

*A Victorious Self-Image
in Virtue Love*

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Subjectivity is the cause of so many problems for believers in churches today. It establishes a mindset that is a direct result of Adam's Fall. Beginning with a preoccupation with self, subjective Christians evaluate people, situations, and even the Word of God according to relative righteousness (with self as the standard). Their arrogance masks a poor self-image, and they are often suspicious of people's motives and even paranoid. The good news is that no one has to live that way!

Be careful how you hear. Satan will tempt you to hide yourself from objectivity if you allow him to make you subjective when the Scriptures are being taught. Remember, *you* are never the object of the preacher's message, but each of us is the object of God's living Word, which enables us to grow in grace and knowledge and to be renewed in His image.

God's grace is inexhaustible; it depends

upon the Giver and never the receiver. His forgiveness is incomprehensible; His mercy is eternal; and His love is unconditional. It is this quality of love—‘virtue love’—that sets captives free, because *this* love never demands a response from its object.

Successful men and women are those who hear the Word of God and do it, who find the will of God and honor it, and who find the virtue love of Christ and experience it. The foundation for this victorious self-image is secured in the believer’s heart by faith: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

Chapter One

THE PROBLEM OF SUBJECTIVITY

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

“And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

“And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?” (Genesis 3:6-9).

Adam and Eve were in a perfect environment, but Eve was deceived because, as a re-

sponder, she didn't abide under her covering—and she didn't receive doctrine from God. You see, Genesis 3:8 reveals that God came to the garden every evening in the cool of the day, seven days a week, to personally teach doctrine to Adam and Eve. The Hebrew imperfect tense reveals that He *continued* to meet them at the same time every day. We also read in Isaiah 50:4 that the Father awoke the Son each morning to teach Him categorical doctrine. From the beginning, it was clearly God's plan for every believer to receive daily instruction in His Word.

But the day came when Adam and Eve didn't show up. God came to teach them on the day they ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. They didn't come to Bible class that day because the fruit of that tree made them subjective, choosing to become the subject of their own thoughts—to be as gods. Instead of operating from the objective mind of God imparted through His Word, Adam and Eve chose to disobey God with their volition.

Volition always determines a man's condition. Adam and Eve's eyes were "opened," and they realized that they were naked. Although they had been naked all along, they had never been self-conscious, only God-conscious. They

tried to cover their nakedness by sewing fig leaves together to make aprons. But that's not all they did. The Word says they hid themselves from the presence of God (which is pretty hard to do since He is omnipresent!). In other words, they didn't show up for "church" because of their negative self-consciousness and poor self-image.

In Genesis 3:9, God asked "Where are you?" They said, "We hid ourselves because we were afraid of You." From that point on, everything God said would make them feel guilty, no matter what it was, because of subjectivity.

Subjectivity will cause a person to think that people are taking notice of him when they are not. "Everyone knows what mistakes I made by the way I was acting last night," he thinks to himself. He becomes tense and fearful, preoccupied with his old self-image in Adam.

Subjective people are always occupied with themselves. We have all experienced it to some degree. But taken to extremes, this occupation causes Christians to hide themselves from church. Relationships with others often become sarcastic because of the old sin nature. Eventually, they will want counseling, but they will never receive better counsel than they can get from the Bible.

Steps toward Meekness

So, how does a person get out of subjectivity? The opposite of self-consciousness is God-consciousness, and we get there through *meekness*. Practically speaking, meekness means to live in God-consciousness, thinking with Jesus Christ. There are a number of steps toward becoming meek.

The first step is in studying to be quiet and doing your own business with quietness (1 Thessalonians 4:11). It is being still and knowing that God is God (Psalm 46:10). When you make a decision not to be preoccupied with self, you will not react in the flesh. Remember, a man only reacts because of what is in himself and not what is in God. But if a man is born again, God is in him. Therefore, instead of reacting to 'self' (Adam and all of his productions), he begins to respond to God who is in him.

