

THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS : INTROSPECTION, OR HEAVEN-SPECTION?

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Who Do You Uplift In Your Life And Ministry?

Recently, a member of The E.D.G.E. Online mailing list asked me a question regarding some quotes from the Gospel Of Thomas. After reading his comment, my mind was immediately filled with a variety of verses which I proceeded to use to answer his inquiry. Realizing that others may have also read the Gospel of Thomas, and that they may likewise have similar questions, I have decided to present my response in this article. Following then is a direct quote from this person's message:

"I'd really like your comments on 'The Gospel of Thomas' especially v3 where Jesus says:- "If those who lead you say to you, 'See, the kingdom is in the sky', then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea', then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realise that it is you who are the sons of the Living Father. But if you will not know yourselves, you will dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty."

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To begin this article, let me state that while I have the Gospel Of Thomas in my pile of apocryphal works, due to the tremendous amount of unfinished writing projects I have yet to complete, I haven't had time yet to actually read it...or many other apocryphal works for that matter. As such, until I do, I feel it would be unwise of me to pass a full judgment on whether or not it is a Divinely-Inspired work. I am aware that there are opposing views regarding its authenticity; however, I try to not allow such comments to influence me as I wish to begin reading such works with as unbiased an opinion as possible. I am the type of person who likes to form his own opinions on a matter and not rely too heavily on the evaluations of others, particularly when it involves matters of a religious nature. As stated in part two of the 'Biblical Cafeteria' article, while I do sense Divine Inspiration in most of the actual Apocrypha, I do not feel the same Spirit in the majority of the other apocryphal and pseudepigraphical works that I have read thus far. The only one I have accepted as having any degree of inspiration is the book of Enoch. Even though I have quoted from it, I feel that I should clarify that it is not a one hundred per cent endorsement of the book. I simply found enough information in the Authorized King James Bible which seems to substantiate the authorship of the book of Enoch. This gives it a little more credence than some of the other works. Please refer to my articles on that topic for more in-depth commentary.

Nevertheless, from reading the above comment from our list member, I must admit that I am a bit disconcerted by the contents of the material he quoted from the Gospel Of Thomas. In my view, it describes a 'self-centered' faith rather than a 'Christ-centered' faith which is what Jesus and the First Disciples taught. As I continued to ponder these quotes, the Lord brought a number of verses to mind which I will now share. As you will see, rather than support the purported quotes from Jesus in the Gospel Of Thomas, they do the exact opposite. To begin with, consider what Jesus said in the following verse:

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32)

With this one verse alone, Jesus is making clear that we are to look up to Him for our salvation, and not down or inward into ourselves. The answers to life, particularly eternal life, will not be found in introspection, in examining ourselves, but rather in what we might refer to as Heaven-spection, in looking upwards to Jesus:

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)

King David, a man plagued with many problems during his lifetime, likewise knew that the answers to life, and his own salvation, could only come from above:

"&A Song of degrees.> I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth." (Psalms 121:1-2)

Again, we are told to lift up our eyes, and not to look downward, or inward at ourselves. We are not told to find ourselves or to know ourselves as the Gospel Of Thomas seems to be saying. Consider also what Jesus said when His disciples inquired of Him regarding the signs of the Endtime:

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." (Luke 21:28)

This whole idea of looking inward is a central part of many Eastern religions as well as New Age thought. They say that the answers can be found within ourselves. They teach that we are the masters of our fate. They claim that humans have much more potential than what most people realize, if we can just learn to harness our mental, emotional and spiritual energies. In short, they are claiming that we are our own gods. If you really stop to think about it, this is exactly what Satan did, and it is also what caused his downfall. Because of his own pride and vanity, he took his eyes off of the Lord and looked inward to himself. He deceived himself into thinking that he deserved more, and that he was better than God. I do not believe that this is what Jesus meant by the kingdom of God being within us. Here is exactly what

Jesus said when He was confronted by the unbelieving Pharisees:

"...The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20b-21)

You see, the Pharisees were carnally-minded. They looked upon the things of the flesh, and the things of this world. They were more interested in observing the Mosaic Law, in performing their Temple services, in making loud public prayers, and in wearing their long flowing garments. They were only interested in impressing people with their own outward righteousness so that they could receive the praises of men. This is why Jesus said to them:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." (Matthew 23:27-28)

