



Living for yourSELF . . . or your SAVIOR

Natural wisdom proclaims that a fulfilled life rests in the inherent *goodness* and *promotion* of one's self. On the other hand, God's Word teaches that fulfillment depends on one's relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and this relationship calls a believer to die to self. Both of these contradictory perspectives – *promoting* self as opposed to *dying to* self – cannot be accurate. Because their respective sources of authority are diametrically opposed to one another, beliefs based on natural wisdom and humanistic philosophies inevitably conflict with the truth and wisdom of God's Word.

While often overlooked or simply ignored, the chasm between natural wisdom and divine wisdom is unbridgeable, as the following verses indicate.

Proverbs 14:12, There is a way *which seems* right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

Luke 9:23-24 (*spoken by Jesus*), And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. ²⁴ For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."

Romans 14:7-8, For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; ⁸ for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

2 Corinthians 10:17-18, But HE WHO BOASTS IS TO BOAST IN THE LORD. ¹⁸ For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends.

The view of self espoused by natural wisdom is addressed in Self-Esteem Fallacy Unmasked Years Ago at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Self%20Esteem%20Fallacy%20Unmasked%20Years%20Ago.pdf>

The gulf between divine wisdom and natural wisdom is so pronounced that no one can cross this gulf through personal effort or intelligence, religious duties, visions, dreams, or good works. Each person's natural self-orientation produces personal sin that results in estrangement from God. A person's only hope is for God graciously to forgive one's inherent sinfulness through the sacrificial death and miraculous resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

See *This is the Gospel ... The Good News* at

<http://wordtruth.org/PDF/This%20is%20the%20Gospel%20-%20The%20Good%20News.pdf> and

Good Works are Not Good Enough and Do Not Work at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Good%20Works%20are%20not%20Good%20Enough.pdf>

What does the Bible say about each of us apart from God? The Bible states that *every* person is naturally:

- Like dust

Psalms 103:14, For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are *but* dust.

- Like a mere breath and a passing shadow, with a lifetime that is nothing in the Lord's sight

Psalms 39:4-5, LORD, make me to know my end and what is the extent of my days; let me know how transient I am. ⁵ Behold, You have made my days *as* handbreadths, and my lifetime as nothing in Your sight. Surely every man at his best is a mere breath.

Psalms 62:9, Men of low degree are only vanity and men of rank are a lie. In the balances they go up; they are together lighter than breath.

Psalms 144:4, Man is like a mere breath; his days are like a passing shadow.

- Like grass

Isaiah 40:6-8, A voice says, "Call out." Then he answered, "What shall I call out?" All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. ⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. ⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.

Isaiah 51:12, “I, even I, am He who comforts you. Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies and of the son of man who is made like grass.”

1 Peter 1:24, For, “ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.”

- Like a flower of the field that flourishes and then is no more

Psalms 103:15-16, As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes.¹⁶ When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, and its place acknowledges it no longer.

- Like a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away

James 4:14, Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

- Stupid and devoid of knowledge

Jeremiah 51:17a, All mankind is stupid, devoid of knowledge ...

- Accounted as nothing and meaningless

Isaiah 40:17, All the nations are as nothing before Him, they are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless.

Daniel 4:35, All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and *among* the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, “What have You done?”

The above verses show that every person is woefully deficient, especially in comparison to God Almighty. Furthermore, people who will not heed God’s Word with regard to God’s plan of salvation through Jesus Christ are:

- Worthless (depraved, unapproved), detestable (*Jeremiah 13:10; Titus 1:16*), rejected with regard to faith in God (*2 Timothy 3:1-8*) and worthy of death (*Romans 6:23*).

Jeremiah 13:10, This wicked people, who refuse to listen to My words, who walk in the stubbornness of their hearts and have gone after other gods to serve them and to bow down to them, let them be just like this waistband which is totally worthless.

Titus 1:16, They profess to know God, but by *their* deeds they deny *Him*, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.

2 Timothy 3:1-8, But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ² For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. ⁶ For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, ⁷ always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸ Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these *men* also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith.

Romans 6:23, For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Corrupt, unrighteous, and useless (*Psalms 14:1-3, Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:10-18*)

Psalms 14:1-3, The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; there is no one who does good. ² The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. ³ They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

Ecclesiastes 7:20, Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who *continually* does good and who never sins.

Romans 3:10-18, as it is written, “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.¹³ THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING. THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS,¹⁴ WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS;¹⁵ THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,¹⁶ DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,¹⁷ AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN.¹⁸ THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.”

- Dead in their sins (*Ephesians 2:1*)

Ephesians 2:1, And you were dead in your trespasses and sins

Even for believers in Christ, trusting in one's self is futile since:

- Nothing inherently good dwells within any person's heart or flesh (*Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 7:18*).

Jeremiah 17:9, The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?

Romans 7:18, For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not.

- No one can do anything spiritually fruitful apart from Jesus (*John 15:5*).

John 15:5, I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

- Apart from Jesus Christ, every person is a slave to sin (*Romans 6:16-18, Hebrews 2:14-15*).

Romans 6:16-18, Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin ^[a]resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that ^[c]though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Hebrews 2:14-15, Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

- Natural wisdom is inadequate to direct one's steps (*Psalms 94:11, Proverbs 14:12, Jeremiah 10:23*).

Psalms 94:11, The LORD knows the thoughts of man, that they are a mere breath.

Jeremiah 10:23, I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.

The Bible addresses and refutes other areas of self-emphasis such as the errors of self-worth, self-love, self-assurance, self-confidence, self-assertiveness, self-esteem, self-exaltation, and self-righteousness.

For biblical truth regarding all of the "self" terms in the above paragraph, see **Scriptural Response to Self-Esteem Teaching** at: <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Scriptural%20Response%20to%20Self-Esteem%20Teaching.pdf>

See also **Christ Crucified: The Solution to Self-Dependency** at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Christ%20Crucified%20Study%20with%20Outline.pdf>

According to the Bible, every person apart from Jesus Christ is spiritually helpless and destined for a hopeless eternity. On the other hand, everyone who receives the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior is identified with Him in this life and divinely promised to be in His physical presence in the life to come.

See **Your Identity in Christ** at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Your%20Identity%20in%20Christ.pdf> and

Jesus IS Lord at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Jesus%20IS%20Lord.pdf> and

Is Dying to Self Really Necessary? at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Dying%20to%20Self.pdf>

Many people will eventually realize the devastating impact that self-focus has in one's life. That discovery will, ideally, lead to their receiving salvation through Jesus, which is the first step in becoming a faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those people who do not recognize the detriments of self in this life and fail to receive salvation through Jesus will certainly have to account for that oversight in the life to come. May each of us respond to God's love revealed in His Son and, as a result, receive the benefits of continually dying to self and faithfully living for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The "self" descriptions in this study are from Self-Confrontation, a 480 page discipleship manual produced by the Biblical Counseling Foundation (<http://www.bcfministries.org>). Phone: (760) 347-4608. Fax: (760) 775-5751. For Orders within USA: (877) 933-9333. E-mail correspondence: admin@bcfministries.org and E-mail orders: orders@bcfministries.org