Once he is quiet, the next step toward meekness is in understanding that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). Every born-again Christian needs to find a pastor-teacher and receive a regular diet of Bible doctrine, learning how to think with God precisely. We receive faith by hearing

the Word of God from a preacher, realizing that without faith it is impossible to please God. “He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (see Hebrews 11:6). It follows that a regular intake of the Word will result in a faith that has objective substance.

Then, in James 1:21, we are to lay aside all “superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word.” We rebound from anything we have done that made us naughty (1 John 1:9), laying it aside to receive the Word of God with *God*-consciousness—without subjectivity and without condemnation. Through the Holy Spirit, the Word is borne in a believer and is able to deliver his soul (James 1:21). This is meekness.

Next, as soon as he hears the Word in the freedom of grace, mercy, and love he will begin to obey it mentally, and he is on the road to having meekness internalized in his soul.

Now that he is set free in his soul by the truth he has received, this believer begins to experience virtue love in the local assembly where God leads him. He becomes part of a living organism in that assembly (Ephesians 5:30), and his heart is comforted as he is knit with others

in the Body of Christ by virtue love (Colossians 2:2). Through the knowledge and understanding of doctrine and the Holy Spirit, he experiences being knit together as a member in particular (1 Corinthians 12:27).

Next, he loves every single person as much as God loves him (John 15:12; 1 John 3:14; John 13:34-35), and he is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). The only way that can happen is by the Holy Spirit who sheds God's unconditional love abroad in his heart (Romans 5:5). This is meekness.

Advancing to Thanksgiving

“In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Thanksgiving is the gauge of your spiritual condition produced through your volition. Whatever the circumstances, you will either continue to advance moment by moment, or you will go backward. There is no standing still on this road.

A Christian can recognize the moment he is off, because he is outside of the will of God pertaining to thanksgiving. Even when we watch and pray, we need to be thankful (Colossians 4:2), “Giving thanks always for all things unto

God and the Father in the [nature] of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20). When we are giving thanks, we are not subjective.

A woman in our church had a rough time growing up. She had fears and subconscious effects that were always with her because of the terrible things that consistently went on in her home. But during one service, she was completely delivered. None of those things have come back to hinder her. She didn’t have to go through a process—*it was a miracle*. She can no longer relate to any of the things that happened. All of her natural subjectivity about that situation was taken away to Calvary and buried once and for all (Hebrews 10:10, 14). She is free! She just believed and received and it was gone.

“Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep [guard and establish] your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:4-7).

Did you know that another meaning for the word that is translated as “rejoice” is “relax”?

Relax always, and let your *moderation* (*epieikes* in the Greek) be known unto all men, for the Lord is with you. This unusual word speaks of mercy that rejoices against judgment, mercy that goes beyond justice because of God's Finished Work. We all quote Psalm 119:165, "Great peace have they which love thy [doctrine]: and nothing shall offend them." *Nothing* shall offend them. Have you been offended recently? It happened because you don't love God's Word, and you are subjective. Subjectivity will follow you to the grave—and it could put you there years ahead of time.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

If there is anything with virtue love in it, if there is anything to praise God about, let *this* be the boundary line in your thinking. Bring every thought to God with prayer and thanksgiving. Your mental attitude determines where you're at. Your *volition* causes your condition—not another person. You are responsible for your own choices. The problem isn't what people have

done to you, even if they were monsters.

Of course there are wounds that require a healing process, and the provision is in Christ's Finished Work. But if you continue to live in the effects of the past rather than what the Finished Work says about you, you have a problem. Your volition has chosen the wrong response to what those people did and your emotions will get beaten up because of continual wrong choices (Isaiah 30:26).*

The Problem of Unthankfulness

Every day we either advance or go backwards. Satan hates to see us advance, and he will try everything he can bring about our downfall. Romans 1:21a says, "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." One of the first things to happen when people will not glorify God in a situation because of subjectivity is that they are not thankful. Instead, they live in self-consciousness, suspicion, and the blame game.

