

THE CRUCIFYING OF THE WORLD BY THE CROSS OF CHRIST

With a Preface Against Self-Seeking

RICHARD BAXTER

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A Treatise of Self-Denial

"I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your estate.
For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."
— Philippians 2:20–21

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A Premonition Concerning This Second Edition

Reader,

I take the love of God and self-denial to be the sum of all saving grace and religion: the first, of the positive part; and the second, of the

oppositive or negative part. I judge the measure of my own, and of all other men's true piety, by these two. And it is the rarity of these two which assures me of the rarity of sincere godliness.

Oh, how much selfishness, and how little love of God, are too often found among those who contend for supposed true doctrine, true worship, true discipline, and the true church! Who can say that their zeal for these things eats up themselves, their charity, their peaceableness, and their brethren? The same men who will not yield in an opinion, a formality, or a singularity for the church's peace and concord, or for the interest of love and the healing of our wounds, will just as hardly yield a jot of their wealth, their worldly honor, their carnal interest, or their selfish wills. This shows that their zeal and seeming orthodoxy and wisdom—as it is in them—is not from above, but from beneath (James 3:15–17).

Oh, that men knew what heart's ease self-denial brings, by mortifying all that corrupts and troubles the souls of sinners! And if that part of religion which seems hardest and harshest is so sweet, what is our love and delight in God, but the foretaste of heaven itself?

But the soul is seldom fit to relish this doctrine rightly until some special providence or conviction has made the world clearly insufficient for our relief. But he who, in or after sharp affliction, still remains selfish in a predominant degree, is next to hopeless.

I remember that one accounted a man of eminent wisdom, a little before he left the land of his nativity, made this the first word he ever spoke to me: *"I thank you especially for your book of Self-Denial."* And when we are going out of the world, we shall all be much fitter to relish and understand the doctrine of self-denial than we are now.

Though undeniable reason thus presented, by the grace of God, does much cure some particular souls, yet alas, the world—most of the visible church and the land—is so far uncured that selfishness still triumphs over our innocence, piety, and peace, and seems to mock our hopes of remedy. Were profession as rare as true self-denial, I should agree with those who would reduce the church to a much narrower compass than either the Roman, the National, the Presbyterian, or the Independent.

Alas, how few are the true believers whose inordinate self-love, self-conceit, self-will, and self-seeking are truly conquered by faith and turned into the love of God as God, and of the public good, and of their neighbor as themselves—and into a humbled understanding, conscious of its ignorance—and into a humbled, submissive will, more disposed to follow than to lead, and to obey rather than to be imperious and domineering—and into a life entirely devoted to God and to the common good?

But this complaint has been made before. Yet what we most feel, we are most inclined to lament—and to press that on others which we find most necessary to ourselves. I must say, that of all the books I have written, I peruse none so often for the use of my own soul in its daily work as *My Life of Faith*, this *Treatise of Self-Denial*, and the last part of *The Saints' Rest*.

One little thing I will here tell the reader: that no book of mine (except the first two) ever had the word *Dedicatory* joined to the epistle by my consent; and I have often prohibited it in vain—whether through the forgetfulness or self-conceit of the booksellers or printers, I cannot tell. Not that I condemn the word in others, but

that my epistles were always of such a different nature as required a different title.

R. B.

To the Honorable Colonel James Berry, &c.

SIR,

Providence having deprived me of the opportunity of nearer converse with you, which heretofore I have enjoyed, yet leaving me the same affections, they work toward you as they can; and have chosen here to speak to you in the hearing of the world, that my words may remain to the ends intended, when a private letter may be burnt or cast aside. Flattery, I am confident, you expect not from me, because you know me, and know me to be your friend. (And yet my late Monitor hath made many smile, by accusing me of that fawning crime.) I am told what it is to bless my friend with a loud voice, Prov. 27:14. I have learned myself that *open rebuke is better than secret love; and that faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful* (Prov. 27:5–6). And therefore I shall do as I would be done by. Faithfulness and usefulness shall be the measure of my message to you. And they have commanded me to set before you this lesson of self-denial, and earnestly to entreat you, and again entreat you, that you will faithfully read, and learn, and practice it.

Though I judge you have learned it long ago, I think it not needless to remind you of it again; my soul being astonished to see the power of selfishness in the world, even in those who by confessions and prayers and high professions have frequently condemned it. Yet this is the radical, mortal sin. Where this lives, all sins virtually live. Say that a man is selfish, and (in that measure) you say all that is naught of him as to his inclination. That selfishness is the sum of vice, and the capital enemy of God, of commonwealths, of order and government, of all grace and virtue, of every holy ordinance and duty, especially of unity and brotherly love, and of the welfare of our neighbors and of our own salvation, I have manifested to you in the following discourse.

But alas, what need have we of words to manifest it, when the flames of discord and long-continued divisions among brethren do manifest it! When hatred, strife, variance, emulation, backbiting, violence, rebellions, bloodshed, resisting and pulling down of governments, have so lamentably declared it! When such havoc is made by it before our eyes, and the evil spirit goes on and prospers, and desolation is zealously and studiously carried on, and the voice of peacemakers is despised or drowned in the confused noise! *Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they have not been afraid to speak evil of dignities* (2 Pet. 2:10). To speak evil? Was that the height of presumption and self-willedness then? Alas, how much further hath it proceeded now, even under the cloak of liberty and religion? How many conquerors, who have often triumphed over their enemies, are conquered by themselves, and live in continual captivity under this home-bred, most imperious tyrant?

Whence is it but for want of self-denial that there is such scrambling for rule and greatness, for riches and honors among all? As if they thought it more desirable to fall from a high place than a low, and at death to part with riches rather than with poverty, and at judgment to have much to answer for rather than little, and to go to heaven as a camel through a needle's eye, rather than by the more plain and easy way!

Whence is it but for want of self-denial, that men are so hardly convinced of their sins—be they never so open, and odious, and scandalous—if they are but such as will admit of an excuse before the world? Most sins that are confessed are such as seem not to be disgraceful, or such whose justification would double the disgrace, or such as are confessed in pride, that the confessor may gain the reputation of humility.

Whence is it but for want of self-denial that Christian love is grown so cold, while all profess it to be the badge of Christ's disciples? And that so many professors have so little charity for any but those of their own opinions—unless it be a slandering charity, or a persecuting, or murdering charity? That all is commendable or excusable that is done by men of their own conceits; and all condemnable, or at best a diminutive good, that is found in those who differ from them, especially if they dispute or write against them?

Whence is it but for want of self-denial, that men who know that whoredom, and drunkenness, and theft are sins, can yet be ignorant (in the midst of light) that discord and church-divisions are sins? And that they hear him with heart-rising, enmity, or suspicion, who

declaims against them? As if uniting were become the work of Satan, and dividing were become the work of Christ. I mean not dividing from those without, but dividing in his church and among his members, who are all baptized with one Spirit into one body (1 Cor. 12:13)—even the body of Christ (not of the Pope), of which even apostles are but members (and therefore Peter was not the head) (1 Cor. 12:27–28), which is so tempered together by God that there should be no schism in it, but that the members should have the same care one for another (1 Cor. 12:24–25). And that for all the plain and terrible passages against divisions that are found in the Word of God, it seems to some a venial sin, and to others a commendable virtue, if not a mark of Christian piety. I may seem to speak incredible things of the delusions of selfish professors of religion, if they were not attested by the common and lamentable experience of the times.

And whence is it but for want of self-denial, that peace-makers succeed no better in their attempts? That while all men cry up Peace and Unity, most men are destroying them, and few are furthering them, and fewer do it with zeal and diligence; so few, that they are borne down in the crowd, and speed no better than Lot among the rabble of the Sodomites, who cried out against him, *"This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee than with them"* (Gen. 19:9). How long have some been longing, and praying, and moving, and laboring for peace among the professed sons of piety and peace in England? And all (for ought I see) almost in vain, unless to the condemnation of a selfish, unpeaceable generation. (But yet let the sons of peace plead for it, as long as they have a tongue and breath to speak.)

Whence can it be but for want of self-denial, that magistrates professing a zeal for holiness regard no more the interest of Christ? But that the name (and but the name) of liberty—a liberty that hath neither moral good nor evil in it—is set in the balance against the things of everlasting consequence, and thought sufficient to outweigh them? And that the mere pretense of this indifferent, carnal liberty is thought an argument of sufficient weight for the introduction of a wicked, damning liberty—even a liberty to deceive and destroy as many as they can, and to hinder those that endeavor men's salvation? And what is the argument pleaded for all this? It is partly a pretense of tenderness and mercy, and partly because men cannot be made religious by force. And must such ignorant or juggling confusions serve the turn, to cheat a nation of their religion and liberties, and many thousands of their salvation? As if all the controversy were, whether we should force others to be of our religion, when it is only or principally whether we may hinder them from robbing us of our own, and from tempting unstable souls to sin and to damnation, and from hindering the means of men's salvation, and from the open practice of idolatry or ungodliness.

If we cannot force them to the Christian faith, can we not hinder them from drawing others from it? And are we unmerciful to them if we give them leave to damn themselves (for that is the mercy that is pleaded for) and only hinder them from damning others? Is it cruelty or persecution to hinder them from enticing souls to hell, as long as they may freely go thither themselves? I should rather think that if we did our best to save themselves, it were far from cruelty. For example, if infidel or Papists' books be prohibited, what cruelty or persecution is this? If Quakers be hindered from railing at God's ordinances in the open streets and assemblies, what cruelty or

persecution is this? But some think it enough for this toleration, that they think as confidently they are in the right as we do that they err. And so do heathens, Mohammedans, and infidels. And what! shall every man have leave to do evil, that can but be ignorant enough to think (or say he thinks) that he does well? And must magistrates rule as men who are uncertain whether there be a Christ, or a Church, or a Heaven, or Hell, because some are found in their dominions so foolish or impious as to be uncertain of it?

In plain English, is it any hindrance to men's salvation, and furtherance of their damnation, to be made infidels, Papists, and such as deny the essentials of Christianity, or not? If not, then away with Christianity and Reformation. Why do we pretend to it ourselves? But if it be, will merciful rulers set up a trade for butchering of souls, and allow men to set up a shop of poison for all to buy and take that will—yea, to proclaim this poison for souls in streets and church assemblies, as if men's souls were no more worth than rats or mice or hurtful vermin, or as if it were some noble achievement to send as many as may be to the Devil? Judge impartially whether all this be not for want of self-denial. If selfish interest led them not to this, and if they were more tender of the interest of Christ than of their own, and of men's souls than of their flesh, it would not be thus.

But the same argument that tempts the sensual to hell does tempt such magistrates to set up liberty for drawing men to hell. The wicked sell their souls to spare their flesh, and let go heaven to enjoy the liberty of sinning, and run into hell to escape the trouble of a holy life. And such magistrates sell the people's souls to spare the flesh of the deceivers; and in tenderness and mercy to their bodies, they dare

not restrain men from seeking their damnation. Is faith and holiness propagated by persuasion and not by force? Surely then infidelity, Popery, and ungodliness are propagated by persuasion too! Again I tell you, self-love makes such rulers wiser than to grant commission or liberty to all who will entice their soldiers to mutiny or rebellion, their wives to adultery, their children to prodigality, or their servants to thievery. But the love of Christ and men's salvation is not so strong as to satisfy them whether men should be hindered from raising mutinies in his Church and from destroying souls.

Forsooth, they tell us that Christ is sufficient to look to his own cause. Very true (and they shall one day know it). But must he not therefore teach or rule by men? Is not adultery, murder, theft, rebellion, against the cause of Christ and his laws as well as Popery and infidelity? And must they therefore be let alone by man? Christ is sufficient to teach the world, as well as to govern. But does it follow that men must be no teachers under him? Nothing but selfishness could cause this blindness.

And because I know that this stream proceeds from the Roman spring, and it is their great design to persuade the world that it belongs not to magistrates to meddle with religion, but only to cherish those whom the Pope approves of, and to punish those whom the Pope condemns; and that Christ must govern and judge of matters of religion himself—that is, by his pretended Roman Vice-Christ—I shall only now say this: that if Rome were acquainted with self-denial, and if the selfish, carnal interest of riches and rule and worldly greatness had not blinded them, they could never have believed themselves that Christ appointed the Pope of Rome to be his universal vicar; and that princes and magistrates in their own

dominions have not more power to judge who is to be tolerated or punished by the sword than the Pope of Rome. When no priest or prelate upon earth (as such) hath anything to do with such a judgment, no, not in the places where they live. All that they have to do herein is to judge who is the heretic or offender in order to his censure and excommunication. But it is magistrates only who must judge who is the heretic or offender in order to corporal punishment or restraint. And this I undertake to make good against all the Papists in the world; much more that the Roman tyrant hath no such power at the Antipodes, nor in all the Christian nations on earth.

Remember in all this, that I speak not against a toleration of godly, tolerable men—Episcopal, Presbyterian, Independent, Anabaptist, &c.—who will walk in charity, peace, and concord; we shall never be well till these are closed.

But do we not know that Papists have Italy, and Spain, and Germany, and France at hand to help them? And that if we grant them such a liberty as shall strengthen them and make way for their power, we give away our own liberty, and are preparing faggots for our martyrdom, and giving away the Gospel which by wonders of mercy hath been till now preserved (and I hope shall be preserved in despite of Rome and Hell). Nor yet do I plead for any cruelty against a Papist, but for a necessary defense of the interest of Christ and the souls of men, and the hopes of our posterity. True humanity abhors cruelty.

Did magistrates well know their dependence upon God, and that they are His officers, and must make Him their end, they would not take their flocks to be their masters, though they may take them for their

charge; nor would they set up a carnal interest of the multitude against the pleasing of God and men's salvation; nor would they think so highly of men's conceits and wills as to judge it a matter of so much moment, to allow them in religion to say or do what they list. If allowing a man's self in the practice of known sin is inconsistent with a state of grace, and a sign of a miserable slave of Satan, I leave it to you to consider what it will prove to allow others—even countries and nations—in known sin. And if rulers know not that setting up a universal Vice-Christ, and worshipping bread (though they think there is no bread) with divine worship, and serving God in an unknown tongue, with other points of Popery, are sin; and that opposing and reproaching the holy Scriptures, ordinances, and ministry are sin—woe to such rulers, and woe to the nations that are ruled by such. O what a blessing is a holy, self-denying magistracy to a nation!

