

Regarding my present situation, I realized that if the symptoms of an accident were healed through the denial of the reality of accident, there could be no other effect from the supposed accident. It had never occurred in the realm of infinite Mind, God. During the afternoon and evening I gradually gained the use of my left hand. In the morning as I left for the airport, I found I still could not lift my suitcase with that hand. The next day, however, as I was crossing the airstrip to the plane, I noticed I was carrying my suitcase with my left hand. I never knew exactly when the healing had come, but it was permanent and complete.

How grateful we are that as we follow Christ Jesus in the way he showed us and become his disciples, we can know the eternal Truth as that which has been demonstrated, and be free: Q.E.D. The answer is there, our freedom assured. ■

NAHUM



The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him. . . . What do ye imagine against the Lord? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time.

Nahum 1:7, 9

Overcoming self-condemnation

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THERE are times when we realize that our actions have fallen short of expectations—perhaps we missed an opportunity or made a wrong decision or feel we’ve strayed off the course—and often the response is to sink into a downward spiral of self-condemnation and depression.

What should our response be when we feel our life is less than we expected, or even seems downright useless? We can learn more of man’s God-given worth and stop looking at a past mistake as capable of producing a present problem.

Mary Baker Eddy writes in *Science and Health*: “Deity was satisfied with His work. How could he be otherwise, since the spiritual creation was the outgrowth, the emanation, of His infinite self-containment and immortal wisdom?” (p. 519)

Man’s worth emanates from God. As God’s child, he reflects all needed abilities. So it’s natural for us to express productivity, competency, usefulness. We often fail, however, to recognize our real self as God’s able child because we’re so weighed down with self-criticism or perhaps with others’ criticism. Either way, we’re spending so much effort on false judgment that the spiritual view of ourselves is clouded.

Yet Christ Jesus taught, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). Righteous judgment judges according to man’s inherent, spiritual perfection. It judges according to what Spirit, God, knows and not according to matter.

All too often we judge ourselves on the basis of another’s opinion or evaluation of our work or life. We give unlimited credit

to such opinions instead of turning to God to ask Him what He knows of man—His child. Looking to God for approval or judgment, we find man made in God's image, whole and good. If we happen to be wrong in an action or thought, through turning to God and understanding *His* assessment of our nature, we find our experience adjusting in His direction. Judging ourselves according to what God has created man to be, rather than according to the impressions of the material senses, helps us to express our God-given completeness.

As we understand God's man to be fully under His direction, we see self-condemnation as a falsehood. The more we refuse to partake of it, the more thought and experience expand to express our native self-confidence and goodness.

Whether the clouds hover over us as past mistakes, a mortal history, or even conscious sin, renewal and deliverance are possible. I have a friend who fell into self-condemnation after he made what he knew was a serious mistake. He had been working and saving to pay for his college education when he was dating a young woman whom he eagerly wanted to impress. She liked a particular car, and so my friend decided to buy it. Once he'd done it, though, deep down he regretted it. The money he had been putting away for college was now being spent for car payments. He knew that material possessions were not what he wanted to be judged by and that trying to buy happiness or companionship was not how he really wanted to appeal to anyone. Instead of feeling joy, he found that self-condemnation and worry soon occupied his thought to such an extent that he couldn't sleep.

This man's true desire, however, was to be moral and ethical. His deepest longing was to judge everyone on the basis of man's identity as God's child and to cease trying to measure up to some human opinion. He yearned to express his God-given worthiness, to put the mistake behind him and follow God.

Late one evening he was reading an article from one of the Christian Science periodicals, which explained that if we make a mistake, we can be healed through prayer and willingness to obey

God's directives. In that moment the weight of worry dropped away; he realized that self-condemnation and self-defamation could be overcome and the situation rectified.

Not long after this, he was prayerfully led to take a demanding summer job that enabled him to pay off the loan after he sold the car, and gave him enough to pay for his first quarter at college. The relationship with the girl came to an end; yet, with what he'd learned, he was able later to build more solidly grounded relationships.

We don't have to suffer our way out of sin. Mrs. Eddy writes in *Science and Health*: "We acknowledge God's forgiveness of sin in the destruction of sin and the spiritual understanding that casts out evil as unreal. But the belief in sin is punished so long as the belief lasts" (p. 497). This is true renewal.

If we believe that it's too late to change things, that we don't know how to base our life on God's righteous and loving judgment, that our life is already ruined, or that it's too difficult to turn to God, we will be governed by our belief until it is discarded through a fuller understanding of God. The need is to *replace* the material concept of a sinning man with acknowledgment and acceptance of the spiritual idea that God made. This leads to healing. Replacing self-condemnation with a correct, spiritual judgment of ourselves and a willingness to follow God, plants us on a spiritual foundation, and thus we progress.

The Bible teaches, "He [God] performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him" (Job 23:14). Usefulness and purpose are given to man by God. No matter how severe our situation, our native worth, our purity, our freedom from sin as God's child, are ever present. And God's power is always able to bring these realities to light. ■