The Jewish Elders were so blinded to The Truth that they were looking for, and continue to look for, an outward kingdom. They were looking for, and continue to look for, a physical Saviour who would, and who will, deliver them from the hands of their oppressors. This is exactly what the Zealots were all about. Two thousand years ago they sought for a physical king and saviour who would deliver them out of the hands of their Roman occupiers. Today, orthodox Jews look forward to the arrival of 'Moshiach' who will deliver them out of the hands of the enemy Arab nations which surround Israel. However, until they fully understand what Jesus meant, they will never be able to enter that Kingdom. That Kingdom is presently invisible, and has been invisible for the past two thousand years; for it is within. Someday it truly will be here in a very physical, very visible sense; but for now, we can only experience it through an inner spiritual rebirth. Because of the Jews' unbelief, that Kingdom has been ripped out of their hands and been given to the Gentiles. Jesus made this very clear when He said:

"And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 8:11-12)

Those who believe that they are the heirs of promise, those who believe that they are the children of the Kingdom, the children of Abraham, the flesh Jews, will be cast out. And do you know why they will be cast out? Jesus provided a very clear answer on this in His teachings:

"...The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready:

come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:1b-14)

Notice that in the final verses, Jesus uses the same exact descriptive words that He used in the verse from Matthew chapter eight above. And what is the wedding garment which this man failed to wear? It is the righteousness which only belief in Christ can give us. It is the cloak which covers our sins as discussed in other articles. It is the blood of Jesus Christ:

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." (Revelation 3:5)

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." (Revelation 3:18)

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;" (Revelation 7:9)

"And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." (Revelation 19:8)

Of course, we know that that righteousness can only be obtained through complete spiritual renewal and rebirth, a spiritual washing and cleansing which comes about only through acceptance of Christ's sacrifice on the cross:

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;" (Titus 3:5)

This is exactly what is meant by the Kingdom being within. This is exactly what Jesus tried to explain to Nicodemus who, while being a Pharisee himself, recognized Who Jesus

really was:

"...Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

(John 3:3b-8)

Because the flesh Jews rejected this basic Truth, they were denied the Kingdom, and it has been given to the Gentile believers. Rather than accept the Garment Of Righteousness so that they can enter freely into the Marriage Feast of the Lamb, they have chosen to be cloaked in their own righteousness. But you see, as explained in the 'Saved And Sealed' article, Jesus ripped that cloak away two thousand years ago:

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin." (John 15:22)

All of these things have been fulfilled since two thousand years ago. As explained in part one of the 'Biblical Cafeteria' article, since that time, beginning with the Apostle Paul, we Gentiles have been receiving and believing in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, while the majority of Jews continue to reject it. But there is hope. Please see my article 'Is God A Racist?'

Having now explained what is meant by the Kingdom of God being within, let me continue to explain why we are told to look out and up and not down and in. To refresh your memory, let me again quote part of the material from the Gospel Of Thomas which inspired this article:

"...Rather, the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realise that it is you who are the sons of the Living Father. But if you will not know yourselves, you will dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty."

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In looking at the above quote, we can see an immediate contradiction to what Jesus said to the Pharisees in Luke chapter seventeen. The Lord clearly told them that the Kingdom of Heaven does not come with observation, that it is within; yet according to the Gospel Of Thomas, Jesus said it is without and within. In a sense, I can agree that it is without as well because the Kingdom consists of the born-again believers who we can visibly see. And of course, as the First Disciples began to establish Churches in Israel, Asia Minor and the surrounding areas, the Kingdom

became even more visible. In another sense, we also know that sometime in the future, the Kingdom of Heaven will be visibly witnessed on the Earth when Jesus rules during the Millennium as outlined in the book of Revelation. At the same time, we also know that once the Lord creates the New Heaven and the New Earth, the Heavenly City will descend from Heaven to set on or just about the Earth. Looking at it from this perspective, we can see that the words which Jesus prayed in the 'Lord's Prayer' have been fulfilled in part since the day He spoke them:

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10)

Although I can make this part of the Gospel Of Thomas quote fit my understanding, I must still express some doubt as to whether or not these words were really spoken by Jesus. I just don't feel comfortable with them at this moment. Concerning the phrase 'When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known', here again, this whole idea of knowing ourselves bothers me. As all of the above verses show, we are to know Jesus, and know His Word as well. That is where hope and salvation lie, and not within ourselves. As far as being known, I am not exactly sure what Thomas (if he really wrote this), meant. The only verse that I can think of which might make some sense out of this is the following:

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:35)

But notice, the emphasis in Jesus' words is not in exalting ourselves, but rather in exalting His Love. He is saying that people will know we are different because they will see God's love shining through us. We are to exalt the Lord through our Christian example...and that is where we all have room for lots of improvement, beginning with this writer. As pointed out in other articles, we are only to act as reflectors of His Truth and His Love. We are only to serve as prisms which reflect the different aspects of God, just as a prism reflects the different colors of white light. Through seeing the Love and Light which we reflect, people are supposed to be brought to Jesus, and not just to us or our particular church or organization. We are not the source of that Light and Love; we are only the tools through which the Lord shines. If we are only bringing people to us, or to our particular faith or doctrine, then we have failed. Unless they are firmly established in the Lord and in His Word, then they will also fall and fail in times of hardship.

The true Christian perspective is in direct contrast to the ways of the world. This is why Jesus repeatedly said that His followers are not of the world:

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."
(John 15:18-19)

In the school of the world, we are taught to be proud of our accomplishments. From the time we are young we are taught to have personal pride, national pride, pride at work, pride in sports, pride in education, etc. It is all exaltation of self. It is looking inward instead of upward, all glory to self and none to God. John echoed these same sentiments later when he wrote his epistles:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John 2:15-16)

The Apostle James likewise had some very strong thoughts to express on this when he said:

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4:4)

So then, contrary to the false ideas and values which the world tries to brainwash us with, we are not to seek our own glory, our own credit, or to exalt ourselves in the eyes of men. As Christians, we are instructed to do the exact opposite. Jesus made this very clear when He said:

"...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." (Luke 9:23b-24)

John the Baptist was well aware of this when he said:

"He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

He wasn't just referring to the fact that he knew that his ministry must decrease as Jesus started to shine in His own ministry. From the very beginning John had to deny the ways of men so He could fulfill the Lord's work. What if John had been more concerned about the opinions of men instead of pleasing the Lord?

The Apostle Paul also instructed us to present our bodies as living sacrifices in his epistle to the Romans:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:1-2)

He repeated this same sentiment in his letter to the Church at Corinth when he said:

"I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." (1 Corinthians 15:31)

Unless we are willing to die to ourselves, to die to our own

wants and worldly interests in life, unless we are willing to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God, we may never know what God's will is for our lives. Jesus compared this dying daily to a seed planted in the ground:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." (John 12:24-25)

We each must make the choice for ourselves. Either we selfishly live for ourselves, or else we live for the Lord in daily sacrifice. There is no room for both as Jesus made clear in the story of the rich men who thought he had done all to inherit the Kingdom of God. In the Sermon on the Mount, He also said:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also...No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:19-21, 24)

We are to lift up Jesus and not look to ourselves. We are to look UP to Heaven and not IN to ourselves. As explained in the recent article, 'What Really Happens To Us When We Die?', our old man, the flesh, our old way of thinking and doing things is our enemy. It fights against God and His will for our lives. It is for this reason that we must deny it and crucify it:

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Romans 6:6)

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;" (Ephesians 4:22)

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;" (Colossians 3:9)

As I stated in the aforementioned article, there is a constant war going on between our new man of the spirit, and our old man of the flesh. While we must know ourselves, that is, be aware of our own human weaknesses and shortcomings, we are not to dwell upon them. It is only in knowing Jesus' Spirit which dwells in us that we have eternal life:

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3)

"And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we

are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 5:20)

There is one final reason why we are told not to look inward to ourselves. The simple fact of the matter is, there is nothing good there. If you think there is, then you are being deceived by your own pride and vanity, and you will be utterly useless to God in any real way. It is easy for us all to say, 'Oh sure, I know I am a sinner. I know that I need Jesus.' However, how much of it is just lip service? How much do we really believe it? In his epistle, James wrote:

"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." (James 1:26)

We can easily quote verses like Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23, but are we just applying them to others, or to ourselves as well? The Jewish religious elders were notorious for doing this. Remember the story Jesus shared regarding the publican and the sinner? Which one of those two are we?