If one could have told you twenty years ago that you and such as you should be rulers in this land, how confidently would you have promised an universal encouragement to godliness, and a vigorous promoting of the cause of Christ, and a zealous suppressing of all that is against it! Little would you or I have thought that after professors of godliness were in power, so many years should have been spent in destroying charity and unity, and cherishing almost all that will stand up for the Devil, and plead his cause against the doctrine, and discipline, and worship, and churches, and officers of Jesus Christ. And that in their days it should have been put to the question, whether the ministry itself should be taken down. And that men in power should write for liberty for all that will call itself religion—even Popery not excepted (nor, I think, Infidelity or Mohammedanism itself)—and that those who write so should be

men in power? My heart would have risen against him as an odious calumniator who should have presumed to tell me that such men as have attempted this would ever have come to such a pass; and I should have encountered them with Hazael's question, *Are they dogs, that they should do so vile a thing?*—and exercise such cruelty on souls, and seek to bring back the people of God to the Romish vomit, and set up the greatest tyranny on earth, and all under pretense of a religious liberty?

But alas, it is not magistrates only who are so wanting in self-denial. Ministers also are guilty of this crime. Or else we should not have been so forward to divisions, and so backward to the cure; nor would men of this profession, for the interest of their opinions and parties, have cherished dissension, and fled from concord, and have had a hand in resisting and pulling down authority, and embroiling the nations in wars and miseries.

And whence is it but for want of self-denial (for our own faults must be confessed) that the ministers of Christ are so much silent in the midst of such heinous miscarriages as the times abound with? I know we receive not our commission as prophets did, by immediate, extraordinary inspiration. But what of that? The priests who were called in an ordinary way were bound to be plain and faithful in their office as well as the prophets—and so are we. How plainly spoke the prophets even to kings? And how patiently did they bear indignities and persecutions?

But now we are grown carnally wise and cautious (for holy wisdom and caution I allow); and if duty is like to cost us dear, we can think that we are excused from it. If great men would set up Popery in the

land by a toleration, alas, how many ministers think they may be silent, for fear lest the contrivers should call them seditious or turbulent or disobedient, or should set men to rail at them and call them liars and calumniators; or for fear lest they should be persecuted and ruined in their estates or names!

If they do but foresee that men in power or honor in the world will charge them with lies or unchristian dealing for speaking the words of truth and soberness against the introduction of Popery and impiety, and that they shall be made as the scorn and offscouring of all the world, and have all manner of evil said falsely of them for the sake of Christ, His Church and truth, they presently consult with flesh and blood, and think themselves discharged of their duty. When God says (Ezek. 33:6, &c.), *If the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.* And were we no watchmen, yet we have this command (Lev. 19:17), *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him.*

Yet now many ministers will be cruelly silent, lest they should be charged with malice and hating those whom they are commanded to rebuke. The sword of violence I persuade them not to meddle with; but were it not for want of self-denial, the sword of the Spirit would be more faithfully managed against the sins of the greatest enemies of Christ and of the Gospel than it is by most, though it should cost us more than scorns and slanders, and though we know that bonds and afflictions did abide us.

And verily I cannot yet understand that the contempt and scorn of the ministry in England is fed by anything so much as selfishness. Could we be for all men's opinions and carnal interests (O what experience have I had of this!), all men, for ought I see, would be for us. Is it a crime to be a minister? Doubtless it is then a crime to be a Christian. And he that rails at us as ministers today is like to rail at us as Christians tomorrow. But if such will vouchsafe to come to me, before they venture their souls, and soberly debate the case, I undertake to prove the truth of Christianity. The world may see in Clem. Writer's exceptions against my *Treatise of Infidelity*, what thin, transparent sophisms and silly cavils they use against the Christian cause. When they have well answered not only that Treatise, but Du Plessis, Grotius, Vives, Ficinus, Micraelius, and the ancient apologies of the Christian writers of the Church, let them boast then that they have confuted Christianity. The Devil hath told me long ago in his secret temptations as much against the Christian faith as ever I yet read in any of our apostates. But God hath told me much more that is for it, and enabled me to see the folly of their reasonings, who think the mysteries of the Gospel to be foolishness.

But if it be not as ministers and Christians that we are hated, what is it then? If it be because we are ignorant, insufficient, negligent, or scandalous, why do they not by a legal trial cast us out, and put those in our places that are more able, diligent, and godly, when we have provoked them to it, and begged it of them so often as we have done? If it be because we are not Papists, it is because we cannot renounce all our senses, our reason, the Scripture, the unity, judgment, and tradition of the far greatest part of the universal Church. If I have not already proved that Popery fights against all these, and am not able to make it good against any Jesuit on earth, let them go on to

number me with heretics, and let them use me as they do such when I am in their power.

If we are hated because we are not of the opinions of those that hate us, it seems those opinions are enemies to charity; and then we have little reason to embrace them. And if this be it, we are under an unavoidable necessity of being hated. For among such diversity of opinions, it is impossible for us to comply with all, though we durst be false to the known truth, and durst become the servants of men, and make every self-conceited brother the master of our faith.

If we are so reviled because we are against an universal liberty of speaking or writing against the truths and ways of Christ, and of laboring in Satan's harvest to the dividing of the Churches and the damnation of souls, it is then in the upshot, because we are of any religion, and are not despisers of the Gospel, and of the Church, and of men's salvation, and because we believe in Jesus Christ.

I have lately found, by their exclamations and common defamations and threatenings, and by the volumes of reproaches that come forth against me, and by the swarms of lies that have been sent forth against me through the land, that even the present contrivers of England's misery (Liberty, I would say) and of toleration for Popery and more, are themselves unable to bear contradiction from one such an inconsiderable person as myself; and they have got it into the mouths of soldiers, that my writings are the cause of wars, and that till I give over writing, they shall not give over fighting (though I do all that I am able to do for peace). And if this be so, what a case would they bring the nation into, by giving far greater liberty to all, than ever I made use of! Unless they still except a liberty of

contradicting themselves, they must look for other kind of usage when libertinism is set up.

Yea, if they will seek the ruin of the Church and cause of Christ, they must expect that we should take liberty to contradict them, and to speak for Christ and the souls of men, till they have deprived us of tongues, or pens, or lives; and they must expect that we obey God rather than men, and that, as Paul did Peter (Gal. 2:11), we withstand them to the face; and that Satan shall not be unresisted because he is transformed into an angel of light; nor his ministers be unresisted because they are transformed into the ministers of righteousness; nor the false apostles and deceitful workers because they are transformed into the apostles of Christ (2 Cor. 11:13–15). Nor must they think to do so horrid a thing as to weave their libertinism and toleration of Popery into a new fundamental constitution of the commonwealth, which Parliaments must have no power to alter, and that the ages to come shall curse us for our silence, and say that ministers and other Christians were all so basely selfish as, for fear of reproaches or sufferings, to say nothing, but cowardly to betray the Gospel and their country.

If the rattling of the hail of persecution on the tiles, even on this flesh which is but the tabernacle of our souls, be a terrible thing, how much more terrible is the indignation of the Lord, and the threats of Him who is a consuming fire! If you can venture your life against an enemy in the field, we are bastards and not Christians if we cannot venture ours, and give them up to persecuting rage, as long as we know that we have a Master that will save us harmless, and that the God whom we serve is able to deliver us; and that He hath charged us not to fear them that kill the body and after that can do no more;

and that He hath told us that we are blessed when men revile us and persecute us and say all manner of evil against us falsely for His sake; bidding us rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is our reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets who were before us (Matt. 5:10–12). And when we are told that he who will save his life shall lose it, and whoever will lose his life for the sake of Christ shall find it (Matt. 16:25). And when we know that we own a cause that shall prevail at last, and resist them whose end shall be according to their works (2 Cor. 11:15).

And what though this be unknown to the opposers? That will not warrant us to betray a cause that we know to be of God; nor will the ignorance of others excuse us for neglecting known truth and duty. If the souls of private persons be worth all the study and labor of our lives, and we must deal faithfully with them, whatever it shall cost us: surely the safety of a nation, and the hopes of our posterity, and the public interest of Christ, is worthy to be spoken for with much more zeal, and we may suffer more joyfully for contradicting a public destroyer of the Church, than for telling a poor drunkard or whoremonger of his sin and misery.

Hitherto I have permitted my pen to express my sense of the common want of self-denial in the land: Now give me leave, as your most affectionate, faithful friend, to turn my style a little to yourself, and earnestly to entreat of you these following particulars.

I. In general, that as long as you live you will watch against this common deadly sin of selfishness, and study continually the duty of self-denial. We shall be empty of Christ, till we are nothing in ourselves. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of*

heaven. Self is the strongest and most dangerous enemy that ever you fought against. It is a whole army united; and the more dangerous because so near. Many that have fought as valiantly and successfully against other enemies as you, have at last been conquered and undone by Self. And conquer it you cannot without a conflict: and the conflict must endure as long as you live: and combating is not pleasing to the enemy. And therefore, as long as self is the enemy, and self-pleasing so natural to corrupted man (who should be wholly addicted to please the Lord), self-denial will prove a difficult task. And if somewhat in the advice that would engage you deeper in the conflict should seem bitter or ungrateful, I should not wonder.

And let me freely tell you, that your prosperity and advancement will make the work so exceedingly difficult, that since you have been a Major General, and a Lord, and now a Counselor of State, you have stood in a more slippery, perilous place, and have need of much more grace and vigilance, than when you were but Baxter's friend. Great places and employments have great temptations, and are great avocations of the mind from God. And no error scarcely can be small that is committed in public great affairs, upon which the honor of God, and the temporal and spiritual welfare of so many, do, in some sort, depend. These times have told us to our grief, what victory and prosperity can do to strengthen the selfish principle in men: they have swallowed camels since they were lifted up, that would have strained at gnats in a lower state. The ministry, and ordinances, and holy communion that once were sweet to them, are grown into contempt.

Centaury and wormwood are excellent helps to procure an appetite and strengthen the stomach; but marrow and sweetness breed a loathing. The vertiginous disease is not so strong with them that are on the ground as with them that stand on the top of a steeple. I had rather twenty times look up at them that are so exalted, than stand with them, and have the terror of looking down. Had not professors been intoxicated by prosperity, they had not believed and lived so giddily. I have often seen men's reason marred with a cup or two too much, but seldom by too little. And too many I have known that have wounded conscience and sold their souls for the love of prosperity and wealth; but none that ever did it for poverty. For a rich man to be saved is impossible to man, though all things are possible with God (Matt. 19:26; Luke 18:27).

For my own part, I bless God that hath kept me from greatness in the world, and I take it as the principal act of friendship that ever you did for me, that you provoked me to this sweet, though flesh-displeasing life, of the ministry, in which I have chosen to abide. I had rather lie in health on the hardest bed, than be sick upon the softest. And I see that a feather-bed maketh not a sick man well. *The sleep of the laboring man is sweet:* the plowman's brown bread and cheese is more savoury to him, and breedeth fewer sicknesses, than the fullness and variety of the rich. This country diet doth not cherish voluptuousness, arrogancy, vainglory, earthly-mindedness, uncharitableness, and other selfish diseases, so much as worldly greatness doth.

Experience telleth us that most men are best in a low estate: insomuch that a bad man in sickness will speak better, and seem more penitent and mortified, than many better men in health. It is a

wonderfully hard thing to live like a Christian in full prosperity; and to be above this world, and have lively apprehensions of invisible things, and live a heavenly conversation, in health and wealth, when our flesh hath so much provision at hand to accommodate and please it. Prosperity doth powerfully corrupt the mind: it breedeth many dangerous errors and vices; and it maketh useless that knowledge which men have. So that though such men can speak the same words as another about the matters of the life to come, it is but dreamingly, and without life. Their knowledge hath but little power on their hearts and lives. The world is so great with them (which is as nothing) that God and everlasting life are as nothing to them (which are All). They are so full of the creature that they have no room for Christ: and so busy about earth that they have but little time for heaven: and taste so much sweetness in their present pomp, that they cannot relish the true and durable delights. They know their morals, as they know some astronomical or geometrical verities, by an opinion or ineffectual knowledge: so that indeed they know not what they know.

Pausanias in his prosperity, desiring to hear some secrets of philosophy, had no more from Simonides but, *Remember that thou art a man*. He contemned this at the present, as a ridiculous memento of that which no man could forget. But when he was reduced to an extremity, he then remembered the philosopher's lesson, and perceived there was more in it than he understood when he contemned it.

How little is there in a prosperous state that should seem desirable in a wise man's eyes? Why is it that great travelers and statesmen, and all that have most tried the world, desire to withdraw from it toward

the evening of their age, and to retire themselves into a private life, that they may there look toward eternal things, and cry out of the vanity and vexation which they have here found? Must we not conceive them wiser after much experience than before? And therefore wiser in their recess than in their aspirings? And therefore that it is folly to be ambitious, and wisdom to scorn the world? Why else do dying men most scorn it? Dear friend, you will think of these things more understandingly and more feelingly one of these days, when you come to die, than you can do now. I would not for all the world have been without the advantages of looking death so often in the face as I have done since you first knew me. If I have been but a while without this sight, and have but conceived that yet I have many years to live, alas, how it hath enervated my knowledge and my meditations! So that twenty times thinking the same holy thoughts will not do so much as once will do, when I seem to be nearer my everlasting state.

And what doth worldly greatness add to your real worth in the eyes of God or of wise men? Magistracy as a thing divine I honor: but James hath taught me not to be partial to the rich as rich, and call up the man with the gold ring and gay attire, and say to the poor, *Sit there at my footstool.* As to be proud of fine clothes is a childish or womanish piece of folly, below a man: so to be proud of victories and dignities and wealth and worldly honors is the vanity of an infidel or atheist, and below a Christian that hath the hopes of heaven. If a man be holy, he is above his worldly greatness, and beareth it as his burden, and feareth it as his snare. And if he be carnal, he is the faster in his misery; and golden fetters are stronger than any others. A pebble-stone on the top of Atlas is but a pebble: and a pearl is a pearl in the bottom of the sea. A nettle on the top of a mountain is

but a nettle: and a cedar in the lowest valley is a cedar. If God dwell with the contrite, and have respect to him that is poor and humble and trembleth at his word, it seems they are most to be respected, and are the most honorable, if God can put more honor upon us by His approbation than man. God will not ask us where we have grown (in order to our justification), but what fruit we have borne; nor whether we were rich or poor, but whether we were holy or unholy; nor what was our station, but how we behaved ourselves in it.

Prosperity usually breedeth a tenderness and sickly frame of soul, so that we can scarce look out of door but our affections take cold; and can scarce feed on the most wholesome food but we receive it with some loathing, or turn it to the matter of some disease. But to worldly vanities, it breeds a canine appetite: so that ambitious wretches are like dogs that greedily swallow the morsel that you cast them, and presently gape for more. But wholesome poverty hardeneth us against such tenderness and infirmities, and breedeth not such diseases in the soul. *A poor man's rod when thou dost ride, is both a weapon and a guide,* saith our serious poet. I sleep most sweetly when I have travelled in the cold; frost and snow are friends to the seed, though they are enemies to the flower. Adversity indeed is contrary to glory, but it befriendeth grace.