Let's look at 2 Timothy 3:1-5: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”

Unthankfulness and covetousness will mark these last days we are living in. When you get mad and tell someone off, you are unthankful, and you need to repent. Don’t let the skeletons of ‘damaged goods’—wounds and failure from the past—make you the devil’s representative as he fires his artillery at your soul.

So many love pleasures more than they love God. They would rather go out with the world than with Christians. Having a form of godliness, they make a fair show in the flesh. They may show up in church, yet deny God’s power. They are subjective. Subjective people deny God’s love, mercy, grace, stewardship, power, peace, poise, and wisdom. They live acknowledging their potential but never experiencing the reality of advancing in grace.

God said, “Where art thou?” Good question. “You certainly haven’t been in Bible class.”

Adam and Eve said, “We hid ourselves. But, look at our new aprons! Oh, we had to do it. We

saw that we were naked.” The answers of subjectivity.

Proper Self-Examination

Revelation 7:12 says we are to give thanks and honor to Jesus Christ. *My attitude of praise will determine the attitude of my heart.* It will determine what is in my heart, in my mind, and in my soul. Do you realize that it is possible to be Spirit-filled seven days a week by being quick to rebound, not living in subjectivity at all, and by simply being thankful? “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Of course there are days when subjectivity tries repeatedly to get into our thought patterns. But it’s over when we simply identify it as subjectivity.

In order to be meek, I have to obey them who have the rule over me and follow their examples as they follow God (Hebrews 13:7). I should communicate with my pastor-teacher (Galatians 6:6). In order to reveal meekness, I need to edify every person around me and minister grace to the listeners. I want people to say of me, “Even when he tells me truth that hurts, I like it because he edifies me” (see Ephesians 4:29).

If I am truly meek, I will build myself up as a

believer-priest in the holy faith of categories, having a specific word from God for the detail I'm facing. I will keep myself in the love of God, even if all hell comes against me. I will look for mercy to come every day (see Jude 20-22).

God prepared a draft of each of our lives billions of years ago. He had a perfect plan for you and me. In His foreknowledge, He saw some of the stupid things we would do to try to ruin His plan.

Get back into the perfect plan of God; live in it and think in it. Speak according to the power that is in you (Philemon 6). Respond to His provision. The greatest thing in the world is to accept His plan, execute His provision, and walk in the light of grace.

Subjective people don't relate to the plan of God. Cain was subjective; Abel was not. Absalom was subjective; David was not. Saul was subjective and ended up taking his own life (1 Samuel 31:34). He feared David because he was occupied with himself as the subject, even though he started out well (1 Samuel 10).

A subjective person privately interprets people's words and actions in the distorted viewpoint of their fallen self-image because of self-conscious preoccupation with the Fall. Con-

trast that with 1 Corinthians 13, where we are told to believe all things, endure all things, and hope all things. Virtue love never thinks evil. But subjective love always thinks negative thoughts. Do you see how virtue love works? Virtue love is thankful. It is appreciative and happy. Virtue love is never sarcastic. It is kind. If virtue love wrongs anyone, it asks for forgiveness. It is good to ask for forgiveness when you get off, because it humbles you.

Put these truths into your marriage and you will enjoy an eternal honeymoon. Instead of privately interpreting the motives of people around you as you put on fig leaves and hide in subjectivity, live in the words of virtue love. *Your volition will determine your condition.*

The Fall of Adam is still making people subjective today. Our past will cause us to evaluate others subjectively, based on how we interpret those events. But we can be liberated experientially from the past forever. Remember, if you are not advancing, you are going backward. But by God's grace, we can live in our new self-image, because that is always God's viewpoint of us in Christ.

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your

own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

"Examine yourselves" is *peirazo*, a present active imperative in the Greek text. This doesn't mean to be introspective; it means to allow the Holy Spirit to reveal if there is any infection within. If there is, then just deal with it through the Blood of Christ and the Word of God. Take up the provision God has given to abide in Him, and allow His words to abide in you (John 15:7).