From one end of the Bible to the other, we find prophets and men of God, not boasting of how great they are, not boasting of what wonderful things they have done for the Lord, but beseeching the Lord for His love, mercy and forgiveness because of their sinful state. King David is particularly known for his many supplications to the Lord in his psalms. One which has been used as an example of prayer by many Christians is Psalm 51 which David prayed after murdering Uriah and then stealing his wife Bathsheba. It says in part:

"...Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."
(Psalms 51:1b-10)

It was because of David's honesty with the Lord and the fact that he acknowledged his true condition that he was so special in the Lord's sight. When Samuel was sent to Saul to inform him that his kingdom would be given to David, Samuel said:

"But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee."
(1 Samuel 13:14)

The Apostle Paul confirmed this same thought when he preached in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia:

"And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will." (Acts 13:22)

It is when we are so full of ourselves and our own pride that the Lord's Spirit does not have a chance to work in us or through us. As long as we think we are good, as long as we think we can save ourselves or merit our own salvation, we will never be truly saved. As any doctor will tell you, the first part of finding a cure is to admit that there is something wrong. For most people, this can be the hardest step to take, either with an Earthly doctor, or with our Heavenly Spiritual Doctor. You see, the Lord is an Expert Cardiologist. He knows exactly where the problem lies, and how serious it is. He also knows how to remove the diseased tissue. So exactly how bad is it? Well, I think the Bible can speak for itself on this matter:

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)

Our heart is so evil that we can't even begin to realize how wicked it is. Working in conjunction with our brain, it protects itself by feeding us all kinds of rot to keep us living in a state of delusion. It tells us how good we are, how great we are, that there is nothing wrong with us, etc. This is in direct contrast to what Jesus had to say about it:

"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man." (Matthew 15:18-20)

This is why our Heart Specialist needs to perform an operation of the Spirit. Modern man prides himself in being able to perform heart transplants, but do you know what?...He can never get to the real root of the problem because it is spiritual in nature. The real cure isn't in replacing our heart with another healthy human heart, or even with an artificial one, but rather in replacing it with one of the Lord's own making:

"And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:" (Ezekiel 11:19)

The Apostel Paul was no stranger to these matters of sin and the battles of the flesh. If you read my article 'Biblical Cafeteria Part One,' you'll discover that Paul knew exactly what the score was between himself and the Lord. Even after the Lord had smacked him down hard and turned him into a new creature, Paul still wrestled for the rest of his days against his old flesh and his besetting sins:

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:18-19, 24)

Like Paul, we must make a conscious effort on a daily basis to keep ourselves in submission to the Lord and His will. Paul said it quite well with the following:

"I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."
(1 Corinthians 9:26-27)

In his epistle to the Roman Church, Paul emphasized this again when he said:

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."
(Romans 8:7)

So then, from all of the above verses, it should be clearly recognized that no good thing dwells within us, no matter what anyone says. That being the case, why do so many false religions and New Age doctrines teach that we should look inward for the answers? The answer is quite simple: as long as we are carnally minded, as long as we dwell on the things of the flesh, as long as we think the answers can be found within ourselves or in the temporal things which the world has to offer, we will never lift up our eyes to Jesus and see the real answer. That is what meditation is all about. It isn't about lifting our hearts up to Jesus; it is about getting lost in our own darkness of sin...and a lot worse as I have pointed out elsewhere.

As far as the idea of living in poverty because of not knowing ourselves as stated in the Gospel of Thomas, again, this seems like a contradiction to accepted Scripture. It is in knowing Jesus and His Word that we acquire the True Riches of the Kingdom. It is in investing our lives in preaching the Gospel to others that we acquire the true Heavenly Rewards, and those are the only ones which will last. As far as our physical needs are concerned, Jesus explained Heavenly Economics quite well when He said:

"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:31-33)

The Apostle Paul also said:

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

(Philippians 4:11)

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5)

In conclusion, all we need to know about ourselves is that we are sinners in need of a Saviour. We must recognize our sins and shortcomings, but we are not to dwell upon them. We could sit around all day complaining about how bad we are and what a mess we are, but that isn't going to do anyone one bit of good. All that does is keep us from doing what the Lord really wants us to do. Believe me, I have a lot of experience with this subject. Satan just loves to try to discourage me by pointing out all of my mistakes in life. He'll tell me what a failure I am, or what a hypocrite I am, all kinds of nasty things...and maybe they are true. Believe me, I have my share of problems and besetting sins just like everyone else...but I don't think anyone wants to hear about them. We are to publish the good tidings, and not the bad tidings:

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" (Isaiah 52:7)

Lucifer's whole job is to get you to take your eyes off of Jesus, because the minute he gets you to do that, you are sunk. You will sink down into the discouraging mire of self, and sin and the old man. Each time I have foolishly invited Satan to pull up a chair and tell me how bad I am, and how I failed at this point in my life, or at that point in my life, or how I failed this person or that person, etc., I have sunk so low into myself, into my own morass of sin, that I get absolutely nothing accomplished for the Lord. You see, that is exactly what the Ole Boy wants! He makes me feel like such a hypocrite that I stop writing. Sometimes it hits me really hard too and I won't write for a few days until the depression passes. Just remember, when you feel that way, it is not of the Lord. The Lord wants us to be aware of our sins, He wants us to feel remorse for them as well, but He also wants us to ask for forgiveness and know that we are forgiven. God promised in His Word to blot out our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ:

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isaiah 1:18)

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." (1 Peter 2:24)

It is only Satan who tells us that we are too bad for Jesus. He is the accuser of the Saints. He is the Prosecuting Attorney who says we are guilty until proven innocent:

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night."
(Revelation 12:10)

Don't believe his lies for one minute, for he is a liar and the Father of Lies!:

"...He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44b)

The simple equation to follow is: accept and recognize our sins, ask for forgiveness, believe we have been forgiven, and then press on to better things leaving the dead weight of sin behind...or better yet, let Jesus carry it for us:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

"...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1-2)

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14)

We are not to try to work out our own salvation in the flesh through introspection or self-analysis, for it will come to no avail. The only way to overcome our weak sinful nature is by a miraculous rebirth through faith in Jesus Christ. Once His Holy Spirit dwells in us, like Paul, we become new creatures. The same weaknesses and temptations are still there, but we now have the power of God's Spirit to resist them; and even when we do fall, we know that He is always willing to forgive us if we ask Him to. Our salvation is only by faith, and not by good works. We must always remember that, because our good works will never be good enough anyway.

In conclusion, the whole spirit of the above quote from the Gospel of Thomas just doesn't seem right to me. Not only does it seem to be too cryptic, too mystic, perhaps even kaballistic in nature, but it seems somewhat contrary to the Spirit of Truth I find in the other Gospels. While Jesus did speak some things in parables, He normally explained Himself later. In other words, he preached a simple Gospel to simple men. The above doesn't seem to follow that pattern. It seems more similar to some of this New Age psychobabble you find

all over the Internet and other networks. I honestly don't know who those folks are trying to reach with all of that garbage. It is so de-spiritualized, so secular, so humanistic, so full of the philosophies of men that it sickens me. It seems that the people who write that crap are only interested in uplifting themselves and their own carnal wisdom. When I read Jesus' words in the KJV, I don't have to struggle with it. It is easily understood. The quotes from the Gospel Of Thomas, as well as this New Age stuff is not. Even after reading it a few times, I still had a hard time trying to make some sense out of it. This is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ I am familiar with. Perhaps it is simply because it is something new for me which I have never read before; or perhaps because I am used to reading King James English. I am not convinced of this though. Until I have had a chance to read this work in its entirety, I would advise caution in accepting it as the bona fide words of Jesus Christ. It is possible that after I do read the whole work, I will have more to say on this issue; but based on my current impression, I am not sure that I am going to have a change of view. We shall see. For now though, this is the best counsel that I can offer anyone who may be wondering about the Divine Inspiration of the Gospel Of Thomas. I hope it is a help. As a final note, I would encourage anyone who has an interest in reading the apocryphal and pseudepigraphical works, to be extremely prayerful and sensitive to God's Spirit. Most of all, I suggest that you become totally familiar with God's Spirit in what is already accepted Scriptures before delving into these questionable works. If you don't, you may be opening yourself up to a lot of satanic deception. Remember, some of that stuff was purposely written to confuse and deceive the sincere believers, and to contradict the real Word of God. In short, choose the good and eschew the evil:

"Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it." (1 Peter 3:11).

May the Lord bless you with The Truth, and nothing but The Truth, so help you God.

Written by the WordWeaver

webmaster@endtimeprophecy.net
<http://www.endtimeprophecy.net>