Plutarch tells us that when Caesar passed by a smoky, nasty village at the foot of the Alps, some of his commanders merrily asked him, *Whether there was such a stir for commands and dignities and honors among those cottages, as there was at Rome?* The answer's easy. Do you think that an Antony, a Mark, a Jerome, or such other of the ancient retired Christians, were not wiser and happier men than a Nero or a Caligula, yea or a Julius or Augustus Caesar? Is it a

desirable thing to be a lord or ruler before we turn to common earth? And as Marius that was one day made emperor, and reigned the next, and was slain by a soldier the next; so to be worshipped today, and laid in the dust, if not in hell, tomorrow?

It was the saying of the Emperor Severus, *Omnia fui, sed nihil expedit;* and of King David, *I have seen an end of all perfection.* O value these things but as they deserve! Speak impartially: are not those that are striving to get up the ladder foolish and ridiculous, when those that are at the top have attained but danger, trouble, and envy; and those that fall down are accounted miserable?

— Sed nulla aconita bibuntur
Fictilibus.
Juvenal

There are more draughts of poison given in golden than in earthen vessels, saith the Poet. The Scythian therefore was no fool, who, when the Emperor Michael Paleologus sent him precious ornaments and jewels, asked what they were good for—whether they would preserve him from calamity, sickness, or death?—and sent them home when he heard they were of no more use. You desire not the biggest shoes or clothes, but the meetest; so do by your dignity and estate. As you must ask but your daily bread, so must you desire no more: neither poverty nor riches, but convenient food; yet so as to learn to abound and to want, and in every state to be content; bearing riches and dignity, if cast upon you without seeking, but not desiring or gaping after them, nor glorying in them: undergoing them as a burden with patience and self-denial, and carefully using all for God, but neither desiring nor using them for carnal self. *They*

that will be rich (or great) fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition: for the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Tim. 6:9–10).

Remember where you began, and where you must end. Naked you came into the world, and naked you must return to dust. You brought no riches hither, and none shall you take hence, unless you learn the blessed art of making friends of the unrighteous mammon, and laying up a good foundation against the time to come, and laying up a treasure in heaven, by the right improvement of your present mercies. Though our life be not circular but progressive, the end, as to our naturals, is liker to the beginning than to the middle. If we die not children, yet liker to children than we live. It is sad that the height and perfection of our age should be the height of our folly; and that childhood and retired age should be least entangled with these vanities. And it is a lamentable stupidity that alloweth self so confidently to play its game so near eternity; where one would think the noise of damned souls, and the triumphant joys of blessed saints that passed to rest by the way of self-denial, should mar the sport, and turn their pride into shame and trembling; and that the great things of mortality that are even at hand, should drown the noise of pomp and pleasure, and make the greatness of this world appear an inconsiderable thing. The Lord grant that you be no less humble, and heavenly, and true to Christ, and above this world, than when you and I had our first familiar converse, (and sure by this time you should be much better). It is said of Agathocles, King of Sicily, that having been a potter's son, he would always have together earthen and golden vessels at his table, to remember him of his original. You

tread on earth, and bear about you such evidences of your frailty as serve to tell you whence your nature came and whither it is going, and how it should be used now. Remember also your spiritual new birth, by what seed you were begotten and by what milk you were nourished, and see that you degenerate not, and do nothing unworthy of that noble birth and the heavenly nature then received.

II. And remember that self-denial is never right unless it be caused by the love of God; and as you deny yourself, so you entirely and unreservedly devote yourself to Him. To this end I crave your observation of these few unquestionable precepts.

1. Take heed of unbelief, and dread all temptations tending to it, and live by that faith which maketh absent things to be to you as present, and things unseen as if they were seen. When heaven once loseth its interest in the soul, the world may play *rex* and delude and destroy us at its pleasure.

2. Take heed of all intrusions of selfishness: especially overvalue not your own understanding in the things of God. Draw not a great picture of a little man. Be not easily drawn to scorn the judgments of those who have searched the holy Scriptures with equal diligence and humility, and with much more advantage of retiredness, and time, and helps than you.

3. Take heed of engaging your hand, or tongue, or secret thoughts against the faithful ministers of Christ: but further the work of Christ in their hands with all your power. I am no prophet, but yet presume to say, that if the reproaches of a faithful ministry in England be purged away without some dreadful judgment of God on the apostate reproachers, or else a desertion of the nation by a removing of our

glory, I shall wonder at the patience and forbearance of the Lord. It is a dreadful observation, to see so much of the spirit of malignity possessing those who once said they fought against malignants. And that the ministers and servants of the Lord are railed at by many of them, as formerly they were by the worst of those whom their hands destroyed: and with this dreadful aggravation, that then it was but some that were reviled, and now with many it is all: then it was under the name of Puritans and Roundheads, and now it is openly as ministers under the name of Priests, and Blackcoats, and Presbyters, and Pulpeteers. What have these souls done, that they are so far forsaken by the Lord! The Judge of all the world is at the door, that will plead His servants' cause in righteousness. It is hard kicking against the pricks. He that despiseth, despiseth not men, but God. Persecution under pretence of liberty is heightened with hypocrisy, and is one of the greatest sins in the world. But men are not caught in spiders' webs, though flies are: our Lord will make us a way to escape. Persecution never conquered Christ. And because He lives, we shall live also. Here is the faith and patience of the saints.

I know that malice wants not words to cloak their iniquity. He that hath will and power to do hurt hath so much wit as to pretend some reason for it. Though I think that malice did never walk more nakedly, since the primitive persecutions, than it doth in England at this day. Their principles and profound contrivances they can hide; but their malignity goes stark naked, and is almost grown past shame. They talk against mercenary ministers, as if they had never read 1 Cor. 9, Mal. 3, and such other Scriptures; or as if they envied food and raiment to them that watch and labor for their souls, to whom they are commanded to give double honor (1 Tim. 5:17), when they envy not provender to their horses, nor fodder to their laboring

ox, nor the crumbs to their very dogs. But the matter is, that their wit is too scant and narrow for their malice; and therefore the Popish and malignant enemies have no fairer pretence to cast out the ministry, than by this engaging the covetousness of the ignorant and ungodly sort against them.

They talk of our want of a just call. But what is it in point of calling that is wanting? Abilities, say some; succession, say others; miracles, say others. And indeed it is what the interest of selfish men doth dictate to the accusers. O that they would tell us what is the due call, and where is the ministry on earth that hath it, if we have not? If they would have all laid by that work no miracles, we may see what they would have done to the Church. If we are not what they would have us be, and do not what they would have us do, why do they not come in charity and meekness, and show us the course that we should take? If we are fools, or besides ourselves, it is for them. The God whom we serve, that will shortly judge us, is our witness, that we have chosen the calling that we are in, for their salvation and for His glory; and that we labor in it in season and out of season to please Christ and to profit them, rather than to please or accommodate our flesh.

You brought me into the ministry: I am confident you know to what ends, and with what intentions, I desired it. I was then very ignorant, young, and raw. Though my weakness be yet such as I must lament, I must say, to the praise of the great Shepherd of the flock, that He hath since then afforded me precious opportunities, much assistance, and as much encouragement as to any man that I know alive. You know my education and initial weakness was such as forbiddeth me to glory in the flesh. But I will not rob God of His

glory, to avoid the appearance of ostentation, lest I be proud of seeming not to be proud. I doubt not but many thousand souls will thank you, when they have here read that you were the man that led me into the ministry. And shall I entertain a suspicion that you will ever hearken to those men that would rob you of the reward of many such works, and engage you against the King of Saints?

Is it gain, or ease, or worldly advantages, that continueth me in this work? Let me speak as a fool, seeing it is for the Lord, in imitation of Paul, who was no fool. Was I not capable of secular and military advancement as well as others that are grown great? Did I ever solicit you so much as for my arrears (which is many hundred pounds)? You could scarce do the thing that would gratify my flesh more, than to silence and depose me from the ministry. Might I consult with the flesh, I should be more against my own employment than many of my enemies are. Did I but turn physician, I could get more worldly wealth: and my patients would not be so froward, and quarrelsome, and unthankful, as most ministers find their carnal auditors to be. When men come to me for physic for their bodies, how submissive are they, and how do they entreat, and what thanks after will they return? But when we would help their souls, what cavils, and quarrels, and unthankful obstinacy do we meet with? We must be much beholden to them to accept our help, and all will not serve some. My patients that have bodily diseases will pay me, if I would take it: but if, by giving them twice as much as I receive, I could satisfy and further the cure of diseased souls, how joyful should I be? And must we deny ourselves and all things in the world, for our people's sakes, and after all be reproached as if we were a mercenary generation and sought ourselves? O how will God confound this ingratitude when He comes to judge!

Something they might say, if the ministers of England had the provision of the French and other Popish clergy. (I will not presume to compare now our calling, fidelity, and maintenance, with magistrates, judges, and men of other professions.) Should I suppose the magistracy epitomized in you, and the ministry in me, I should give you an undue advantage: for I suppose there are far more ministers better than me, than there are magistrates better than you. And yet I think you would not judge of me as the ministers are judged of. As there are no such commissioners for ejection of scandalous, insufficient, negligent magistrates, as are for the ejection of such ministers, so if there were, I should not doubt but you would quickly see which part were liable to more exceptions.

But when I look on the faithful ministers round about me (how many of them could I name!), with whom my conscience tells me I am not worthy to be compared in holiness, I am then amazed at the ingratitude of the apostates of this age. How constantly and zealously do they preach in public, at home and abroad, some of them many times a week! How diligently do they instruct the ignorant in private, from house to house! How unblameably, and meekly, and self-denyingly do they behave themselves! And are men that once made profession of religion become the enemies of such a ministry? *O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united* (Gen. 49:6). I had rather be in the case of Turks, yea of cannibals, than of those men.

I know that many think our very ignorant dividers to have more illumination, and that the pastors of the flocks are carnal, ignorant men; as the blind man that rushed against another, and asked him whether he were blind, that could not go out of his way. But I have

long tried the spirits; and I have found that these chameleons have nothing within but lungs: and that straw and little sticks may make the quickest and the lightest blaze, but will not make a durable fire, as the bigger fuel doth. A bittern hath a louder voice than a swan or eagle. And in some one thing a bungler may excel a better workman. And what if one minister excel in one gift, and another in another, and few in all? Is not this like the primitive administration? You are not angry with your apple tree that it bears not plums, nor with your pear tree that it bears not figs.

But I have been too tedious. I beseech you, interpret not any of these words as intended for accusation or unjust suspicion of yourself: God forbid you should ever fall from that integrity that I am persuaded you once had. But my eye is on the times with grief, and on my ancient, dearest friend with love. And in an age of iniquity and temptation, my conscience and the world shall never say that I was unfaithful to my friend, and forbore to tell him of the common dangers.

Dear friend, take heed of a glittering, flattering world. Remember that greatness makes few bad men good, and few good men better. As Seneca saith, *The carcass is as truly dead that is embalmed, as that which is dragged to the grave with hooks. And this I say, the time is short: it remaineth that they that weep be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away* (1 Cor. 7:29–31). And when the soul of the worldly fool is required of him, then whose shall all their dignities, and honors, and riches be?

In the meantime God judgeth not by outward appearance, as man judgeth, nor honoreth any for being honored of men.

Solus honor merito qui datur, ille datur.
"That honor alone is honor, which is deserved."

These truths (well known to you) I thought meet here to set before your eyes, not knowing whether I shall any more converse with you in the flesh; and also to desire you seriously to read over these popular sermons (persuaded to the press by the importunity of some faithful brethren, that love a mean discourse on so necessary a subject). *Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation.* I rest,

Your Friend,
Richard Baxter.

Sept. 12, 1659.

THE PREFACE

Readers,

I here present to your serious consideration a subject of such necessity and consequence, that the peace and safety of Churches, Nations, Families, and souls do lie upon it.

The eternal God was the beginning and the end, the interest, the attractive, the confidence, the desire, the delight, the *All* of man in

his upright, uncorrupted state. Though the Creator planted in man's nature the principle of natural self-love, as the spring of his endeavors for self-preservation, and a notable part of the engine by which He governeth the world, yet were the parts subservient to the whole, and the whole to God. And self-love did subserve the love of the universe and of God; and man desired his own preservation for these higher ends.

When sin stepped in, it broke this order; and taking advantage from the natural innocent principle of self-love, it turned man from the love of God, and much abated his love to his neighbor and the public good, and turned him to himself by an inordinate self-love, which terminateth in himself and principally in his carnal-self, instead of God and the common good. So that Self is become *All* to corrupted nature, as God was *All* to nature in its integrity.

Selfishness is the soul's idolatry and adultery: the sum of its original and increased pravity; the beginning and end, the life and strength, of actual sin: even as the love of God is the rectitude and fidelity of the soul, and the sum of all our special grace, and the heart of the new creature, and the life and strength of actual holiness. Selfishness in one word expresseth all our aversion positively, as the want of the love of God expresseth it privatively; and all our sin is summarily in these two: even as all our holiness is summarily in the love of God and in self-denial.

It is the work of the Holy Ghost, by sanctifying grace, to bring off the soul again from self to God. Self-denial therefore is half the essence of sanctification. No man hath any more holiness than he hath self-denial. And therefore the Law (which the sanctifying Spirit writeth

on the heart) doth set up God in the first table, and our neighbor in the second, against the usurpation and encroachment of this Self.

It saith nothing of love or duty to ourselves as such expressly. In seeking the honor and pleasing of God, and the good of our neighbor, we shall most certainly find our own felicity, which nature teacheth us to desire. So that all the Law is fulfilled in love, which includeth self-denial, as light includeth the expulsion of darkness; or rather, as loyalty includeth a cessation of rebellion and a rejection of the leaders of it; and as conjugal fidelity includeth the rejection of harlots.

The very meaning of the first Commandment is, *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,"* which is the sum of the first table, and the Commandment that animateth all the rest. The very meaning of the last Commandment is, *"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,"* which is the summary of the second table, and in general forbiddeth all particular injuries to others not enumerated in the foregoing precepts, and secondarily animateth the four antecedent precepts.

The fifth Commandment, looking to both tables and conjoining them, commandeth us to honor our superiors in authority, both as they are the officers of God, and so participatively divine, and as they are the heads of human societies, and our subjection necessary to common good.

So that self-denial is principally required in the first Commandment —that is, the denying of self as opposite to God and His interest. And self-denial is required in the last Commandment—that is, the denying of self as it is an enemy to our neighbor's right and welfare,

and would draw from him unto ourselves. Self-love and self-seeking, as opposite to our neighbor's good, is the thing forbidden in that Commandment; and charity, or loving our neighbor as ourselves, and desiring his welfare as our own, is the thing commanded.

Self-denial is required in the fifth Commandment in a double respect, according to the double respect of the Commandment:

1. **In respect to God**, whose governing authority is exercised by governors, their power being a beam of His majesty, the fifth Commandment requireth us to deny ourselves by due subjection and by honoring our superiors; that is, to deny our own aspiring desires, and our refractory minds, and disobedient self-willedness, and to take heed that we suffer not within us any proud or rebellious dispositions or thoughts that would lift us up above our rulers, or exempt us from subjection to them.