"Prove your own selves" is *dokimazo*, which means to see how much divine good you are operating in. Not everything is all bad, even in the worst of us. "Reprobates" is the Greek word *adokimos*. This word doesn't indicate that you are lost and going to hell, but that God disapproves of the things you do because you are not fulfilling His will with an attitude of praise.

Furthermore, to examine yourself does not mean to condemn yourself. It simply means to make sure you are well with grace and living up-to-date in an attitude of love. This starts with God loving you, then you loving yourself. When that is established, virtue love will automatically flow from you.

*Freely Receive from God, by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998, discusses the stroke of a wound in depth.

Chapter Two
**LOSE CONTROL
AND LET GOD REIGN**

“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21).

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

“But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

When Eve was at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the serpent deceived her by saying, “You will not surely die as you have been told” Oh, how some people argue and rationalize God’s Word away.

A subjective person makes himself the subject of all of his decisions. He wants control of his life because of his needs, his past, and the

scar tissue from wounds in his soul. Think about Paul who said, “Brethren I have suffered the loss of all things.” *Come on, Paul! You’re not in control.* “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ...” (Galatians 2:20a). *Paul! That doesn’t make sense.* Jesus said, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it brings forth fruit.” We have to lose control and turn our selves over to God’s system of virtue love.

God *is* love. When He becomes the object of our lives, we love Him because He’s the only object that has perfect value and perfect virtue.

First, we receive Him as our personal Savior. He gives us power to become the sons of God (John 1:12). Then we hear the Word of God from a pastor-teacher sent by God (Romans 10:17), and the Word produces faith in us. Then, we enter into academic discipline. The pastor communicates doctrine and the listener receives the whole counsel of the Word in the local assembly. Once he has heard, the listener stands or falls before God as a believer-priest.

When we receive the Word with meekness, it is able to deliver our souls from *self*-control and from the image of Adam because we were created in the image of God (Genesis 5:3; 1:27).

Overcoming the Image of Adam

When a believer lives in the image of Adam, he is self-conscious. His self-image in the Fall struggles to be in control of people and situations. Afraid to give everything over to God, as the subject he becomes his own god, controlling his life and privately interpreting the Scriptures. He prays to God without submitting to the Word.

Often, people (as subjects) answer their own prayers in self-preference, appeasing their conscience. They honor their self-image and fulfill the desire for a comfortable, convenient Christianity. They have no firm convictions that come from hearing the Word of God. Paul wrote, “Faith cometh by *hearing*”, not by reading. But notice Hebrews 4:2, “For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but *the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*”

Today Jesus would tell us, “When I was in the desert being tempted by Satan, I lived by every Word of God. I didn’t have to pray about whether I should build Myself up in categories for the trial or consult with My feelings about it. I simply quoted the Scriptures. I could have

turned to human resources, but I relied on the divine resources of the Word of God. 'It is written!'—that's what I told the devil, and I came out of forty days and nights of fasting in the desert in excellent condition."

Jesus made the Father the object of His life on earth. The Father filled Him with Holy Spirit as He was taught the Word every morning (Isaiah 50:4). The result? Jesus Christ had virtue love that was unconditional.

Subjective Love and the Ego

Many Christian marriages are in trouble because their love is subjective and relates to the ego. For example, two people fall in love, come to the altar, and exchange vows. "By the grace of God, will you keep these vows to your own hurt?" the pastor asks.

"Yes," they answer.

"Do you take this person, for better, for worse? In prosperity, or bankruptcy? Do you take this person, no matter what happens, in sickness and in health for the rest of your life?"

"I do."

Sure they do, because at that point the object of their love has certain value. The husband is handsome, tall. The wife finds value in him until

she has lived with him five to ten years. Then she finds a reason to leave him. She says she can't go back. Yet, there has been no adultery.

Subjectivity will do that, because in subjectivity, you are the subject, and everything you do in life is related to how the object of your love relates to you. In this case, the object didn't produce any value for the subject because the subject lived as a god in subjectivity, making decisions to honor her own preferences, her own lust patterns, and her own needs.

