

(Standing on Faith) 9. THE CURSE OF SELFISHNESS

by A.B. Simpson

Transcript

"I have eaten my morsel alone." Job 31:17. This is classed by Job among some of the basest and most abominable offences against God and humanity. He gives us a catalogue of seven different crimes of which men are guilty, and solemnly asseverates his innocency of all.

The first of these respects the law of purity; the second, of honesty; the third, charity toward the poor and helpless; the fourth, greed and avarice; the fifth, pride and vainglory; the sixth, idolatry; and the seventh, vindictiveness and malice toward his fellow-men. To have eaten his morsel alone places him in the same category with all these gross and glaring vices, and to his lofty sense of right it is just as odious and abominable as licentiousness, idolatry, or greed of gain.

The expression here used stands for selfishness in all its forms. It represents the heartless and self-centered spirit that absorbs all the blessings of life to itself, and neither thinks nor cares about the needs and sufferings of others. Our Lord has given us His estimate of this spirit in the parable of the rich farmer, who lived only for his wealth, and who is described as saying to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." The parable has told the story of his fearful doom, and lighted it up with the solemn moral, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

Selfishness has a thousand forms, but no matter what its aspect, it is always the deep fountain of all human sin and the worst foe every one of us has to face. Archbishop Whately said: "If you ask me to tell you who it is that causes you the greatest trouble, and threatens you with the direst danger, I can only say that if you will look in the glass, you will see an excellent picture of him." The sin of selfishness puts you in the place of God, and is high treason against the sovereignty of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Let us look a little at this monster who so easily disguises himself that he has become the rival of heaven and the idol of every human heart.

Selfishness is contrary to the very law of nature itself. The scientist will tell you that every plant and animal is adjusted according to a law of mutual dependence and helpfulness. It takes two flowers to produce the seed that will reproduce and perpetuate the blossom. They must meet in the exchange of the fertilizing pollen which gives life to the plant, and in the distribution of the pollen every element of nature and multitudes of living creatures are made to minister to future generations. The honey bee, as he sucks from

flower to flower the sweet nutrition, deposits the fertilizing pollen of some other flower in the cup that he visits, and thus ministers to others while satisfying his own industry and appetite. The very life of a plant is built on the principle of its death in order to give life to the next generation. The beautiful blossom withers and dies, but out of its sepulcher comes the little seed pod which is to create a new summer of radiant blossoms. The wild creatures of the wilderness and the birds of the air band together in herds and flocks for mutual protection, and the instinct of motherhood leads them to provide for the next generation with the most self-sacrificing care, and even lose their very lives for their young.

All nature is full of interdependence and helpfulness. The philosopher calls this altruism. It is just a little foreshadowing of divine love. Emerson has well expressed it:

"All are needed by each one; Nothing is fair or good alone." And Burns has put it still more strongly: "God never made an independent man; \

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