2. **In respect to human societies**, for whose good authority and government is appointed, the fifth Commandment obligeth us to deny our private interest, and in all competitions to prefer the public good; and maketh a promise of temporal peace and welfare, in a special manner, to those that, in obedience to this law, do prefer the honor of government, and the public peace and welfare, before their own.

Thus charity, as opposed to selfishness and including self-denial, is the very sum and fulfilling of the Law. And selfishness is the radical, comprehensive sin (containing uncharitableness) which breaks it all.

And as the Law, so also the Redeemer, in His example and His doctrine, doth teach us—more plainly and urgently—this lesson of

self-denial.

The life of Christ is the pattern which the Church must labor to imitate. And love and self-denial were the summary of His life; though He had no sinful self to deny, but only natural self. He denied Himself in avoiding sin; but we must deny ourselves in returning from it. He loved not His life in comparison of His love to His Father and to His Church.

He appeared without desirable form or comeliness. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, and was esteemed stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was laid upon Him; the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment… He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of His people was He stricken… It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief. (Isa. 53)

What was His whole life but the exercise of love and self-denial? He denied Himself in love to His Father, obeying Him unto death and pleasing Him in all things. He denied Himself in love to mankind, in bearing our transgressions and redeeming us from the curse by being made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13). *He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled*

Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:6–8).

And this He did to teach us, by His example, to deny ourselves; to *be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; that nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves; looking not every man after his own matters, but every man also after the things of others; and thus the same mind should be in us that was in Christ Jesus* (Phil. 2:3–5).

He denied Himself also in obedient submission to governors. He was subject to Joseph and Mary (Luke 2:51). He paid tribute to Caesar, and wrought a miracle for money rather than it should be unpaid (Matt. 17:24–26). He disowned a personal worldly kingdom (John 18:36). When the people would have made Him a king, He avoided it (John 6:15), as being not a receiver but a giver of kingdoms. He would not so much as once play the part of a judge or divider of inheritances, teaching men that they must be justly made such before they do the work of magistrates (Luke 12:14).

And His Spirit, in His apostles, teacheth us the same doctrine (Rom. 13; 1 Pet. 2:13–17; Eph. 6:1, 5). And they seconded His example by their own, that we might be followers of them as they were of Christ.

What else was the life of holy Paul and the rest of the apostles, but a constant exercise of love and self-denial? Laboring and traveling night and day; enduring the basest usage from the world; undergoing indignities and manifold sufferings from unthankful men, that they might please the Lord and edify and save the souls of men; and living in poverty that they might help the world to the everlasting riches.

In a word, as love is the fulfilling of the whole Law as to the positive part, so selfishness is the evil that stands in contrariety thereto—even self-conceitedness, self-willedness, self-love, and self-seeking. And thus far self-denial is the sum of our obedience as to the *terminus à quo*. And Christ hath peremptorily determined in His Gospel, that *if any man will come after Him, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Him; and that whosoever will put in a reserve, but for the saving of his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for His sake shall find it* (Matt. 16:24–25). And that *he that doth not follow Him, bearing his cross, and that forsaketh not all he hath for Him, cannot be His disciple* (Luke 14:27, 33).

According to the nature of these holy rules and examples is the nature of the workings of the Spirit of Christ upon the soul. He usually beginneth in showing man his sin and misery, his utter insufficiency to help himself, his alienation from God and enmity to Him, his blindness and deadness, his emptiness and nothingness. And then He brings him from himself to Christ, and showeth him His fullness and sufficiency; and by Christ he cometh to the Father, and God doth receive His own again.

It is one half of the work of sanctification to cast ourselves from our understandings, our wills, our affections, and our conversations; to subdue self-conceitedness, self-willedness, self-love, and self-seeking; to mortify our carnal wisdom, and our pride, and our concupiscence, and our earthly members. And the other (and chiefest) part consisteth in setting up God where self did rule: that His wisdom may be our guide; His will, our law; His goodness the chiefest object of our love; and His service the work and business of our lives.

The Spirit doth convince us that we are not our own, and have no power at all to dispose of ourselves or anything we have, but under God, as He commandeth us. It convinceth us that God is our owner and absolute Lord, and that as we are wholly His, so we must be wholly devoted to Him, and prefer His interest before our own, and have no interest of our own but what is His, as derived from Him and subservient to Him. Fear doth begin this work of self-denial; but it is Love that bringeth us up to sincerity.

The first state of corrupted man is a state of selfishness, and servitude to his own concupiscence; where pride and sensuality bear rule, and have no more resistance than now and then some frightening, ineffectual check.

When God is calling men out of this corrupted selfish state, He usually (or oft at least) doth cast them into a state of fear: awakening them to see their lost condition, and terrifying them by the belief of His threatenings, and the sense of His indignation; and making use of their self-love to cause them to fly from the wrath to come, and to cry out to the messengers of Christ, *What shall we do to be saved?*

Some, by these fears, are but troubled and restrained a little while, and quickly overcoming them, settle again in their selfish, sensual, senseless state.

Some have the beginnings of holy love conjunct with fear (of whom more anon).

And some do, from this principle of self-love alone, betake themselves to a kind of religious course, and forsake the practice of those grosser sins that bred their fears, and fall upon the practice of

religious duties, and also with some kind of faith do trust on the satisfaction and merits of Christ, that by this means they may get some hopes that they shall escape the everlasting misery which they fear.

All this religion—animated by fear alone, without the love of God and holiness—is but preparatory to a state of grace; and if men rest here, it is but a state of hypocrisy or self-deceiving religiousness. For it is still the old principle of selfishness that reigns. Till love hath brought man up to God, he hath no higher end than himself.

The true mark by which these slavish professors and hypocrites may discern themselves is this: **They do the good which they would not do, and the evil which they do not, they would do.** They had rather live a sinful life, if they durst; and they had rather be excused from religious duties (except that little outward part which custom and their credit engage them to perform). They are but like the caged birds, that though they may sing in a sunshine day, had rather be at liberty in the woods.

They love not a life of perfect holiness, though they are forced to submit to some kind of religiousness for fear of being damned. If they had their freest choice, they had rather live in the love of the creature than in the love of God, and in the pleasures of the flesh, than in the holy course that pleaseth God.

The third state is the state of *Love*: and none but this is a state of true self-denial, and of justification and salvation. When we reach to this, we are sincere: we have then the Spirit of Adoption, disposing us to go to God as to a Father.

But this Love is not in the same degree in all the sanctified. Three degrees of it we may distinctly observe.

1. Oft-times in the beginning of a true conversion, though the seed of Love is cast into the soul, and the convert had rather enjoy God than the world, and had rather live in perfect holiness than in any sin, yet fear is so active that he scarce observeth the workings of the Love of God within him. He is so taken up with the sense of sin and misery, that he hath little sense of love to God, and perhaps may doubt whether he hath any or none.

2. When these fears begin a little to abate, and the soul hath attained somewhat of the sense of God's Love to itself, it loveth Him more observably, and hath some leisure to think of the riches of His grace, and of His infinite excellencies and attractive goodness; and not only to love Him because He loveth us and hath been merciful to us, but also because He is Goodness itself, and we were made to love Him.

But yet in this middle degree of Love, the soul is much more frequently and sensibly exercised in minding itself than God, and in studying its own preservation rather than the honor and interest of the Lord. In this state it is, that Christians are almost all upon the inquiry after marks of grace in themselves, and asking, *"How shall I know that I have this or that grace, and that I perform this or that duty in sincerity, and that I am reconciled to God, and shall be saved?"* These are needful questions, but should not be more insisted on than questions about our duty and the interest of Christ.

In this state, though a Christian hath the Love of God, yet having much of his ancient fears and self-love, and the Love of God being yet too weak, he is much more in studying his safety than his duty; and

asketh oftener, *How may I be sure that I am a true believer?* than, *What is the duty of a true believer?* There is yet too much of Self in his religion.

3. In the third degree of Love to God, the soul is ordinarily and observably carried quite above itself to God, and mindeth more the will and interest of God than its own consolation or salvation. Not that we must at any time lay by the care of our salvation, as if it were a thing that did not belong to us, or that we should separate the ordinate love of ourselves from the Love of God, or set His glory and our salvation in an opposition. But the Love of God, in this degree, is sensibly predominant, and we refer even our own salvation to His interest and will.

In this degree, a Christian is grown more deeply sensible that he is not his own, but His that made him and redeemed him; and that his principal study must not be for himself, but for God; and that his own interest is in itself an inconsiderable thing in comparison of the interest of the Lord. And that rewarding us with consolation is God's part, and loving and serving Him is ours (assisted by His grace); and that the diligent study and practice of our duty, and the lively exercise of Love to God, is the surest way to our consolation.

In our first corrupt estate, we are careless of our souls, and are taken up with earthly cares.

In our estate of preparation, we are careful for our souls, but merely from the principle of self-love.

In our first degree of the state of saving grace, we have the Love of God in us; but it is little observed, by reason of the passionate fears

and cares of our own salvation that most take us up.

In our second degree of holy Love, we look more sensibly after God for Himself, but so that we are yet most sensibly minding the interest of our own souls, and inquiring after assurance of salvation.

In our third degree of saving grace, we still continue the care of our salvation, and an ordinate self-love; but we are sensible that the happiness of many—even of Church and Common-wealth—and the glory of God, and the accomplishment of His will, is incomparably more excellent and desirable than our own felicity.

And therefore we set ourselves to please the Lord, and study what is acceptable to Him, and how we may do Him all the service that possibly we can; being confident that He will look to our felicity while we look to our duty, and that we cannot be miserable while we are wholly His and devoted to His service.

We are now more in the exercise of grace, when before we were more in trying whether we have it. Before, we were wont to say, *"O that I were sure that I love God in sincerity!"* Now we are more in these desires: *"O that I could know and love Him more, and serve Him better! That I knew more of His holy will, and could more fully accomplish it! O that I were more serviceable to Him! O that I could see the full prosperity of His Church, and the glory of His Kingdom!"*

This high degree of the Love of God doth cause us to take ourselves as nothing, and God as all. And as before conversion we were careless of our souls through ignorance, presumption, or security, and after conversion were careful of our souls through the power of

convincing, awakening grace, so now we have somewhat above our souls (much more our bodies) to mind and care for. So that though still we must examine and observe ourselves, and that for ourselves, yet more for God than for ourselves.

When we are mindful of God, He will not be unmindful of us. When it is our care to please Him, the rest of our care we may cast on Him, who hath promised to care for us. Even when we suffer according to His will, we may commit the keeping of our souls to Him in well doing, as to a faithful Creator (1 Pet. 4:19).

And it is not possible in this more excellent way (1 Cor. 12:31) to be guilty of a careless neglect of our salvation, or of the want of a necessary Love to ourselves. For the higher containeth the lower, and perfection containeth those degrees that are found in the imperfect. This neglect of ourselves through the Love of God is, consequentially, the most provident securing of ourselves. This carelessness is the wisest care. This ignorance of good and evil for ourselves, while we know the Lord and know our duty, is the wisest way to prevent the evil.

To be something in ourselves is to be nothing. But if we be nothing in ourselves, and God be all to us, in Him we shall be something. Be not wanting to God, and I am sure you cannot be wanting to yourselves. He will reward, if you will obey.

I have shown you hitherto the nature and necessity of self-denial: O that I could next show you the nations, the churches, that are such indeed as I have described! But when I look into the world, when I look into the churches of all sorts, and consider men of all degrees,

my soul is even amazed and melted into grief, to think how far the forwardest professors are swerved from their holy rule and pattern!

O grievous case! How rare are self-denying men? Nothing in the world doth more assure me that the number that shall be saved are very few; when nothing is more evident in Scripture than that none but the self-denying shall be saved, and nothing more evident in the world than that self-denying men are very few.

Would God but excuse men in this one point, and take up with preaching and praying, and numbering ourselves with the strictest party, then I should hope that many, comparatively, would be saved. Would He give men leave to seek themselves in a religious way, and to be zealous only from a selfish principle, and would He but abate men this self-denial and the superlative love of God, I should hope true godliness were not rare. But if self-denial be the mark, the nature of a saint, and this as effected by the love of God, then alas, how thin are they in the world! and how weak is grace even in those few!

It is the daily grief of my soul to observe how the world is captivated to itself; and what sway this odious sin doth bear among the forwardest professors of religion; and how blind men are that will not see it; and that it hath so far prevailed that few men lament it, or strive against it, or will bear the most suitable remedy.

Alas, when we have prevailed with careless souls to mind their salvation, to read and pray, and hold communion with the godly, and seem well-qualified Christians, how few are brought to self-denial! and how strong is Self still in those few! What a multitude that seem of the highest form, in zeal, and opinions, and duties, delude

themselves with a selfish kind of religiousness! And it grieveth my soul to think how little the most excellent means prevail, even with professors themselves, against this sin! What abundance of labor seemeth to be lost, that we bestow against it? When I have preached over all these following sermons against it (though grace hath made them effectual with some, yet) selfishness still too much bears sway in many that heard them.

O what a rooted sin is this! How powerful and obstinate! Men that seem diligently to hear, and like the sermon, and write it, and repeat it when they come home, and commend it, do yet continue selfish. And they that walk evenly and charitably among us in all appearance, as long as they are smoothly dealt with, when once they are but touched and crossed in their self-interest, do presently show that there is that within them which we or they before perceived not.

It was (doubtless) from too much experience of the selfishness even of professors of religion, and of the successfulness of temptations in this kind, that Satan did tell God so boldly, that Job would sin if he were but touched in his self-interest (Job 1:9–11; 2:4–5): *"Doth Job,"* saith he, *"fear God for nothing? Hast not thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."* As if he should have said, *"Glory not of Job or any of Thy servants: it is not Thee, but themselves that they seek. They serve Thee but for their own commodity. It is Self and not God that ruleth them, and that they do all this for. Seem but to be their enemy, and touch their self-interest,*

and cross them in their commodity, that they may serve Thee for nothing, and then see who will serve Thee."

This was the boast of Satan against the saints of the Most High, which hypocrites that encouraged him hereto would have fulfilled; and which God doth glory in confuting. And therefore He gives the Devil leave to try Job in this point, and putteth all that he had into his power (1:12). And when Satan by this succeeded not, he yet boasteth that if he might but touch him more nearly in his self-interest, he doubted not to prevail (2:4–5): *"Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth Thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face."*

This confidence had Satan even against such a servant of the Lord, *"that there was none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, that feared God and eschewed evil"* (1:8). And though the power of grace in Job did shame the boasts of Satan, yet how frequently doth he prevail with men that seem religious?

