

ME

“Have mercy on me O God” (Ps. 51:1)

This psalm of David contains 31 references to “me”, “my” and “I” in only 19 verses. It is thought to have been composed by David after the prophet Nathan confronted him about his adultery with Bathsheba. To his credit David repented and cried out to God - have mercy on me, cleanse me, teach me, wash me, sustain me, save me, Etc. The focus of the psalm is not totally selfish, however, for if God restored unto him the joy of his salvation David promised: **“Then I will teach transgressors your ways and sinners will turn back to you” (Ps. 51:13).**

For those familiar with commercial aviation, passengers are told that in case the cabin loses pressure an oxygen mask will drop down from the ceiling. Each passenger is to immediately put on that mask before attempting to help others. The reason is obvious. If you become unconscious you will not be able to help anyone. Similarly, David’s prayer for forgiveness was a first step to helping other sinners find forgiveness.

As you know, mankind is basically selfish. The infant is totally self centered. A hungry baby doesn’t care about anyone else. Growing older doesn’t automatically solve the problem. When looking at a map we instinctively look for where we are. When looking at a group picture we automatically look for either our self, or someone we know. The prodigal son didn’t come home because he loved his father but because he was starving to death (Lk. 15:17). This instinctive desire for self preservation is not totally bad. It is perhaps the primary reason lost people turn to Jesus for salvation.

The wicked one, however, is completely aware of our human nature and cleverly exploits these natural desires. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride of life were not only present in Eden but also in every generation since. It was these same three natural desires that the Devil used to tempt Jesus in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1 - 11). Jesus was victorious over each temptation because He had mastered the art of self denial. He did not come to earth to do His own will, but the will of the Father!

Someone has quipped that sin is “I want, what I want, when I want it”. Self centeredness was certainly at the center of Satan’s downfall as he said in his heart: **“I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High” (Is. 14:13 - 15).** It was because of this that God cast Satan down to earth. Note that while David was in “submission” to God, Satan was in “competition” with Him!

With this brief background let us consider these profound words of Christ. **“Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matt. 10:39).** This is, of course, a paradox. As the martyr Jim Elliott said: “He is no fool who gives up the things he cannot keep to gain the things he cannot lose”. It is our strong desire for life eternal that causes us to deny our earthly life and take up a cross. By losing this life for Christ we gain abundant life. Remember! Except a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it only remains a single seed. If it dies, however, it can produce many seeds (Jn. 12:24). You do not have to die as a martyr to do this!

This is not a peripheral issue but is at the heart and core of conversion. We are to set our minds on things above and not on things of earth because we have died and our lives are hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). When we are crucified with Christ, Christ lives within us by faith (Gal. 2:20). Therefore, whatever we do in word or deed we do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to Go the Father through Him (Col. 3:17). David lived many years after he wrote this psalm, and thousands of sinners have turned back to God because he set the example.