Here's a young man who marries a beautiful girl. He vows to love her until death do they part. She comes down with a crippling arthritic disease that puts her in a wheelchair. In time, he divorces her and remarries. Why? The object of his love was no longer desirable.

The only time subjective love is acceptable is when it is in Jesus Christ's virtue love. That is when verses such as "Greater is [H]e that in you than he that is in the world" really make sense. Inside each of us is something that can take over the streams of consciousness, that can flood our self-consciousness with God's thoughts, giving us the mental attitude of Christ and the emotional stability of the Holy Spirit. But when a man's affections are set in heaven and *God* is the

object of his love, then he will have God's love for himself and everyone else.

Virtue Love Goes beyond the Condition

Consider the story of the prophet Hosea. His wife, Gomer, goes out on him in adulterous affairs, keeps going out on him, and eventually becomes a prostitute. Years later, Hosea finds Gomer as she is brought to the slave auction. She is old and wrinkled, disfigured by the effects of her sin, but Hosea says, "That's Gomer! I'm going to buy her back and take care of her because I love her." God was teaching the fallen nation of Israel a beautiful lesson of how much He loved them. It's called virtue love.

Virtue love is unconditional. All we, like sheep, were gone astray, and every one of us turned to his own way, yet the Father laid upon Jesus Christ the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53). That's virtue love. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, *while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). Was there any value in us as the objects of His love? None whatsoever.

In Luke 15, the shepherd left the ninety and nine to search for the one lost sheep. The woman lost a coin, lit a candle, and diligently sought

until she found the coin. Virtue love is always seeking.

When the prodigal son came home, the father saw him afar off, ran to meet him, and kissed him repeatedly on the neck. Before the prodigal could finish his confession, the father interrupted, gave him a robe, a ring, new shoes, and then held a tremendous banquet.

Mercy assures that we never get what we *do* deserve. Beyond mercy, grace adds to our life what we *don't* deserve. With the prodigal, we see mercy in action. The father wouldn't let the son finish his confession. He received the full privileges of his sonship because he never lost his position.

The Lord is waiting to be gracious to us (Isaiah 30:18). He will be exalted that he might have mercy on us. He won't give us what we deserve; that was settled forever at the Cross. Now He is waiting to add something to our lives that we don't deserve. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). He will give us these things richly and freely to enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17).

The Joy of Mercy and Grace

God is waiting to get our attention, to give us what we don't deserve in this lifetime so He will be exalted in His grace and mercy. He wants to give us mercy; He wants to make sure we know that He's not going to give us what we really deserve.

When we receive the Word of God, we receive something from heaven, something outside of us. The truth goes into our human spirit for a few moments and then the human spirit brings it back into Channel A—the part of our mind that is committed to perception and awareness.* Then we must make a decision. Do we want to live by the Word we've received? We decide with our volition. God doesn't force us into a choice. No pastor can enforce choices upon people. He communicates the truth, but it is the responsibility of the hearers to make decisions with every Word of God that is taught.

By mixing faith with the Word, we enter into total humility and meekness with God-consciousness. We are no longer self-conscious, but God conscious; we no longer control our lives. The Cross takes us out of control. We can no longer control anything.

The Holy Spirit now guides us (Romans 8:14), the Word leads us (Psalm 119:133), and meditation reinforces the life of Christ in us. We are now led by what we have received, assimilated, and circulated through the grace of God into our conscience. For us to live is Christ.**

No longer do we play God with all our emotions, old wounds, and reactions. God takes over, sets us completely free and liberates us through the Cross. Daily we take up our Cross, which means daily we surrender control over our lives. The One who does control our lives is Jesus Christ, the Written Word and the Living Word. And as the Spirit fills us, we walk in unconditional virtue love.

We know that we have passed from death to life because we have unconditional love for the brethren (1 John 3:14). And even as God laid down His life for us, we are to lay down our lives for each other (1 John 3:16). This is virtue love!