How truly may he say of many among us: *"Now they seem godly, but let the times turn, and godliness undo them in the world, and then see whether they will be godly. Now they seem faithful to their pastors and brethren; but give them a sufficient reward, and see whether they will not play the Judas. Now they seem peaceable, humble men; but touch them in their self-interest, cross them in their commodity or reputation by an injury, yea, or by justice or necessary reproof; and then see what they will prove."*

O that the Devil could not truly boast of thousands, that by a few foul words, or by crossing their self-willedness, he can make them speak

evil of their neighbors, and fill them with malice and bitterness against their truest friends. O where are the men that maintain their love, and meekness, and concord any longer than they are pleased, and their wills and interests are complied with, or not much contradicted?

Besides what I have more largely spoken of this master-common sin in the following Discourse, take notice here of a few of the discoveries of it.

1. Observe but the striving that there is for command, and dignity, and riches, and this even among professors of religion; and judge by this whether they are self-denying men. For whom is it but themselves that men make such a stir for offices and honors, and places of superiority? Surely, if it were for the good of others, they would not be so eager and so forward. We cannot perceive that their charity is so hot, as to make them so ambitious to be serviceable to their brethren. If that be it, let them keep their service till it be desired or much needed, and not be so eager to do men good against their wills, and without necessity.

As Gregory the Great saith of the ministry: *Si non ad elationis culpam, sed ad utilitatem adipisci desiderat, prius vires suas cum eo quidem subiturus onere metiatur: ut et impar abstineat, et ad id cum metu cui se sufficere existimat accedat.* Men use not to be ambitious of duty or trouble. He that desireth government ultimately *and principally* for himself, desireth tyranny, and not a lawful government, whose ultimate end is the common good.

And will not the wrath of the King of Kings be kindled with less ado, nor hell be purchased at cheaper rates, than all the contrivance,

cares, and hazards that ambitious men do draw upon themselves? *O ambitio,* inquit Bernardus, *ambientium crux, quomodo omnes torques? Omnibus places, nil acrius cruciat, nil molestius inquietat, nil tamen apud miseros mortales celebrius negotiis ejus*. Wonderful! that such abundant warning tameth not these proud aspiring minds!

They set up or admired them but yesterday whom they see taken down and despised today, and see their honor turned to scorn; and yet they imitate their folly! They see the sordid relicts of the most renowned conquerors and princes levelled with the dirt; and yet they have not the wit to take warning, and humble themselves that they may be exalted. They know how death will shortly use them, and read of the terrors that pride and ambition bring men to; but all this doth not bring them to their wits. When death itself comes, then they are as sneaking, shrinking worms as any; and the worm of ambition, that fed upon their hearts in their prosperity, doth breed a gnawing worm in their consciences, which will torment them everlastingly.

But (*ut Juvenal*):

— Mors sola fatetur,
Quantula sunt hominum corpuscula —

This *aerugo mentis*, as Ambrose calls it, and *regnandi dira cupido* (ut Virg.) doth keep men from knowing what they know, and denieth them the use of their understandings. All former professions are forgotten; repentings are repented of; the best parts are corrupted and sold to the Devil (as truly as witches sell themselves, though not so grossly); and men are anything that Self would have them be, where the humor of ambition doth prevail, and this secret poison insinuateth itself into the mind. This subtle *malum* (ut Bernard),

secretum virus, pestis occulta, doli artifex, mater hypocrisis, livoris parens, vitiorum origo, tinea sanctitatis, exstirpatio cordium, ex remediis morbos creans, ex medicina languorem generans. The God of vengeance, that abhorreth the proud and beholdeth them afar off, and that cast aspirers out of Paradise, will shortly take these gallants down and lay them low enough, and make them wish they had denied themselves.

2. Observe but men's desire of applause, and their great impatience of dispraise, and judge by this of their self-denial. Who is it that is angry with those that praise them, yea, though they exceed their bounds and ascribe more to them than is due? Saith Seneca: *Si invenimus qui nos bonos viros dicat, qui prudentes, qui sanctos, non sumus modica laudatione contenti; quicquid in nos adulatio sine pudore congessit, tanquam debitum prehendimus: optimos nos esse sapientissimosque affirmantibus assentimus, cum sciamus illos saepe multa mentiri. Adeo quoque indulgemus nobis, ut laudari velimus in id cui contraria maxime facimus.*

Even proud men would be praised for humility, and covetous men for liberality, and fools for wisdom, and ignorant men for learning, and treacherous hypocrites for sincerity and plain honesty; and few of the best do heartily distaste their own commendations, or refuse anything that is offered them, though beyond desert.

But if they think they are lightly or hardly thought of, or hear of any that speak against them or dishonor them in the eyes of men, you shall see how little they can deny themselves. O how the hearts of many that seemed godly men will swell against them that speak to their disparagement! What uncharitable, unchristian deportment

will a little injury produce! What bitter words! What estrangedness and division, if not plain hatred, and reviling, and revenge! Yea, it were well (in comparison) if a due reproof from neighbors or from ministers (that are bound to do it by the Lord) would not draw forth this secret venom, and show the world the scarcity of self-denial.

Let others speak never so well of God and of all good men, and be never so faithful or serviceable in the Church; yet if they do but speak ill of them (though it is like deservedly and justly) these selfish men cannot abide them. By this you may perceive what interest is strongest with them. Were they carried up from themselves by the love of God, they would delight to hear the praise of God and of their brethren, and be afraid to hear their own; and say from their hearts, *"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy name be glory"* (Psa. 115:1).

To praise another may be our gain (in the discharge of a duty, and exercise of love), but to be praised ourselves is usually our danger. Pride needeth no such fuel or bellows. *Non laudato, sed laudantibus prodest,* saith Augustine. *Esse humilem est nolle laudari in se: qui in se laudari appetit, superbus esse convincitur,* inquit idem. It is the expectation of these proud and selfish men that tempteth men to the odious art of flattery, when they find it is the way to please. And when one is flattering and the other pleased with it, what a foolish and sordid employment have they? *Et vani sunt qui laudantur, et mendaces qui laudant,* saith Austin.

It is God to whom the praise is due, whom we know we cannot praise too much, whose praises we should love to speak and hear. *In laude Dei est securitas laudis; ut laudator non timet ne de laudato*

erubescat, saith Austin. We may boldly praise Him of whom we are sure we never need to be ashamed. It is God in His servants that we must praise, and it is only His interest in our own praise that we must regard.

3. Observe but upon what account it is that most men's affections are carried to, or against, their neighbors, and then judge by this of their self-denial. Even men that would be accounted godly, do love or hate men according as their self-interest commandeth them, more than according to the interest of Christ.

Let a man be never so eminent in holiness, and never so useful and serviceable in the Church, and one that hath proved faithful in the greatest trials; if he do but oppose a selfish man, and be thought by him to be against him, he hateth him at the heart, or hath as base contemptuous thoughts of him as malice can suggest. He can as easily nullify all his graces, and multiply his smallest infirmities into a swarm of crimes, by a censorious mind and a slanderous tongue, as if virtue and vice received their form and denomination from the respect of men's minds and ways to him; and all men were so far good or evil as they please him or displease him; and he expects that others should esteem men such as he is pleased to describe or call them.

Let all the country be witnesses of a man's upright and holy life; yea, let the multitude of the ungodly themselves be convinced of it, so far as that their consciences are forced to bear witness of him, as Herod did of John (Mark 6:20), that he was a just man and a holy; yet can the selfish hypocrite that is against him blot out his uprightness with

a word, and make him to be proud, or false, or covetous, or what his malice please; yea, make him an hypocrite—as he is indeed himself.

No man can be good in their eyes that is against them; or if he be acknowledged honest in the main, it is mixed with exceptions and charges enough to make him seem vile while they confess him honest. And if they acknowledge him a man, they will withal describe him to be so plaguey or leprous, that he shall be thought not fit for human converse. *Such a man is an honest man,* say they, *but he is a peevish, humorous, self-conceited fellow*. And why so? Because he is against some opinion or interest of theirs. *He is proud,* because he presumeth to dissent from them, or reprehend them. *He raileth,* every time he openeth their errors, or telleth them of their misdoings. *He is a liar,* if he do but contradict them, and discover their sins, though it be with words of truth and soberness.

In a word, no person, no speeches or writings, no actions can be just that are against a selfish man. In differences at law, his cause is good because it is his; and his adversary's is always bad, because it is against him. In public differences the side that he is on (that is for him) is always right, let it be never so wrong in the eyes of all impartial men. The cause is good that he is for (which is always that which seems for *him*), though it be undoubted treason and perfidious rebellion, accompanied with perjury, murder, and oppression. And the cause must be always bad that is against him; and they are the traitors, and rebels, and oppressors, that resist *him*. His own murders are honorable victories, and other men's victories are cruel and barbarous murders. All is naught that is against themselves. They are affected to men according to their self-interest; they judge of them and their actions according as they do affect them; they

speak of them and deal by them according to this corrupted judgment.

But as for any that they imagine do love and honor them, they can love them and speak tenderly of them, be they what they will. A little grace or virtue in them seemeth much; and their parts seem excellent that indeed are mean. If they drop into perjury, fornication, treason, or such like scandalous sins, they have always a mantle of love to cover them; or if they blame them a little, they are easily reconciled, and quickly receive them to their former honor. If they have anything like grace, it is easily believed to be grace indeed, if they be but on their side. If they have nothing like grace, they can love them for their good natures—but indeed it is for themselves.

When this self-love describeth any person, when it writeth histories or controversies about any cause or person that they are concerned in, how little credit do they deserve! Whence is it else that we have such contrary descriptions of persons and actions in the writings of the several parties as we find? How holy, and temperate, and exceedingly industrious a man was Calvin, if the whole multitude of sober, godly men that knew him may be credited; or if we may believe his most constant intimate acquaintance; or if we may judge by his judicious, pious, numerous writings. And yet if the Papists may be believed (contrary to the witness of a Popish city where he was bred), he was a stigmatized sodomite; he was a glutton (that ate but once a day, and that sparingly); he was an idle fleshly man (that preached usually every day, and wrote so many excellent volumes); and he died blaspheming and calling on the Devil (that is, in longing and praying for his remove to Christ, crying daily, *How long, Lord! how long!*).

And how comes all this inhumane forgery about? Why, one lying Pelagian apostate, Bolsec, wrote it (whom Calvin had shamed for his errors); and a peevish Lutheran, Schlusselburgius, hath related part of it from him; and this is sufficient warrant for the Papists ordinarily to persuade their followers it is true, and with seared consciences to publish it in their writings, though Massonius and some other of the soberer sort among themselves do shame them for the forgery. So do they by Luther, Beza, and many more.

Among ourselves here, how certainly and commonly is it known to all impartial men acquainted with them, that the persons nicknamed *Puritans* in England have been (for the most part) a people fearing God and studying a holy life, and of an upright conversation; so that the impartial did bear them witness, that in the scorner's mouth a Puritan was one that was *integri vitae, scelerisque purus*; and this was the reason of their suffered scorn. And the name was the Devil's common engine in this land, to shame people from reading and hearing sermons, and praying, and avoiding common sins, and seriously seeking their salvation.

A Puritan was one that *believeth (unfeignedly) that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him* (Heb. 11:6); that strives to enter in at the strait gate, and lives as men that believe that heaven is worth their labor, and that God's kingdom and its righteousness should be first sought (Matt. 6:33).

And yet if Fitz-Simon and other Jesuits, and Bishop Bancroft, Dr. P. Heylyn, Mr. Tho. Pierce, and other such among us are to be believed, what an abominable, odious sort of people are they (and especially

the Presbyterians, who are the greatest part of them)!—what intolerable, hypocritical, bloody men!

And what is the reason of these accusations? Much is pretended; but the sum of all is, that they were in some things against the opinions or interests of the persons that abuse them. The Jesuits know that they were averse from their doctrines and practices. The rest are angry because some of them would be excused from two or three ceremonies, and from vowing obedience to the ceremonymakers. Yea, many of their accusers think themselves injured, if not oppressed and persecuted, as long as they are withheld from silencing, ejecting, or persecuting these that would fain serve God according to His Word as the sufficient rule, and have nothing imposed on them in matter of worship but necessary things, according to the Apostles' decree (Acts 15:28).

By all this judge how rare self-denial is, when the interest of men's own opinions, persons, or parties can cause such unchristian dealing from self-esteeming professors and preachers of the Gospel. Selfishness is the greatest liar, and slanderer, and the most malicious calumniator in the world.

4. Observe but how lightly most make of their own sins, and how easily they aggravate the sins of others; and how lightly they make of the good that is in others, in comparison of that which is in themselves, or those that are of their side; and judge by this of their self-denial!

Judah would have judged **Tamar** hardly; but he was not so severe against himself. David pronounceth very peremptorily the sentence of death against the offender, till he heard from Nathan, *Thou art the*

man. How hard is it to convince a selfish one of any sin that will admit of an excuse or cloak? All the town can see the pride of some, the covetousness of others, the unpeaceable unchristian behavior of others; and yet themselves, that should most observe it, and best discern it, perceive it not, nor will by any means be brought to see it.

No minister can put them down, when they are justifying themselves; nor make them humbly and heartily confess that they have sinned. (But God will ere long convince them irresistibly, and teach their tongues another kind of language.) Let the case of another come before them, and how readily will they adjudge him to penitent confession, reparation, restitution, and thorough reformation! But the case is altered when it becomes their own. Such incompetent judges are these selfish hypocrites.

5. Observe but how easily men fall out with one another, and how hardly they are reconciled, and how much ado any peace-maker shall have to end the difference; and observe also whether all the quarrel be not about some selfish interest: and judge by this of their self-denial. When do they so fall out with men for wronging God, or the Gospel, or their own souls, as they do for wronging *them*?

And if a minister that can bear an injury against himself, do faithfully rebuke them that deal injuriously against Christ, and against the Church, and the souls of men—(especially if they be great men in the world that are reproved)—it is strange to see how Self makes them storm; though they have read what a mark of rebellion, and prognostic of misery it was, even in kings, to reject the reproofs of the messengers of the Lord; much more to hate or persecute the reprover.

6. Observe also how forward many are, unreasonably to exalt their own understandings above those that are far wiser than themselves: and judge by this of their self-denial.

Though their brethren or teachers have studied, and prayed, and sought after knowledge ten times, or twenty times more than they, and have as faithfully obeyed according to their knowledge, and indeed be incomparably beyond them in understanding; yet how commonly shall you meet with unstudied, inexperienced novices (notably described, 1 Tim. 3:6; 6:4), of undigested notions, and green and raw apprehensions, that are so puffed up with a little smattering, seeming knowledge, that they despise both ministers and people that be not of their mind, and vilify them as a sort of ignorant, deluded men.

And do they indeed excel us in knowledge as much as they pretend? O that they did, that so we might see the Church furnished with wiser, better teachers, and might ourselves have the privilege of being their hearers, and of being better instructed by them! But how evident is it to all that have eyes, that it is in pride, and not in knowledge, that they excel; and that all this comes from the dominion of Self; and that they speak evil of the things they know not (Jude 10).

