to bring you letters of recommendation, or who ask you to write such letters on their behalf? Surely not!*

² *The only letter of recommendation we need is you yourselves. Your lives are a letter written in our hearts; everyone can read it and recognize our good work among you.*

³ *Clearly, you are a letter from Christ showing the result of our ministry among you. This “letter” is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts.*

⁴ *We are confident of all this because of our great trust in God through Christ.*

⁵ *It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own. **Our qualification comes from God.***

⁶ *He has enabled us to be ministers of his new covenant. This is a covenant not of written laws, but of the Spirit. The old written covenant ends in death; but under the new covenant, the Spirit gives life.*

Why is thinking in these terms so important? Because without it we will bounce back and forth between fear and pride or between insecurity and overconfidence. Without it we will become either withdrawn or introverted or we will find ourselves running around in a state of confusion

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Brackets added.

¹⁸ Op Cit., Keathley

trying to feel good about ourselves because of our achievements. **Paul's spiritual maturity** and qualification as a leader is seen in his freedom to serve others because, resting in who he was in Christ as a servant called of God by grace, he was not seeking to protect a poor self-image or to impress men with his greatness.¹⁹

1 Corinthians 4:1-3 (MSG):

¹ *Don't imagine us leaders to be something we aren't. We are servants of Christ, not his masters. We are guides into God's most sublime secrets, not security guards posted to protect them.*

² *The requirements for a good guide are reliability and accurate knowledge.*

³ ***It matters very little to me what you think of me, even less where I rank in popular opinion. I don't even rank myself. Comparisons in these matters are pointless.***

1 Thessalonians 2:1-6 (NLT):

¹ *You yourselves know, dear brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not a failure.*

² *You know how badly we had been treated at Philippi just before we came to you and how much we suffered there. Yet our God gave us the courage to declare his Good News to you boldly, in spite of great opposition.*

³ *So you can see we were not preaching with any deceit or impure motives or trickery.*

⁴ *For we speak as messengers approved by God to be entrusted with the Good News. **Our purpose is to please God, not people.** He alone examines the motives of our hearts.*

⁵ *Never once did we try to win you with flattery, as you well know. And God is our witness that we were not pretending to be your friends just to get your money!*

⁶ ***As for human praise, we have never sought it from you or anyone else.***

A poor self-image robs us of the ability to relate to others because we are frequently thinking of our own shortcomings. That is especially true when we are in the presence of people who remind us of our shortcomings or whose opinion of us can determine **how we feel about ourselves**. In such situations we are so self-conscious that we cannot give adequate attention to others. As a result we may be perceived to not care about others. *"Our feelings of inadequacy prevent us from reaching out to love and care for others."*²⁰

People with a poor self-image often look to other people's opinions to determine how they feel or think about themselves at a particular moment. People with a poor sense of self-worth are slaves to the opinions of others. They are not free to be themselves. What we need is a feeling of confidence based on our personal relationship with God and the ability to rest in Him knowing that we are each His exceptional creation both physically and spiritually.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

Now that you know how special and valuable you are, you can get on with the work God has planned for you, and be able to do it with confidence.