

Complete Regulation of All the Appetites

by Dougan Clark

The sermon emphasizes the importance of regulating our appetites and desires in order to live a life that is pleasing to God.

Scripture: Matthew 22:39, 1 Corinthians 9:27, Galatians 2:20, Galatians 5:13, Ephesians 5:18, Philippians 2:3, Philippians 4:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 1 Timothy 4:4, Hebrews 13:4

Topics: "Holiness Living", "Sanctification Process"

Description

Dougan Clark preaches about the outer life of holiness, emphasizing the importance of regulating our appetites, propensities, and affections rather than eradicating them. He warns against asceticism that seeks to extirpate natural sensibilities, advocating for purification and sanctification of these sensibilities instead. The sermon highlights the liberty to do what is right, the importance of love in the glory land, and the need to seek happiness in God rather than selfish desires. Clark stresses the prohibition of selfishness in the pursuit of holiness, calling for the death of sinful self and the promotion of God's glory above all.

Transcript

The outer life of holiness is shown moreover by a complete regulation of all the appetites, propensities and affections. This is what Paul calls keeping under the body, and bringing it into subjection. Observe that we use the word regulation and not the word eradication. It is the great mistake of asceticism, whether it is found among heathens or Christians that it attempts to extirpate the natural sensibilities of the human heart. The ascetic makes it a point to torture and torment himself. He refuses a thing simply because it is pleasant. He chooses another thing simply because it is unpleasant. He is afraid of everything that gives him any gratification or any joy. His one object is to destroy every natural feeling. This he finds to be impossible, and therefore he is ever wearing a yoke of bondage grievous to be borne.

Such Puritanic, long-faced, sanctimonious Christians are to be found in every Church. May the Lord bless them, and He does. But Paul tells us that we have been called unto liberty -- not license, not the liberty to do everything wrong, but the glorious liberty to do everything right -- and He tells us to rejoice evermore as well as to pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice."

The natural affections and propensities are not in themselves sinful. They appertained to our first parents before they fell. They will exist and be active so long as we are in the body. Some of these natural propensities, such as the desire of happiness, the desire of knowledge, and the desire of esteem, will

probably continue with us in the glory of the millennium and in heaven itself. And the affections will certainly survive the short period of our lifetime on earth. Love will be the very atmosphere of the glory land, and whilst we shall love God there supremely and perfectly, we shall also love one another forever.

It is sin that has so marred the physical appetites and the propensities of our fallen race that they have been allowed to usurp the empire of our being, and either to run riot in every form of excess, or to be altogether perverted from their rightful and legitimate use. And the work of entire sanctification, so far as these sensibilities are concerned, is not to eradicate them, but to purify them and take the sin out of them, and then leave them to flow on in the channels and with the restrictions which God has appointed for them.

The holy man, therefore, may partake in moderation and with thankfulness of such animal and vegetable food as is found to strengthen and sustain his physical health. And if such food is agreeable to his palate, he is not bound, on that account, to turn away from it. He does not need, like some of the mystics and ascetics, to mingle ashes with his bread. It is true that he does not live to eat, but he does eat to live, and if he enjoys his food, so much the better and so much the more glory will accrue to the Heavenly Father, who provides for him all these things richly to enjoy.

The holy man may drink freely of pure water, or of the "cup that cheers, but not inebriate," but he should have nothing to do with stimulants, narcotics, or intoxicants of any kind whatever. The appetite for such noxious beverages is not natural but acquired. It arises from Satan without and the flesh within. All such sinful appetites may and should not be regulated but extirpated, by Christ's baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire.

The holy man and woman as well as others may, and most holy men and women ought, to marry and rear families in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. "Marriage is honorable in all." Holy people are not debarred by the law of God from the joys of conjugal endearment and sweets of parental affection. But all Christians, whether entirely sanctified or not, are debarred by the law of God from all licentiousness, from all impure acts, from all wanderings of the desires into forbidden channels, from all cherishing of secret and sinful lusts.

The holy man is permitted, as well as others, to seek his own happiness, and to love himself, provided this seeking and this love are kept in their subordinate and legitimate position. The Bible, by its invitations and appeals to sinners, and by its promises and threatenings alike, sanctions the calling of men to Christ for the sake of their own happiness. For this purpose both the fear of punishment and hope of reward are constantly employed in the inspired word.

This appeal to a lawful self-love, however, is chiefly incipient stage of Christian experience. It generally turns out that when the love of God is made perfect in the consecrated heart, there is such a retrocession of self -- even innocent and lawful self -- that the great all-compending motive of obeying and serving God is not to promote our own happiness, although that result always follows, as a matter of course, but the soul-absorbing desire of promoting the glory and building up the kingdom of Him whom our soul loveth is the chief one.

From that inordinate and perverted action of the implanted principle of self-love which is denominated selfishness, the holy man is absolutely prohibited. Selfishness makes self in its gratifications, or its preferences, or its interests, the very center of our being. The selfish man lives for himself alone. But holiness makes God the center of our existence and lives for Him alone. The two things, therefore, are

altogether incompatible. The selfish man cannot be a holy man. And it is precisely in the principle of selfishness -- ramified as it is through our whole nature in the fall -that we find the "root and center of all moral evil." Inbred sin is entrenched in the selfish heart, and will abide there as "the strong man" until the "stronger than he" shall cast him out. O, for the death of self in every Christian heart, so far as sinful self has an indwelling there! O, for the liberalism of the lawful and innocent self from all bonds of sin, that may find its own happiness in doing and suffering the sweet will of God. Let us lose ourselves, beloved, that we may find ourselves. Let us die in our self-life that we may live with a life that is eternal.

The holy man, like other men, is bound by his duty and obligation to his fellow-creatures to spend some part of his time in social intercourse. But this must be a subordinate thing and not the principal thing. The holy man has, like others, the principle of curiosity, or the desire of knowledge, as an implanted propensity; but the holy man knows that there are many things of which it is even better that he should remain ignorant. He feels that he should ask God to counsel him as to what he should know as certainly as to what he should do.

And thus all lawful desires are kept in their proper place of subordination in the outward life -- because they are first so kept in the inner life of the holy man.

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