7. Observe also how far men are carried by the fond over-valuing of their own opinions, against all reason, and former promises, and against all bonds to God and man; and then judge of their self-denial.

If once they feel a new apprehension, it tickleth them with delight, as being an elevation of their understandings above other men's; and as parents are fond of their children because they are their own, so are

the proud—through the corruption of their minds—fond of an opinion which they can call their own, if there be anything of singularity in it to make them seem persons of more than ordinary understanding. And when they are once possessed of it, how partially do they indulge it? How lightly do they make of the strongest arguments that are brought against it? How contemptuously do they think and speak of the persons, the judgments, the writings, the reasonings of any that are against them? Nay, usually they will not be persuaded so much as once to read the writings that contradict them. Or if they do, it is with so much prejudice and partiality, that they have in their minds confuted them before they read or understand them; and instead of considering the weight of arguments, and comparing faithfully cause with cause, they only study what to say against their adversary (for so they account those that would cross or confute their opinions).

Nay, observe but what a change a new opinion makes upon them in reference to their former friends. How strange do they look at them that cannot follow them in their fancies? Though before they were their bosom friends, yet without any change in themselves, they have lost their interest in these changelings. And though before they honored and praised them, yet all's changed when they themselves are changed; and their friends must seem to have lost their wits or honesty (or never to have had any) as soon as they themselves have lost their humility and charity.

How much am I able to say of this, from sad experience of the change of many of my ancient friends? Some of them are changed to a reproaching of the Scripture, Church, and Ministry, and Ordinances, and to a denying of the Christian faith; and these I have lost (for they

have lost themselves): and indeed these have constrained me to withdraw from them my ancient love of complacency, though I have a love of compassion to them still.

Others are secretly ensnared by the Papists: and these I have lost (though they seem to bear me some respect). Others are changed to opinions which they think meet to hide: and these look strange at me, especially since I wrote against these Hiders. Others are changed in the point of Baptism: and these are greatly offended with me, for dissenting and giving the reasons of my dissent; and what uncharitable dealings some of them have been guilty of, I shall not now express.

Some of them have turned to one opinion, and some to another, and almost all that make these turns have left their charity behind them. Some of them take up new causes in the Commonwealth: and these are as angry with me as the rest, because I cannot follow them in their changes. How many ways hath a man to lose a selfish friend! I was once beloved by all these men; and now I am either hated, or looked at as a stranger (at least), when I am where I was when I had their love.

If I know my heart, I speak not this in any great sense of the loss of my own interest, but in the sense of the lamentable power and prevalency of self-love and self-conceitedness in the world. And while I am bitterly censured by almost every party, how easily could I recover my interest and reputation with any one of them, if I could but be of their mind and side?

How wise and how honest a man could I be with the Anabaptists, if I would but be rebaptized, and turn to them? And how much should I

be valued by the Papists, if I would turn to them? The like I may say of all the other fore-named parties: for every one of them have by word or writing signified so much to me.

Even the Grotian Prelatists would wipe their mouths and speak me fairer, if I could turn to them. Mr. Pierce himself—who hath exceeded all men (in his late book) abounding with visible falsehoods and unchristian abuse of the servants of the Lord, whom he calleth Puritans—yet telleth me (p. 212): *"We contend for your fellowship, and daily pray for your coming in; if you, by name, should have occasion to pass this way, and present yourself with other guests at the holy Supper of our Lord, no man on earth should be more welcome: but if you and your partners will continue your several separations, and shut yourselves out from our communion, as it were judging yourselves unworthy of the Kingdom of God, and excommunicating yourselves,"* &c.

See here the power of selfishness! A man that is painted out as lazy, a reader, a proud hypocrite, and much more, should be *as welcome as any man on earth*, if he will but have communion with them in their way! How much more if he were but of their party? This would cure hypocrisy, pride, and all these crimes. And till we can comply with them, we "excommunicate ourselves, and judge ourselves unworthy of the Kingdom of God."

He that thinks bishops should not be, as now, diocesan, and undertake many hundred parishes, and then feed and govern them by others; and he that submits not to their mode, in a surplice, or some form of prayer, doth therefore judge himself "unworthy of the Kingdom of God": as if God's Kingdom were confined to them, and

lay in meats and drinks, and not in righteousness and peace! And as if we continued in an excommunication of ourselves, because we are not of their party; when yet we deny no Protestants to be our brethren, nor refuse local communion with them, so they will grant it us on Scripture terms: which if they will not, we will yet hold communion with them in several congregations.

But thus it appeareth how strong self-interest is in the world; and how charitable men are to those of their own opinions or parties; and how easily many do take liberty to speak their pleasure against any that are not of their mind.

8. Observe also how forward men are to teach, and how backward to be learners, and then judge of their self-denial. Why are so many unwilling to enter by the way of Ordination? Too commonly it is because they judge better of their own abilities than Ordainers do, and therefore suspect that they may be rejected by the Ordainers, or at least disgraced—while they think highly of themselves. But if they were self-denying men, they would think the sober, faithful pastors much fitter judges of their abilities than themselves, and would not run before they are sent.

Many that reproach the ministers as deceivers will needs be themselves the teachers of the people: as if they should say, *We silly ignorant souls are wiser and fitter to be teachers than you: come down and let us take your places.* In conference you may observe that most are forwarder to speak than to hear, which shows that they over-value their own understandings.

And so much are proud men delighted to be thought the oracles of the world, that if you will but seem to hearken to them, and learn of

them, and yield to their opinions, you win their hearts, and shall be the men that have their commendations. Insomuch that some late ambitious persons, who have thought to rise by the art of dissimulation, have found that there is no way for the deceiving of the people, and procuring the goodwill of most, like this—even to seem to be of every man's opinion that they talk with, and to make every sect and party believe that they are their friends and of their mind.

Especially, if you will seem to be changed by their arguments, and give them the glory of your convictions and illuminations, you will then be the dearly beloved of their hearts. In all this you may see the rarity of self-denial. Yea, in the very work of God, too many of the most zealous godly ministers, that have been the instruments of converting many souls, are touched a little with the temptation to this selfishness, looking too much to their own part in the work.

9. Observe but how commonly, with men called Christians, the interest of Christ is trodden in the dirt when it seems to cross any interest of their own. An argument drawn from the commands of God, or from the necessity of the Church, or of the souls of men, seems nothing to them, if their honor, or gain, or greatness, or safety stand up against it, and be inconsistent with its conclusion.

Hence it is that the souls of hypocrites do cheat themselves by a carnal religiousness, serving God only in subserviency to themselves. Hence it is that hypocrites do most show themselves in matters of self-interest. In the cheap part of religion they seem to be as good as any: as zealous for their party and opinions (which they call the Truth), and as long and loud in prayer, and for as strict a way of

discipline with others. But touch them in their estates or names; call them to costly works of charity, or to let go their right for peace or public good; or to confess and lament any sin that they commit—and you shall then see that they are but common men, and self bears rule instead of Christ.

Hence also it is that so many persons can bear with themselves in any calling or trade of life that is but gainful, be it never so unjust, and will not believe but it is lawful because it is profitable; for they suppose that gain is godliness (1 Tim. 6:5). Hence it is that so many families will be so far religious as will stand with their commodity, but no further. Yea, that so many ministers have the wit to prove that most duties are to them no duties when they will cost them much labor, or dishonor in the world, or bring them under sufferings from men.

And hence it is that so many carnal politicians, in their laws and counsels, always prefer the interest of their bodies before God's interest and men's souls. Yea, some are so far forsaken by common reason, and void of the love of God and his Church, as to maintain that magistrates, in their laws and judgments, must let matters of religion alone; as if that self—even carnal self—were all their interest and all their God; and as if they were of the profane opinion, *Every man for himself, and God for us all*; or as if they would look to their own cause, and bid God look to his.

From the power of this selfishness it is that so many princes and states turn persecutors, and stick not to silence, banish, and—some of the bloodier sort—kill the ministers of Christ, when they but think that they stand cross to their carnal interests. And if you will plead

the interest of Christ and souls against theirs, and tell them that the banishment, imprisonment, silencing, or death of such or such a servant of the Lord will be injurious to many souls, and therefore, if they were guilty of death in some cases, they should reprieve them—as they do women with child—till Christ be formed in the precious souls that they travail in birth with (so their lives be not more hurtful by any contrary mischief which death only can restrain, which is not to be supposed of sober men), yet all this seems nothing to a selfish persecutor, that regards not Christ's interest in comparison with his own.

Self is the great tyrant and persecutor of the Church.

10. Observe also how few they be that satisfy their souls in God's approbation, though they are misjudged and vilified by the world; and how few that rejoice at the prosperity of the Gospel, though themselves be in adversity. Most men must needs have the hypocrite's reward (Matt. 6:2), even some commendation from men; and too few are fully pleased with his eye that seeth in secret, and will reward them openly (Matt. 6:4, 6). And hence it is that injurious censures and hard words do go so near them, and they make so great a matter of them.

Those times do seem best to selfish men which are most for them. If *they* prosper, and their party prosper, though most of the Church should be a loser by it, they will think it is a blessed time. But if the Church prosper, and not they, and any suffering befall them, they take on as if the Church did stand or fall with them. Self-interest is their measure, by which they judge of times and things.

11. Observe also how eagerly men are set to have their own wills take place in public businesses, and to have their own opinions be the rule for Church and Commonwealth; and then judge by this of their self-denial. Were not self predominant, there would not be such striving who should rule, and whose will should be the law; but men would think that others were as likely to rule with prudence and honesty as they.

How eager is the Papist to have his way by an Universal Monarch? How eager are others for one ecclesiastical national Head? How eager are the popular party for their way, as if the welfare of all lay in their several modes of government? And so confidently do the Libertines speak for theirs, that they begin now to make motions that our Parliament-men shall be hanged or beheaded as traitors, if any should make a motion in a (free) Parliament against the general liberty which they desire.

Wonderful! that men should ever grow to such an overweening of themselves, and over-valuing of their own understandings, as to obtrude so palpable and odious a wickedness upon Parliaments so confidently, and to take them for traitors that will not be traitors, or grossly disobedient against the Lord. Self-denial would cure these peremptory demands, and teach men to be more suspicious of their own understandings.

12. Lastly, observe but how difficult a thing it is to keep peace—as in families and neighborhoods, so in Churches and Commonwealths—and judge by this of men's self-denial. Husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, masters and servants, live at variance, and all through the conflicts that arise between their contrary self-interests. If a beast

do but trespass on a neighbor's grounds; if they be but assessed for the State or poor above their expectations; if in any way of trading their commodity be crossed—you shall quickly see where self bears rule.

This makes it so difficult a work to keep the Churches from divisions. Few men are sensible of the Universal Interest, because they are captivated to their own. And therefore it is that men fear not to make parties and divisions in the Church, and will tear it in pieces to satisfy their interest or selfish zeal. Hence it is that parties are so much multiplied, and keep up the buckler against others, because selfishness makes all partial.

Hence it is that people fall off from their pastors, or else fall out with them, when they are crossed in their opinions, reproved for their sins, or called to confess or make restitution, and perhaps that they may sacrilegiously defraud the Church of tithes or other payments that are due. Hence it is also that members so often fall out with one another for foul words, or differences of judgment, or some point or other of self-interest; nay, sometimes about their very seats in the place of worship. While every man is for himself, the ministers can hardly keep them in charity and peace.

And is any of this agreeable to our holy Rule and Pattern? No man can think so who has read the Gospel, except he that is so blinded by selfishness as not to understand what makes against it.

And here, besides what is more largely spoken after, let me tell of a few of the evils of this sin, and the contrary benefits of self-denial.

1. The power of selfishness keeps men strangers to themselves: they know not their original nor actual sins with any kindly humbling knowledge. The very nature of Original Sin consists in these two things:

Privatively, in the want of our original love or propensity to God as God; that is, the privation of the root, habit, or inclination to love God for himself—as the beginning and end of us and all things, the absolute Lord, and infinite, simple, inestimable Good.

Positively, in the inordinate propensity or inclination to ourselves, as for ourselves, and not as duly subordinate to God. The soul having unfaithfully and rebelliously withdrawn itself from God in point of love and subjection, it becomes its own idol, and looks no higher than itself, and loves God and all things but for itself (and principally for its carnal pleasure). And the propensity to this, with the privation of the soul's inclination to God, is Original Sin—the disposition suited to the actual sin that caused it, which was a retiring from God to self.

He that feels not this evil in himself has no true knowledge of Original Sin. And it is the want of the sense of this great evil (and so the want of being acquainted with their hearts) that causes so many to turn Pelagians, and to deny the being of Original Sin.

2. Both selfishness, and the want of a true discerning of it, breeds and feeds abundance of errors, and teaches men to corrupt the whole body of Practical Divinity, and to subvert many Articles of Faith which stand in their way.

How comes the world to be all in a flame about the Universal Reign of the Pope of Rome, but from the dominion of selfishness? Whence is it that the nations of the earth have been so troubled for Patriarchs, Metropolitans, and Diocesans that must do their work by others, and for many things that (at best) can pretend to be but human, indifferent, changeable forms, but from the prevalency of Self?

Whence is it that men's consciences have been ensnared, and the Churches troubled, by so many ceremonies of men's invention, and the Church must rather lose her faithfullest pastors than they be permitted to worship God as Peter and Paul did? Hath not selfishness and pride done this?

It is self that has taught some to plead too much for their own sufficiency, and to deny the need of special grace. And so far has it prevailed with some of late as to lead them doctrinally to deny that God is the ultimate end of man, and to be loved for himself, and above ourselves and all things. They say he is only *finis cujus vel rei*, to be loved *amore concupiscentiae*. In a word, it is this woeful principle that has corrupted doctrine, discipline, and worship in so many of the Churches.

3. We shall never have peace in Church or Commonwealth while selfishness bears sway. Every man's interest will be preferred before the public interest, and rise against it as often (which will be often) as they seem inconsistent. This is the vice that informeth tyranny—whether it be monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy—when selfish interest is preferred before the common interest.

This makes our people think themselves too wise or too good to learn, or to be guided by their pastors; and every man (of this strain) seems wise enough to lead off a party of the Church into a mutiny against the pastors and the rest. This makes the labors of reconcilers unsuccessful, while selfishness engages so many wits, and tongues, and pens, and parties against the most necessary equal terms and endeavors of such as would reconcile. Were it not for these selfish men, how soon would all our rents be healed? How soon would all our wars be ended? And all our heart-burnings and malicious oppositions be turned into charitable consultations for a holy peace? If once men were carried above themselves, they would meet in God, the Center of Unity.

4. It is for want of self-denial that we undergo so many disappointments, and suffer so much disquietment and vexation. Were our wills more entirely subjected to the will of God, so that his will were preferred before our own, we should rest in his will, and have no contradictory desires to be disappointed, and no matter left for self-vexation. Had we no disease, we should feel no pain; and it is our self-will rebelling against the will of God that is our disease.

