

ABRAHAM ... and a bunch of rogues  
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(GENESIS 18: 27)

Self-esteem is rarely found in the heart of a true man of God, for the more virtuous a saint becomes, the less satisfied he will be with himself. Increasing love for God means increasing hatred of the self-life. The Bible has many examples of this fact.

Abraham. " I am but dust and ashes "-Genesis 18: 27.  
Abraham was the friend of God, and the greatest character in the ancient world. Divine secrets were shared with the illustrious patriarch, and in a sense unknown by ordinary men, he walked with God. Yet Abraham despised himself, and became increasingly conscious of his shortcomings. He considered himself unworthy to commune with God, and said he was dust and ashes.

Job. " Behold, I am vile "-Job 40:4.  
We are left in no doubt as to the true greatness of this man. It is recorded that the Lord said of him " . . . there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil " (Job 1: 8). When Job's friends declared him to be a hypocrite ; that secret sin had brought about his misfortunes, he maintained that his heart was clean before God. Yet when he came face to face with his Maker, he whispered, " I am vile."

David. " Behold, I was shapen in iniquity "-Psalm 51: 5.  
The sweet psalmist of Israel was a man after God's own heart, and although certain indiscretions marred his fine record of devotion, his integrity and true consecration were always beyond question. Yet this great man sadly shook his head and denied his own virtue. Psalm 51 is a heart-throb in which we hear tears of anguish, cries of disappointment, and the moan of a man who feels that he is a complete failure.

Ezra. " I blush to lift up my face "-Ezra 9: 6.  
Ezra was one of the greatest men of his day. He held an honorable place among the spiritual aristocracy of the nation. His courageous example at a time when Israel needed spiritual leadership, lifted the nation to new heights of achievement. He and Nehemiah were the greatest men of that generation ; yet Ezra's confession claimed for him a place in Rogues' Gallery. He said, " O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face."

Isaiah. " I am undone ... I am a man of unclean lips" - Isaiah 6: 5.  
Isaiah was one of the major prophets, who gave counsel and guidance to a stumbling nation, and at the same time provided unerring information concerning the coming of the Messiah. He was a friend of the king, a father to the nation, and a trusted servant of the Most High ; yet of himself he had nothing good to say.

Simon Peter. "I am a sinful man" - Luke 5:8  
There is something delightfully human about Simon Peter, for at all times he was unquestionably honest. Sometimes strong emotions and fierce temptations upset his equilibrium ; but within minutes, the real man appeared again. He was a great man, an excellent preacher, and a brother beloved. Yet all who read the New Testament realize how very much Peter

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abhorred himself.

The Centurion. " I am not worthy "-Luke 7: 6.  
This Gentile soldier won a place among the great immortals,  
for his spiritual perception enabled Christ to say, " I have  
not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Although he  
was an officer in Caesar's army, and occupied a position of  
importance, he felt that his home was unworthy of a visit  
from the Carpenter of Nazareth.

Paul. " I am the chief of sinners "-1 Timothy 1: 15.  
Paul was undoubtedly the greatest of all Christian mis-  
sionaries. He was the first to look beyond the narrow bounds  
of Israel's horizons, and with determination of purpose to  
penetrate into the unknown. His indomitable spirit and  
untiring energy took the Gospel to millions of heathen, and  
with God's help he established the Christian Church. Yet  
Paul claimed to be the greatest sinner in the world.  
God has strange ways of estimating the greatness of men.  
Sometimes the first are last, and the last first. Those who  
are great in their own estimation are far from the will of  
God, while others who are overwhelmed by a sense of un-  
worthiness are ready for the Master's use. A bunch of  
rogues? No: some of God's great gentlemen!

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