

The Extinction of Selfishness

by Dougan Clark

The sermon emphasizes the need to overcome selfishness through divine power and to cultivate a life of holiness, characterized by a supreme love of God, meekness, forgiveness, and a new life of present salvation and service.

Scripture: Matthew 16:24, John 14:26, Romans 12:2, Galatians 5:22, Galatians 5:24, Philippians 2:3, Colossians 3:5, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, James 4:3, 1 John 2:15

Topics: "Holiness", "Self Denial"

Description

Dougan Clark preaches about the inner life of holiness, emphasizing the need to extinguish selfishness through Divine Power, as illustrated by a Quaker's dream of overcoming the giant named Self with Christ's help. Selfishness is rooted in desires, including the Appetites, Propensities, and Affections, which must be purified to serve God's glory. The holy soul's chief desire is to align with God's will, leading to a simplified and peace-filled life of trust, prayer, and continual dependence on God, characterized by meekness, forgiveness, and love for enemies.

Transcript

It may be inferred from what has already been stated, that the inner life of holiness involves the extinction of selfishness. Not the extinction of a right and proper self-love, but of that excess or perversion of self-love which is denominated selfishness, and which is regarded as odious by many who make no profession of religion.

A Philadelphia Quaker, of a former generation, is related to have been the subject, on a certain occasion, of a singular dream. He thought he was walking along the highway, when he was met by a person of large size, whom he accosted by asking his name. "My name," replied the giant, "is Self." "Well, then," rejoined the other, "I will kill thee!" A severe conflict followed, in which at last the Friend was victorious, and left his antagonist, as he supposed, dead upon the field. Soon, however, he was met by another giant twice as tall as the former one. "What is thy name?" said he. "My name is Self," was the reply. Again the two entered into a desperate struggle, and again the Quaker succeeded in slaying his opponent, though only when his own strength was on the point of exhaustion.

Pursuing his journey, he was soon met by a personage so great that his head reached the clouds, and who still gave the same answer to his inquiry as to who he was: "My name is Self." Then the poor Quaker, being overthrown and prostrated on the ground, called mightily upon Christ for help, and the blessed Saviour heard his prayer and came to his deliverance and destroyed his enemy. The story is not without a

valuable moral: If ever is destroyed in thy heart, my beloved reader, it must be by Divine Power. Thy own puny arm will never be able to effect so stupendous a victory. Therefore, put thy case at once and implicitly into the hands of the Great Physician, that the old self -- the natural self -- the sinful self, may be destroyed.

The chief seat of selfishness is in the desires. The natural man desires many things. He keeps restlessly running to and fro after this, that, and the other supposed gratification, and is disappointed again and again of finding the happiness he is seeking for. It is often long before the unsatisfied human heart learns the lesson which ought to be learned at the outset, namely: "That things of earth were never yet designed to quench the vast and deathless thirst of an immortal mind."

It is long before the restless soul accepts the fact which God is longing to impart, the fact, namely, that "He has made us for Himself and our souls are restless till they rest in Him."

The mental philosophers divide the Desires into three classes, viz.: The Appetites, the Propensities and the Affections. Of these the Appetites are closely connected with the physical system, and when under the influence of inordinate or perverted self-love these Appetites are allowed full sway, they bring the soul in subjection to the body and reduce a man even below the level of the brute. Gluttony, Drunkenness, Debauchery -- these are the names we apply to the supremacy of the Appetites. And yet the Appetites when brought and kept under the strict control of the higher principles of our nature are good and rich, proper and necessary. What is needed is that selfishness may be killed out of them, and then they will and do serve an excellent purpose in the economy of Providence.

The Propensities are further removed from the body, and consist of such natural desire as the desire of life, the desire of happiness, the desire of esteem, the desire of knowledge, etc. Sin and self have permeated these also with their baleful influence, and these also need to have self extirpated from them, so that they may be used and gratified to God's glory.

Then again, our Affections need to be purged from the leaven of self and sin, in order that they too may be kept in proper subjection to the supreme love for God which ought to possess our souls, and which, when it does so, will regulate all other affections, keep them in their proper and subordinate position, and eliminate the idolatry from our souls.

Now in the unconverted state, and largely in the unsanctified state, we are full of desires, and the root of all these unregulated and unrestrained desire, is selfishness. When selfishness is removed our desires are simplified. They no longer destroy our peace by continually clamoring for gratification. The chief desire of the holy soul is a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and all other desires are merged and swallowed up in one desire: "Thy will, not mine be done."

The inner life of holiness turning away from the feelings, the passions, the aversions, the attachments, the hatred and love which have their roots in excessive or perverted self-love, dwells in a spirit of meekness, forgiveness, long suffering, love of enemies, and all the blessed graces of the Spirit. It fosters and cultivates, above all other things, the supreme love of God in the soul, and admits nothing to its sacred enclosure which is at variance with that love.

The inner life of holiness is accompanied by continual Peace of conscience. There is no condemnation. The inward monitor, the natural conscience, only makes known its existence by its smiles, not by its power nor its lashings. The past is under the blood; the present and future are given to God. All is peace and

quietness, and confidence and rest.

In the natural life, and to some extent in the unsanctified life, we are full of doubts. In the inner life of holiness we are full of trust, and hence doubts are excluded. This inner life places its confidence nowhere short of God. It has nothing to do with human instrumentalities short of Him or independent of Him. It seeks, not the honor of man, but the honor which comes from God only.

This blessed life is a life of prayer. It continues instant in prayer. It prays without ceasing. How can it be otherwise? It has ceased from all human and earthly dependence. How is it possible that it should not depend wholly upon God, and should not continually resort to Him, and consult Him, and commune with Him, and pray to Him?

This inner life is emphatically a new life. A present salvation, a present duty, a present service, or a present waiting, these characterize it. It does not procrastinate, nor permit others to procrastinate, if possible to prevent it. It does not put off till tomorrow what ought to be done today. It keeps abreast of God's intimations and God's providences. It walks in the light constantly and experiences a constant cleansing from sin by the blood.

Instead of striving to have its own way, and to make its own choice, it seeks always to be in God's way and to accept His choice. Its language is

"I worship thee, sweet will of God,

And all thy ways adore,

And every day I live I seem

To love thee more and more."

And so it proceeds day by day, calmly following the heavenly bidding, not agitated nor disturbed by the commotions of the world, having no anxious care about what is happening now, and no restless forebodings about what shall happen hereafter, but leaving all to God and only anxious to abide in His will.

Such a life as this is only possible when attended by the constant indwelling of the Holy Ghost. And this is the promise of the Saviour to His sorrowing disciples: "He dwelleth with you and shall be in you." In order to have this continual abiding and indwelling of the Blessed Comforter, we must be meek and quiet in spirit, free from worldly agitations, looking unto Jesus with that attitude of soul which says, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" free from all selfish desires, in order that we may cherish and obey the slightest intimations of God's desires, not resisting or grieving the tender dove-like Spirit of God, but in all things yielding a ready obedience to our Heavenly Guest. The Lord help and save us for Christ's sake.

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