Virtue love surrenders control so that God's objective Word controls the soul, the heart, and the human spirit through the Holy Spirit. It is the Word of God in the heart—the premise for all of our motivational thinking, the center of operations for all of our behavior, and the supreme center of communication for all the

thoughts of the mind, decisions of the will, and appropriations of truth. That is the new heart and the basis for a victorious self-image through virtue love.

From Weakness to Capacity

Satan consistently attempts to rob us of our capacity, because capacity and the Cross are connected. Details of life can take us away from our daily Cross, but the Cross brings a personal solution for every problem, by God's Word and through His power.

If we have divine viewpoint as our capacity (and that only comes through the inculcation of the Word of God), then we have something millions in the world do not have. Unless they are in Christ, politicians do not have it, historians do not have it, and scientists do not have it. But Christians have the ability to experience a divine thought pattern.

The more I receive the Word of God in meekness, the greater my self-image. My self-image depends upon the operation of God's precise thoughts for the moment. No matter what has happened in the past, my self-image depends upon Jesus Christ's Word for this moment.

Imagine waking up every morning and un-

derstanding with conviction that you have a personal destiny. When you sin, you don't have to run to the high priest the way the Old Testament saints did. We go to Him who ever lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). He is our High Priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separate from sinners, higher than the heavens.

Jesus Christ pleads our case (Hebrews 9:24). He is our only mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). He is our Advocate (1 John 2:1). When we sin, we go directly to Him as a believer-priest. We are royal priests (1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 1:5-6). If we fail, we declare our royal priesthood and go directly to the Father. The issue is settled just like that, because we use our priesthood.

We can have mercy through propitiation: Christ's fulfillment of justice on our behalf. Our part is to keep on receiving the Word of God to build and develop our self-image in virtue love.

**Read The Hearing Heart, by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

***Read Categorical Meditation: The One Answer to All Problems, by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Three

OVERCOMERS
THROUGH WEAKNESS

“For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you” (2 Corinthians 13:4).

The serpent tempted Eve by saying, “God knows that in the day you eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” This is the problem with subjective people, including many Christians: They make themselves a god.

In essence, the devil told Eve, “Your conscience is hanging on that tree. You’re not self-conscious yet—you don’t even know that you’re naked. But if you eat of that tree, your eyes will be opened. As the subject, you will be able to judge between good and evil.” That, my friends, is subjectivity.

Of course, in order to rightly judge between good and evil, we would need to be omniscient and omnipresent—having all knowledge and existing everywhere at all times. Yet, subjective people seem to think that they can do a pretty good job of judging without being omniscient and omnipresent.

When we're tempted to judge, we need to remember that *all* have sinned and come short of the glory of God and all of us are weak. "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians 1:25). The foolishness of God is grace. Grace seems foolish to the average person—especially to those who are subjective. But the weakness of God was revealed when Jesus Christ was crucified in weakness though He lived by the power of God (2 Corinthians 13:4a). The weakness of God is Christ taking all of our sins and becoming sin for us at Calvary that we might be made the righteousness of God through faith.

Of the Son it was said that the Father will "make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears" (Isaiah 11:3). Jesus Christ said, "The Son

can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19). "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge" (John 5:30a).

The Son of God was saying, "I'll show you what subjectivity *isn't*! I fear God my Father, and I will not judge after sight nor reprove based on something somebody tells me they have heard." Jesus didn't open His mouth without the Father. He didn't think a thought apart from the Father. But we do, and we ramble on for hours in subjectivity.

Jesus was perfect, but we can act like we are so good that we play God, thinking we know good and evil. We judge by what we see and reprove by what we hear, though we cannot look upon a man's heart as God can (see 1 Samuel 16:7).

"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

“Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ’s, let him of himself think again, that, as he is Christ’s, even so are we Christ’s” (2 Corinthians 10:4-7).

For one week, decide to be accountable before God and purpose in your heart not to be subjective one time. Refuse to judge by what you see and refuse to reprove by what you hear. Our weapons must not be carnal; we must never make ourselves the subject in any situation. We are to cast down everything that is subjective.

