

Coping with Ourselves

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And let the peace of God rule in your hearts ... and be ye thankful (Colossians 3:15).

People tend to find difficulty in coping with who they are. Often they mask who they really are with a curtain of perceived or “ideal” nature. Some call this political correctness, but it goes much deeper than politics. Each one of us is born naked, bloody and crying; but as we grow older we do our best to conceal our nakedness (both figurative and literal), our bleeding (both figurative and literal) and our crying (both figurative and literal). Why do we do this? I believe it is because in our moments of nakedness, bleeding and tears that our true self shows, and being uncomfortable with ourselves we avoid these moments of transparency and vulnerability at all costs.

As it has been said so often, “life is the path, not the destination.” The beauties of traveling this path all deal with growth in some way. The collection of experience, knowledge, memories and diverse tastes are blessings to each of us. One specific blessing that is visible in the eyes of those who have received it (though few they are) is the blessing of learning to cope with who we are as individuals. The peace that comes with finding our identity and finding comfort in it is a peace that many people discover only as they draw their last few breaths.

My friend has found this blessing early in his life and you can see it so clearly in his eyes. He is at peace with everyone and everything around him. His wife, his children, his grandchildren and his close friends all feel the peace and comfort that radiates from him. He does not fear the transparency and vulnerability of nakedness, bleeding and tears; he counts them as blessings. When you are around someone who is at peace with himself and with the Lord, you know it and you cannot help but enjoy it. You indulge in it. This friend of mine has told me one of the secrets of coping with who I am, because it’s something I struggle with sometimes. This secret is to learn to forgive yourself and stop living in past failures.

He and I both realize what an unspeakable blessing it is to be forgiven by our heavenly Father, but there is an obstacle that my friend has learned to get over which I have not. God has forgiven me for the monster I was in the past; why can’t I? When I apologized to the people I

have sinned against in the past; fortunately every single one has said “I forgive you.” Some even laughed and said, “What do you mean? I have forgotten all about that.”

It seems that is easier for us to forgive others than it is for us to forgive ourselves, but we must. There can be no peace of mind inside a mind at war with itself. This is the part of “coping with myself” that I struggle with the most. I have not yet forgiven myself for some things in my past, but each day that I travel this path I grow towards that goal. There are some things that I thought I’d never forgive myself for which I have come to terms with. None of these things have I forgiven on my own. It is Christ’s example that helps me with forgiveness each day.

Being comfortable with who God made us is something we must all learn to accomplish if we wish to find peace within ourselves. It is an active task which is certainly not easy, but it pays big dividends to yourself and everyone around you. Learn to forgive yourself for the things of the past that haunt your mind. If God has declared you righteous and has thrown away your sins, you have peace with Him. You must also throw away your sins that have passed if you wish to gain peace within yourself. Only then can you see the blessing in being transparent and vulnerable around your loved ones instead of hiding behind the walls of a fortress built with fear and sadness.

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