Self-denial removeth all the venom from our hearts: persecution, and poverty, and sickness may touch our flesh, but the heart is fortified so far as we have his grace. O how happily doth it quiet and calm the mind, when things befall us that would even distract a selfish man! O happy man, where God is All, and self is Nothing! There duty, and love, and joy are all, and trouble and distress are nothing. These are not our matters now; partly because we are above them, and partly because they belong not to our care, but to his providence. Let us do

our duty and adhere to him, and let him dispose of us as he sees meet.

Who would much fear a tyrant or any other enemy, that saw God and glory which faith can see? Did we see the glorious throne of Christ, we should be so far from trembling at the bar of persecutors, that we should scarce so much regard them as to answer them; the infinite glory would so potently divert our minds. As we scarce hearken to our children's impertinent babblings when we are taken up with great affairs, so if a tyrant talk to us of scourging or imprisonment, we should scarce hearken to such trivial impertinencies, were we so far above ourselves as faith and love should advance the soul.

I have further shown you in the following Treatise, how self-denial disableth all temptations; how it conduceth to all eminent works of charity, but especially to the secret works of the sincere. It is of absolute necessity to salvation. It is the thing that hypocrites are condemned for want of. It is the wisdom of the soul, as being the only way to our own security. And it is the holiness and justice of the soul (as it is conjunct with the love of God), in that it restoreth to God his own. The excellency of grace is manifested in self-denial. To do or suffer such little things as self is not much against, is nothing; but to be Nothing in ourselves, and God to be our All, and to close with our first and blessed End—this is the nature of Sanctification.Alas, poor England (and more than England, even all the Christian world), into what confusion and misery hath selfishness plunged thee! Into how many pieces art thou broken, because every hypocrite hath a self to be his principle and end, and forsakes the true Universal End! How vain are our words to rulers, to soldiers, to rich and poor, while we call upon them to deny themselves! And must we lose our labor? And

must the nation lose its peace and hopes? Is there no remedy, but selfishness must undo all?

If so, be it known to you, the principal loss shall be your own; and in seeking your safety, liberty, wealth, and glory, you shall lose them all, and fall into misery, slavery, and disdain. Deny yourselves, or save yourselves if you can. God is not engaged to take care of you, or preserve you, if you will be your own, and will be reserving or saving yourselves from him. And though you may seem to prosper in self-seeking ways, they will end—yea, shortly end—in your confusion.

You have seen of late years in this land, the glory of self-seekers turned to shame. But it is greater shame that is out of sight. The word and works of God have warned you. If yet the cause and Church of God shall be neglected, and yourselves and your own affairs preferred, and men that shall not be tolerated to abuse *you* shall be tolerated to abuse the souls of men, and the Lord that made them; and if God must be denied, because you will not deny yourselves—you shall be denied by Christ in your great extremity, when the remembrance of these things shall be your torment. Hearken and amend, or prepare your answer: for behold, the Judge is at the door.

CHAPTER I.

What Selfishness and Self-denial Are; at the Root

> *And he said to them all, 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 9:23–24

I have already spoken of Conversion in the foregoing discourse, both opening to you the true nature of it, and the reasons of its necessity, and persuading men thereunto. But lest so great a work should miscarry with any for want of a more particular explication, I should next open the three great parts of the work distinctly and in order: that is,

1. From what it is that we must turn;

2. To whom we must turn;

3. And by whom we must turn.

For though I touched all these in the foregoing Directions, and throughout the discourse; yet I am afraid lest so brief a touch should be ineffectual.

The first of these I shall handle at this time from this text, meddling with no more than is necessary to our present business.

You may easily perceive that the doctrine which Christ here proclaimeth to all that have thoughts of being his followers is this: **that all who will be Christians must deny themselves, and take up their cross, and follow Christ, and not reserve so much as their very lives, but resolve to resign up all for him.**

Self-denial is one part of true Conversion. For the opening of this, I must show you:

1. What is meant by *Self*;
2. What by *Denying this Self*;
3. The grounds and reasons of the point;
4. And I shall briefly apply it.

I. What Is Meant by Self

1. **Self** is sometimes taken for the very person, consisting of soul and body simply considered; and this is called *Natural* or *Personal Self*.
2. **Self** is taken for this person considered in his capacity for earthly comforts, and in relation to the present blessings of this world that tend to the prosperity of man as in the flesh; and this may be called *Earthly Self* (yet in an innocent sense).
3. **Self** is taken for the person as corrupted by inordinate sinful sensuality; which may be called *Carnal Self*.
4. **Self** may be taken for the person in his sanctified estate; which is *Spiritual Self*.
5. And **Self** may be taken for the person in his Naturals and Spirituals conjunct, as he is capable of a life of everlasting felicity; which is the *Immortal Self*.

II. What Is Meant by Denying Self

By *Denying Self* is meant **disclaiming, renouncing, disowning, and forsaking it**. Self is here looked on partly as a party distinct from Christ, and withdrawn from its due subordination to God; and partly as his competitor and opposite. And accordingly it is to be denied, partly by neglect, and partly by opposition.

Before I come to tell you how far self must be denied, I must tell you wherein the disease of selfishness doth consist; and for brevity we shall dispatch them both together.

Negatively

1. To be a natural individual person distinct from God our Creator is none of our disease, but the state in which we were created. And therefore no man must, under pretence of self-denial, either destroy himself, or yet, with some heretics, aspire to be essentially and personally one with God, so that their individual personality should be drowned in him as a drop is in the ocean.

2. The disease of selfishness lieth not in having a body that is capable of tasting sweetness in the creature, nor in having the objects of our sense in which we are delighted, nor yet in all actual sweetness and delight in them; nor in a simple love of life itself. For all these are the effects of the Creator's will. And therefore this self-denial doth not consist in a hatred or disregard of our own lives, or in a destruction of our appetites or senses, or an absolute refusal to please them in the use of the creatures which God hath given us.

3. Yea, though our natures are corrupted by sin, self-denial requireth not that we should kill ourselves and destroy our human natures, that we may thereby destroy the sin. Self-murder is a most heinous sin which God condemneth.

4. Our spiritual self, or self as sanctified, must not be so denied as to deny ourselves to be what we are, or to have what we have, or to do what we do. We may not deny God's graces, nor deny that they are in us as the subject; nor may we restrain the holy desires which God exciteth in us, or deny to fulfill them, or bring them toward fruition when opportunity is offered us.

5. We may not deny to accept any mercy which God shall offer us, though but a common creature; nor to use any talent for his service, if he choose us for his stewards. Much less may we refuse any spiritual mercy that may further our salvation. It is not the self-denial required by Christ that we deny to be Christians, or to be sanctified by the Spirit, or to be delivered from our sins and enemies; or that we deny to use the means and helps that are offered us, or to accept the privileges purchased by Christ; much less to deny our salvation itself, and undo our own souls. In a word, it is not anything that is really and finally to our hurt or loss.

Affirmatively

But (as to the Affirmative) I shall show you what the disease of selfishness indeed is, and so what self-denial is.

1. When God had created man in his own image, he gave him a holy disposition of soul which might incline him to his Maker as his only felicity and ultimate end. He made him to be blessed in the sight of his glory, and in the everlasting love of God, and delight in him, and praises of him. This excellent employment and glory did God both fit him for and set before him.

But the first temptation did entice him to adhere to an inferior good, for the pleasing of his flesh, and the advancement of himself to a carnal kind of felicity in himself, that he might be as God in knowing good and evil. And thus man was suddenly taken with the creature as a means to the pleasing of his carnal self, and so did depart from God his true felicity; and retired into himself in his estimation, affection, and intention; and delivered up his reason in subjection to his sensuality, and made himself his ultimate end.

With this sinful inclination are we all born into the world; so that every man according to his corrupted nature doth terminate all his desires in himself. And whatever he may notionally be convinced of to the contrary, yet practically he makes his earthly life, and the advancement and pleasure which he expecteth therein, to be his felicity and end.

Self-denial now is the cure of this. It carrieth a man from himself again, and showeth him that he was never made to be his own felicity

or end; and that the flesh was not made to be pleased before God; and that it is so poor, and low, and short a felicity, as indeed is but a name and shadow of felicity, and when it pretends to that, a mere deceit. It showeth him how unreasonable, how impious and unjust it is, that a creature—and such a creature—should terminate his desires and intentions in himself. And this is the principal part of self-denial.

2. As God was man's ultimate end in his state of innocence, so accordingly man was appointed to use all creatures in order to God, for his pleasure and glory. So that it was the work of man to do his Maker's will, and he was to use nothing but with this intention.

But when man was fallen from God to himself, he afterwards used all things for himself, even his carnal self; and all that he possessed was become the provision and fuel of his lusts; and so the whole creation which he was capable of using, was abused by him to this low and selfish end, as if all things had been made but for his delight and will.

But when man is brought to deny himself, he is brought to restore the creatures to their former use, and not to sacrifice them to his fleshly mind; so that all that he hath and useth in the world, is used to another end (so far as he denieth himself) than formerly it was; even for God and not himself.

3. In the state of innocency, though man had naturally an averseness from death and bodily pains, as being natural evils, and had a desire of the welfare even of the flesh itself; yet as his body was subject to his soul, and his senses to his reason, so his bodily ease and welfare was to be esteemed and desired and sought, but in a due subordination to his spiritual welfare, and

especially to his Maker's will. So that though he was to value his life, yet he was much more to value his everlasting life, and the pleasure and glory of his Lord.

But now when man is fallen from God to himself, his life and earthly felicity is the sweetest and dearest thing to him that is. So that he preferreth it before the pleasing of God and everlasting life. And therefore he seeketh it more, and holdeth it faster as long as he can, and parteth with it more unwillingly. As innocent nature had an appetite to the objects of sense, but corrupted nature hath an enraged, greedy, rebellious, and inordinate appetite to them: so innocent nature had a love to this natural earthly life and the comforts of it; but corrupted nature hath such an inordinate love to them, as that all things else are made but subordinate to them, and swallowed up in this gulf. Even God himself is so far loved as he befriendeth these our carnal ends, and furthereth our earthly prosperity and life.

But when men are brought to deny themselves, they are in their measures restored to their first esteem of life, and of all the prosperity and earthly comforts of life. Now they have learned so to love them as to love God better; and so to value them as to prefer everlasting life before them; and so to hold them and seek their preservation as to resign them to the will of God, and to lay them down when we cannot hold them with his love; and to choose death in order to life everlasting, before that life which would deprive us of it.

And this is the principal instance of self-denial which Christ giveth us here in the text, as it is recited by all the three Evangelists that recite

these words, *He that saveth his life shall lose it,* etc. And, *What shall it profit a man to win all the world and lose his soul?* By these instances it appears that by self-denial Christ doth mean a setting so light by all the world, and by our own lives, and consequently our carnal content in these, as to be willing and resolved to part with them all, rather than with him and everlasting life: even as Abraham was bound to love his son Isaac, but yet so to prefer the love and will of God, as to be able to sacrifice his son at God's command.

And the Lord Jesus himself was the liveliest pattern to us of this self-denial that ever the world saw. Indeed his whole life was a continued practice of it. And it hath oft convinced me that it is a special part of our sanctification, when I have considered how abundantly the Lord hath exercised himself in it for our example. For as it is desperate to think with the Socinians that he did it only for our example, so it is also a desperate error of others to think that it was only for satisfaction to God, and not at all for our example. Many do give up themselves to flesh-pleasing, upon a misconceit that Christ did therefore deny his flesh, to purchase them a liberty to please theirs.

As in his fasting and temptations, and his sufferings by the reproach and ingratitude of men, and the outward poverty and meanness of his condition, the Lord was pleased to deny himself; so especially in his last passion and death. As I have shown elsewhere, he loved his natural life and peace, and therefore in manifestation of that, he prayeth, *Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me.* But yet when it came to the comparative practical act, he proceeded to choose his Father's will with death, rather than life without it, and therefore saith, *Not my will (that is, my simple love of life) but thy will be done.* In which very words he manifesteth another will of his

own, besides that which he consenteth shall not be done, and showeth that he preferred the pleasing of his Father in the redemption of the world before his own life.

And thus in their measure he causeth all his members to do: so that life, and all the comforts of life, are not so dear to them as the love of God and everlasting life.

4. When God had created man, he was presently the Owner of him, and man understood this—that he was God's, and not his own. And he was not to claim a propriety in himself, nor to be affected to himself as his own, nor to live as his own, but as His that made him.

But when he fell from God, he arrogated practically (though notionally he may deny it) a propriety in himself, and useth himself accordingly.

And when Christ bringeth men to deny themselves, they cease to be their own in their conceits any more. Then they resign themselves wholly to God as being wholly his. They know they are his, both by the right of Creation and of Redemption: and therefore are to be disposed of by him, and to glorify him in body and spirit, which are his, 1 Cor. 6. 19, 20; Rom. 14. 9.

To be thus heartily devoted to God as his own, is the form of Sanctification; and to live as God's own, is the truly holy life.

5. As man in innocency did know that he was not his own, so he knew that nothing that he had was his own; but that he was the

> Steward of his Creator, for whom he was to use them, and to whom he was accountable.

But when he was fallen from God to himself, though he had lost the right of a servant, yet he graspeth at the creature as if he had the right of a lord. He now takes his goods, his lands, his money to be his own; and therefore he thinks he may use them for himself, and give God only some small contribution, lest he should disturb his possession. He saith as the impious ones, Psalm 12.4: *"Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?"* Though all of them know speculatively that all is God's, yet practically they take it and use it as their own.

But when grace teacheth them to deny themselves, it strippeth them naked of all that they seemed proprietors of; and maketh them confess that nothing is their own, but all is God's; and to God they do devote it, and use it for him, and give him his own—which the first Christians signified by selling all and laying it at the Apostles' feet. And therefore he asketh God what he shall do with it, and how he shall use it; and if God take it from him, he can bless the name of the Lord with Job (Job 1.21), as knowing he taketh but his own; and can say with Eli, *"It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good"* (1 Sam. 3.18). He knows that God may do with his own as he list (Matt. 20.15), and that he can have nothing but of his bounty; and therefore that it is his mercy that leaveth him anything; but it were no wrong to him if he took away all. And thus he understandeth that he is but a steward, and therefore must use all that he hath for him that he received it from.

If he have children, his desire is to know which way they may be most serviceable to God, and to that he will devote them. If he have wealth, or honor, and power among men, his care is to know which way he may employ them for his Master's use, and so he will employ them. If he have wit and learning, his care is to serve God by it. If he have strength and time, he is thinking which way to improve them for his Lord. And if vain companions, or the world, or fleshly delights would draw him to lay them out for them, he remembers that this were to waste his Master's stock upon his enemies.