“For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you” (2 Corinthians 13:4).

We are living with Christ by the power of God within us. Our source of observation, perception, and evaluation toward others must be by the power of God. There is no subjectivity in that, only objectivity. Subjectivity is the problem. You can carry on in it until you die, or you can shout, “Alleluia! I’ve been counseled by the Word of God today and I am renewed.” You will feel like a million dollars.

Experience the Sufficiency of Grace

In 2 Corinthians 12:7, Paul speaks of “a messenger of Satan,” a demon, that was sent to buffet him. God sent a demon to buffet one of the greatest men in all of the New Testament so he wouldn’t be overcome by the pride of his pharisaic background in Jewish legalism. Paul prayed three times for God to remove the thorn. But prayer wasn’t the answer. Paul desired a natural resource yet he was offered a divine resource. God said, “My *grace* is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Paul’s response? “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” Paul’s necessities, persecutions, and reproaches helped him realize that when he was weak, God was strong.

Every one reading this booklet has an outstanding weakness. It is there to keep you humble. My weakness is there to make me so weak that I will be like the Christians in Hebrews 11:34 who “out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the *aliens*,” speaking of demons, in the original text. We need to stay humble and depend on Christ,

but we will be conquerors, because when we are weak, then we are strong.

The Christian community is a weak community. We can't look at ourselves and play God—even when we fail seven times in one day. I guarantee that I wouldn't be walking with God if it were not for my weakness. Why would I need God? Nevertheless, we are not to live in our weaknesses, but believe 1 Corinthians 1:27-30: "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and...the weak things of the world to confound...the mighty; and the base things of the world, and things which are despised...things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence." But of Him are we in Christ Jesus, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

The Wealth of Weakness

We are weak. Our weakness may be human goodness. It may be self-righteousness. Or it may be personal sins of human evil or unrighteousness. Whatever it is, weakness breaks us down. As we become weaker and weaker, God will bring in a crisis. And in the crisis we discover grace. We discover that His grace is suffi-

cient because it's the Cross for us. Before we know it, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God—the government of God's Kingdom—become the power reigning within.*

We are no longer the subjects of our own lives. We become the objects of Jesus Christ, who is the Subject in us. For us to live is Christ. Our life isn't subjectivity; it is Christ. The strength of grace is made perfect in our weaknesses. We glory in infirmity, because it sends us to Him. We glory in our reproaches, because they bring us to Him. We glory in necessities and persecutions, because they lead us to Him.

When we are weak, we are so strong! In Psalm 84, our strength is in the valley of weeping. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca [weeping] make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God" (Psalm 84:5-7).

Weakness that reckons on Christ's strength removes subjectivity. It also removes unrealistic expectations toward others and toward myself. Unrealistic expectations are nothing more than the skills of pride acting in subjectivity. I may be extremely weak, but if I don't deal with my

weakness by receiving grace then I will build a defense provision of pride. I will become subjective toward others so I can transfer the blame for my problem to them.

God says to each one of us, “Will you let My mind be in you? Will you let the Word dwell richly in your heart? (Philippians 2:5; Colossians 3:16). Will you speak to yourself with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs? Will you relax? When your weakness comes back, will you receive the strength of My character to be forgiven? Isolate your weakness and go on, ‘forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,’ and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14).

The Purpose of a Thorn

People have more problems because of subjectivity than from any other cause. When we are subjective, we become a god, deciding who is spiritual and who isn't, who is right and who is wrong. We decide by what we see with our eyes and what we hear with our ears. We make demands based upon the subjectivity of our personality and unmet needs. When the demands are not fulfilled, we are thrown into greater sub-

jectivity, and weakness never becomes our strength.

It is so important to discern when we are being manipulated by someone's subjectivity, especially in the area of counseling. Though there are legitimate cries for help, there may be times when our "availability" would only reinforce a person's carnality, ungodly imagination, and a driving spirit.

