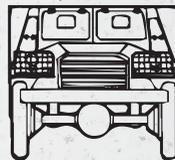


SELF - THE ROOT OF SIN**WARM UP**

In Greek mythology there is an interesting story about a handsome young man named Narcissus, son of the river god. For his insensibility to love, the goddess Nemesis caused him to fall in love with his own image reflected in the water. Unable to grasp his shadow, he pined away and became the flower which today bears his name.

As Christians, we are not into Greek mythology, yet for today's study we focus on the English word *narcissism*, which is derived from the above story. The definition of narcissism is: An excessive love or admiration of oneself. A psychological condition characterised by self preoccupation.

This love of self (which we are all born with), is the root of every sin.

**BACKGROUND**

A pastor once said to me, "Mike, you know the man that I feed, the man that I dress, the man that I put to bed every night and shave every morning, the man that I care for when he is sick or has a headache - if I'm not very careful, and I don't get him first before he gets me, he will stab me in the back and send me to hell!"

I never forgot his words. What he was saying is that self needs to be put to death, before it puts you to death. A.W. Tozer put it well when he wrote, "Self must be torn out of our heart like a plant from the soil. He must be extricated in agony and blood, like a tooth from the jaw".

READ Mark 8:34,35; Luke 14:25-27**QUESTIONS**

1. Discuss your insights on the scriptures quoted, i.e. dying to self (self-denial), as opposed to being put to death as a martyr.

2. "I" is the centre of S I N. Give examples of how self has been the root of sin in your own life, and gotten you into trouble.

3. Read about the fall of Lucifer in Isaiah 14:12-14 and count how many times he uses the word "I". What does that tell us about self, and how often do we fall into the same trap? Also read the Pharisee's prayer in Luke 18:9-12 and count the number of times he says "I". Note that he prayed with "himself", not to God!

4. Discuss your thoughts on Romans 8:13-14. (Note that *flesh* is just *self* spelt backwards without the "h"!)

**IT'S TIME FOR PRAYER****MY RESPONSE AS A PROMISE KEEPER**

As self is at the root of every sin, I will ask the Holy Spirit to put the axe at the root of the tree, so that self can be crucified with Christ.

(See Galatians 2:20.)

CONSIDER THIS

One of the early church fathers once said, "We die by living to self; we live by dying to self!" When we give our lives to Christ in true repentance, the fish is caught, so to speak. Now begins the process of cleaning the fish, and this is usually a painful and messy business.

WRAP UP

Even as mature Christians, we have to come to terms with the fact that the tough old self always resists change, and will not lie down and die easily.

Pray together and invite the Holy Spirit to reveal to you personally where self has come before God and others, and be determined to change things!

