

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## Self-Esteem Agenda

(Jerry Fite)

If you were to point out a root problem plaguing today's societal ills, the lack of self-esteem would be the focus of many. The root concept in “esteem” is “value”. In the opinion of many, the inability of one to sense his or her personal value leads to self-destructive habits of drug and alcohol abuse. Drugs and alcohol deaden the mental pain, at least for the moment, of not seeing the value of one's life. Among the elderly, the mere fact of growing old can lead to self-esteem problems. Growing limitations of life may cause one to interpret his or her life as being of no value. In a depressed state of mind, one may court suicide as a viable alternative. Standing by will be someone to assist, calling it euthanasia.

Perceiving the lack of self-esteem as a major problem, many believe our preaching and teaching should be aimed at solving this issue in our day. Building up self-esteem becomes a conscious goal. As a result, hearers are inundated with “God Don't Make No Junk” sermons.

Why would a Christian have any problem with this agenda? Here are a few Scriptural reasons:

First, that which heads the list of things to be done is “preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2), not build up self-esteem. Where do we read of the Lord calling His apostles in for a conference, and articulate that building up self-esteem should be our focus in preaching and teaching?

The Christian should have the same problem with those who advocate “positive preaching” today. Simply put, this is not the Lord's agenda. God's agenda is “preach the word.” This will demand the message of Christ coming in the form of “rebuke” during the “out of season time,” when ears are in the process of “turning aside from the truth.” If “positive preaching” has replaced the Lord's clear agenda of “preach the word”, how many in this group of “itching ears” will think the “rebuking” preacher is being faithful to the Lord? False agendas create imbalanced preaching. This is not valuable to anyone.

Second, some interpret building self-esteem as “make me feel good about myself.” Self-value to such a person means to focus only on one's good traits and beneficent deeds. With such an agenda, the preacher who

“preaches the word” will be in trouble. How do you grade Peter in the arena of “feel good” advocates as he pricks the hearts of his listeners with their sin of crucifying Jesus (Acts 2:37)?

Third, self-esteem is closely related to “self-love” in the minds of many. God sees this as a problem in man's relationship with Him. It is not the lack of “self-love” that keeps us from drawing close to the Lord, but too much of it in our hearts. Grievous times in the Bible do not issue from the lack of self-esteem, but from men, being “lovers of self,” gratifying themselves with “pleasure,” leaving no room in their hearts to be “lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:2, 4).

If the lack of self-value is the problem, preaching the Gospel with its basis of “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...” should surely cause the hearer to see that he or she is valuable in the mind and heart of God (John 3:16). Preaching the word will also penetrate the heart with the need of changing one's way in repentance. Correcting sinful ways will ensue, instead of ignoring them in “the feel good about myself” way of self-esteem advocates.