God gives a thorn in the flesh so we will trust in the Lord with all our heart, not leaning on our own understanding but acknowledging Him in all of our ways, allowing Him to direct our paths. The thorn should cause us to say, "I am so absolutely weak, Lord, I have to trust You. I can't even live without trusting You."

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through Christ to the pulling down of all those strongholds of subjectivity. Therefore, we must exercise our will in the provision of God and cast down imaginations and high things that exalt themselves against doctrine. Every thought must be brought into the captivity of obedience to Christ. Revenging disobedience with obedience, subjectivity is gone, because we are no longer the subject acting on behalf of self. A positive volition produces a

brand-new spiritual condition, and we are able to advance instead of going backward.

Shout Alleluia! The Lord Reigns

For the moment, we know what we have been saved *from*. But in heaven, we will see what we have been saved *unto*. We will have glorified bodies. We will look upon Jesus as the King of kings and Lord of lords over those who made war against Him. He is the Lamb of God and He overcame them. We will finally see Him receiving the dignity, honor, and respect He should have. When we see what we have been saved unto, we will shout “Alleluia”—a perfect word, pronounced the same in every language. Get used to saying it! (Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, 6).

The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us (Romans 8:18). We shall be like Jesus Christ, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2). We will see the glory of God. We will see loved ones, friends, and best of all, we will see the Lamb, Jesus Christ. We will see the characters of the Bible who were so precious to us, and we will see them glorified. There will be no fear, no insecurity, no withdrawal, no self-consciousness, and no human weariness. We will shout

“Alleluia!” over and over again.

Out of my weakness will come His strength. Thank God, His grace is sufficient. I can do all things through Christ. Though I am weak, I have the power of God Almighty in me toward the objects outside of me. He controls circumstances and situations; Satan cannot do a thing to me without God’s permission. Everything I experience works together for my good and for my sake so that I will learn to be “graced out.”

With my attitude of praise, I will edify those around me, never thinking evil, never being sarcastic or unkind. As a listener, I will minister grace to you, letting God and you deal with your problems (while I will always be available to help).

The foolishness of God—grace—is wiser than the wisdom of men. The weakness of God—His crucifixion by men—is stronger than anything men can do. It reveals God’s amazing character. Imagine, the day is coming very soon when we are going to be perfect, like Him.

Today, we choose to have our conversation in heaven, according to Philippians 3:20. That is objectivity! And in Colossians 3:2, “Set your [mind] on things above.” *That is the answer*—the absolute solution to be delivered from subjectivity.

They who are Christ’s have crucified the

flesh with its lusts (Galatians 5:24). Our old man is crucified; therefore, reckon that you are dead to sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:11). Yield your members as instruments of righteousness unto God and not as instruments unto sin. Live as someone who is raised from the dead and who will be in heaven's "Alleluia" chorus forever.

Satan cannot touch the Christ who is in us because we have the fire of positional truth as a wall around us (Zechariah 2:5). The only way the devil can get through is to lie through our subjectivity. But if we bring every thought to God in objectivity, we will not fall into his trap.

Shout "Alleluia!" The devil doesn't like to hear that. We do not present ourselves to him, but we present our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We may be weak, but the power of God is inside of us. The virtue love of Christ is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Now we can love as He loves us, which is our whole purpose in life.

**Read Operating in the Authority of God's Kingdom, by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

CONCLUSION

The most vital thing we can do for our self-image is to receive total deliverance from ourselves. Stop trying to be in control of your life, and get “lost” in the Lord Jesus Christ and His living Word. We have virtue love because of our value in God’s family as members in particular.

Learn to give thanks in everything, for this is God’s will. Subjectivity can’t get in when we are praising God. Relax! Rejoice always so the effects of mercy can be seen by all men.

We have no idea what people are really thinking, so why become subjective? We don’t know what others have been through, but if we receive the Word of God with meekness, we will have right thoughts toward others and let Jesus Christ do the rest.

Father, bless us with an attitude of praise and thanksgiving and a positive volition that brings us into a brand-new spiritual condition. Alleluia! Amen.