So that though the sanctified man hath all things, yet he knows that he hath nothing. All things are his as God's steward; but nothing is properly and ultimately his own. All things are his for God; but nothing is his for his carnal self, nor ultimately for his personal or natural self. Upon this ground he gives the Devil, the World, and the Flesh a denial, when they would have his time, his tongue, his wit, his wealth, or anything that he possesseth. He telleth them: *"They are none of mine, but God's. I received them, and I must be accountable for them. I had them not from you, and therefore I may not use them for you. I must give to God the things that are God's. That which is yours I will readily yield you. Justice requireth that everyone have his own."* And thus self-denial doth take off the sanctified from giving that which is God's unto themselves.

Object. But do we not lawfully use his mercies for ourselves? Is not our meat, and drink, and clothes, and houses, and goods our own, and may we not use them for ourselves?

Answer. Improperly they are our own: so far our own as that our fellow-servants may not take them from us without our Lord's

consent; as every servant may have a peculiar stock entrusted in his hands, or may have his tools to do his work with, which indeed are his Master's, but are his to use. But as to a strict propriety, they are none of ours, but God is the only Proprietor of the world.

And for the use of them, it may be for ourselves in subordination to God, but never ultimately for ourselves. We may not use one creature, but ultimately and principally for God. When we eat or drink, we must never make the pleasing of our appetite our end, but must do it to strengthen, cheer, and fit ourselves for the service of God. And therefore we must first ask God, and not our appetite, what, and how much we must eat and drink; and we must no further please our appetite than the pleasing of it doth fit us for the service of God.

It is the express command, 1 Cor. 10.31: *"Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God."* You may not wear your clothes merely and ultimately for your bodies, but only to fit your bodies for God's service; and therefore you must advise with his Word, and with your end, what you should put on. You may not provide a house to dwell in, nor friends, nor riches, nor anything else for the pleasing of your flesh as your ultimate end, but for the service of your Lord. For you must put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof (Rom. 13.14).

6. As man had his being and well-being from God, so is it God only that can preserve and continue them. Innocent man understood this, and therefore lived in a dependence upon God; looking to his hand for the supply of his wants, and casting all his care upon him, and trusting him wholly with himself and all, and not

> distracting his own mind with cares and distrustful fears, but quieted and contented his mind in the wisdom, goodness, and all-sufficiency of God.

But when man was fallen to himself from God, he desired presently to have his portion or stock in his own hands, and grew distrustful of God, and began to look upon himself as his own preserver (in a great measure). And therefore he fell to carking and caring for himself, and to studious contrivances for his own preservation and supplies. He searched every creature for himself, and labored to find in it some good for himself, as if the care of himself had been wholly devolved on himself.

I have been as much troubled to understand that text in Gen. 3.22 as any one almost in the Bible, being somewhat unsatisfied with some ordinary expositions; and yet it is too hard for me. But this seems to me the most probable interpretation: that in his estate of innocence Adam was as a child in his Father's house, that was only to study to please his Father, and to do the work that he commanded him, but not to take any thought or care for himself. For while he was obedient, it was his Father's part to preserve him and provide for him, to keep off death and danger, and supply all his wants.

And therefore though man had the faculty or power of knowing more perfectly than we have now, yet he did not need to trouble himself about these matters of Self, because they belonged to God; and consequently had not the actual consideration or knowledge of them. For that would have been but a vain and troublesome knowledge and consideration to him. For though the knowledge of all things necessary to be known was part of his perfection, yet the actual

knowledge of many things unnecessary and vexatious or tempting may be part of a man's infelicity and misery. And so *he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow* (Eccl. 1.18). As man that foreknoweth his own death is, through the fear of it, all his lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. 2.15); and the fear is more grievous than the death itself—when a beast that knoweth not his death is freed from those fears.

Indeed in our fallen estate there is some use for more of this kind of knowledge than before. But in innocence man needed only to know his Maker, and his will and works, and the creature as his utensils, and the glass in which he was to be seen, and to fear with moderation the death which he had threatened, merely as threatened by him.

But by the temptation of Satan, man grew desirous to be past a child, at his Father's finding, and under his care, and would take care and thought for himself, and know what was good or evil for himself as to the natural man. And so far he turned his eye to the creature to study it for himself, when he should have studied God in it; and to search after good and evil to himself in it, when he should have searched after the attributes of God in it, and daily gazed with holy love and admiration upon his blessed face that shined in this glass. And so he would use the creature directly for himself, which he should have used only for God's service.

And thus I conceive man did indeed by his fall attain to much more actual knowledge as to the number of objects than he had before; which knowledge was indeed, in itself considered, physically good, but not good to him as any part of his felicity or his virtue, but rather by participation his sin and misery, as being unsuitable to his

condition. It was better with him when he knew one God, and all things in God as they conduced to the love and service of God, and were suitable to his state, than when he turned his mind from God, and fell to study the creature in itself and for himself, as good or evil to himself, and so lost himself and his understanding in a crowd of unnecessary and misused objects.

Like a foolish patient that, having a most judicious and faithful physician who will take care of his health and provide him the best and safest remedies, doth grow to an eager desire to be acquainted himself with the nature of each medicine and to be skillful in the cure of his own disease, that he may trust his physician no longer, but may be his own physician. And therefore hearkeneth to a seducer that tells him: *"The physician doth but keep thee in ignorance, lest thou shouldst be as wise as he, and able to cure or preserve thyself. Hearken to me, and I will teach thee to know all these things thyself, and so thou mayest take care of thyself."*

So man was seduced by Satan to withdraw himself from the fatherly care of God, by a desire himself to be wise for himself in the knowledge of all that in the creature which might be directly good or evil to himself; so taking on himself the work of God, and casting off the work that God had set him, and withdrawing himself from his necessary dependence on his Maker.

And accordingly much of this selfish knowledge of the creature he did attain: but with the woeful loss of the divine knowledge of the creature, and of the filial soul-contenting knowledge of God; yea, and of himself, as in his due subordination to God. This seems the sense of this text, and this is the case of fallen mankind.

Naturally now every man would fain have his safety and comforts in his own hand. He thinks them not so sure and well in the hand of God. O what would a carnal man give that he had but his life and health in his own hand, and might keep them as long as he saw good! When he is poor, he had rather it were in his hand to supply his wants than in God's; for he thinks it would go better with him. When he is sick, he had far rather it were in his own hand to cure him than in God's, for then he should be sure of it.

If he be in any strait, he cannot be content with a bare promise for his deliverance; but unless he see some probability in the means and work, and unless he be acquainted with the particular way by which he must be delivered, he is not satisfied. For he cannot trust God so well as himself. Is not this the case of all you that are carnal? Would you not think your case much safer and better if it were in your own hands, than you do now it is in God's? What would you not give, that you were but as able to give ease, and health, and wealth, and honor, and life to yourselves, as God is!

Hence it is that you so anxiously contrive for yourselves, and trouble yourselves with needless cares; because you dare not trust God, but think you are fallen to your own care and finding. You think yourselves quite undone when you have nothing left you but God and his promise to trust upon, and when you see nothing in yourselves and the creature to support you. And thus are all men fallen from God to themselves.

But Sanctification teacheth men that self-denial which, according to its measure, doth heal them of this disease. Though some actual knowledge of good and evil, and some care of our natural selves, be

now become a necessary duty as suited to our lapsed state—which yet had never been but through sin—yet that which is sinful, self-denial doth destroy. It showeth man that he is every way insufficient for himself, and that he is not the fountain of his own felicity; nor doth it belong to him, but to God, to preserve him and secure his welfare.

He seeth what a folly it is to depart from the tuition of his heavenly Father, and, as the Prodigal Son, to desire to have his portion in his own hands. Experience tells him with smart and sorrow that he hath not been so good a preserver of himself, nor used himself so well, as to desire to be in the same hands any longer that have so abused him. Yea, he knoweth that it was God that indeed preserved him, while he was over-solicitous about it himself, and would needs have the managing of his own affairs.

He now believes that he can be nowhere safe but in the hands of God, and no way sufficiently provided for but by his wisdom, love, and power. Nor dare he trust himself hereafter with himself or any creature. He finds that he hath but turmoiled and distracted his mind by undertaking the management of his own preservation; and that he hath brought himself into a wilderness, and lost himself, and ravelled his own affairs: when if he had committed himself to God, and been satisfied in his wisdom, love, and power, all had been kept safe and sound, and man had not been lost, nor his estate thus shattered and overthrown.

And therefore the returning self-denying convert is brought to an utter distrust of himself, and resolved hereafter to trust himself upon nothing below all-sufficiency and infinite love. He is so offended with himself for his former self-destruction, and for undoing himself so

foolishly, that he calls himself to account and into judgment for it, and condemneth himself as a traitor to God and a murderer of himself, and will no more be in the hands of so treacherous a delinquent.

But as the eyes of a servant are on the hand of his master, so are his eyes on God for all supplies. And this is the part of the work of the Spirit of adoption, who teacheth us to cry, *Abba, Father*; and as children, not to be over-careful for ourselves, but to run to our Father in all our wants, and tell him what we stand in need of, and beg relief; and to be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer, with supplication and thanksgiving, to make known our requests to God, Phil. 4.6.

And this acquiescence of the soul in the love of God is it that keepeth our hearts and minds in that peace of God which passeth understanding (v. 7). So that the more self-denial, the less is a man dependent on himself, or troubled with the cares of his own preservation; and the more doth he cast himself on God, and is careful to please him that is his true Preserver; and then quieteth and resteth his mind in his all-sufficiency, infinite wisdom, and love; and so is a mere dependent upon God.

7. Moreover, it is the prerogative of God, as absolute Owner of us, to be the sole Disposer of man and of all the other creatures: and to choose them their condition, and give them their several talents, and determine the events of all their affairs, as pleaseth himself. And innocent man was contented with this order, and well pleased that God should be the absolute Disposer of him and all.

But when man turned from God to self, he presently desired to be the disposer of himself; and not of himself only, but of all the creatures within his reach. How fain would selfish, corrupted man be the chooser of his own condition! His will is against the will of God, and he usually disliketh God's disposal. If he had the matter in his own hands, almost nothing should be as it is; but so cross would they be to God that all things would be turned upside down. If it were at their will, there is scarce a poor man but would be rich; and scarce a rich man but would be richer. The servant would be master; the tenant would be a landlord; the husbandman and tradesman would be a gentleman; the laborer would live an easier life. His house should be better; his clothing should be better; his fare should be better; his provision should be greater; his credit or honor with men should be more. The gentleman would be a knight, and the knight a lord, and the lord would be a king, and the king would be more absolute and have a larger dominion. Nay, every man would be a king, and learn the doctrine of the Jews, and many of this age among us, to expect that the world should be ruled by them, and they should reign as lords and princes in the earth.

If it were with selfish men as they would have it, there is scarce a man that would be what he is, nor dwell where he doth, nor live at the rates that now he liveth at. The weak would be always strong; and the sick would be well and always well; and the old would be young again, and never taste the infirmities of age. And if they might live as long as they would, I think there are few of the unsanctified that would ever die, nor look after heaven as long as they could live on earth. *O what a brave life should I have,* thinks the selfish unsanctified wretch, *if I were but wholly at my own disposal, and might be what I would be, and have what I would have!* What

would men give for such a life as this? Had they but their own wills, they would think themselves the happiest men on earth: that is, if they could be delivered from the will of God, and be from under his disposal, and get the reins into their own hands!

Nay, this is not all, but the selfish person would be the disposer of all the world within his reach, as well as of himself. He would have kingdoms at his dispose, and all things carried according to his will. He would have all his neighbors have a dependence upon him. Very bountiful he would be, if he were the lord of all: for he would be the great benefactor of the world, and have all men beholden to him and depend upon him. If he see things that little concern him, he hath a will of his own that would fain have the disposal of them. If he hear of the affairs of other nations, some will he hath of his own which he would have fulfilled in them, at least so far as any of his own interest may be involved in the business.

But when sanctification hath brought men to self-denial, then they discern and lament this folly. They see what silly, giddy worms they are to be disposers of themselves, or of the world. They see that they have neither wisdom, nor goodness, nor power sufficient for so great a work. They then perceive that it were better to make an idiot the pilot of a ship, or an infant to be their physician when they are sick, or the disposer of their estates, than to commit themselves and the world to their dispose. They see how foolishly they have endeavored or desired to rob God of his prerogative; and therefore they return from themselves to him, and give up all by free consent to his sole disposal, that so he may do with his own as he list.

He finds that he hath work enough to do of his own, and is become unfit for that; and therefore he dare no more undertake the work of God, for which he is infinitely unfit. He finds that the more he hath his own will, the worse it goes with him; and therefore he will give up himself to God and stand to his will. If he feels that providence doth cross his flesh, and that he hath poverty when the flesh would have riches, and shame when that carnal self would have honor, and labor when the flesh would have ease, and sickness when the flesh would have health, he would not for all that have the work taken out of the hand of God, but truly saith, *Not my will but thine be done*; and believeth that God's disposal is the best, and that his Father knows well enough what he doth.

And if it were put to his choice, whether God or he should be the disposer of his estate and honor and life, he had rather it were in God's hands than his own, and would not undertake the charge if it were offered him. *Alas,* thinks he, *I am almost below a man; and am I fit to make a god of? I come off so lamely in the duty of a creature as deserves damnation; and am I fit to arrogate the work of the Creator?*

8. Moreover, it is the high prerogative of God to be the Sovereign Ruler of the world; to make laws for them which must be obeyed; and to reward the obedient and punish the disobedient. God is King of all the earth; even King of kings and Lord of lords; and all shall obey him, or be judged by him for their disobedience.

But sin turned man into a rebel against heaven and a traitor to his Maker: so that now the selfish, unsanctified man disliketh God's government—at least in the particulars—and would govern himself.

The law of God contained in his Word and works he murmurs at, as too obscure or too precise and strict for him. He finds that it crosseth his carnal interest, and speaks not good of him but evil; and therefore he is against it, supposing it to be against him and his pleasure, profit, and honor in the world.

If men had but the government of themselves, what a difference would there be between their way and God's! If corrupt, unsanctified, selfish man might make a law for himself instead of the Word of God, what a law would it be? And how much of the law of God should be repealed? If sinners might make a Scripture, you should find in it no such passages as these: *Except a man be converted, or born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; without holiness none shall see God.* If self might make laws, you should not read in them: *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if by the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.* Nor should you there find that the gate is strait, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few there be that find it; or that the righteous are scarcely saved.

As all the Scripture is now for holiness, and against profaneness, ungodliness, and sensuality, if self had the framing of it, it should all be changed, and it should at least speak peace to fleshly-minded men. All those true and dreadful passages that speak fire and brimstone against the unsanctified, and threaten everlasting torments, should be razed out. You should find no talk of damnation in the Scripture for such as they: no talk of the worm that never dieth, or the fire that is never quenched, or of *Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity; I know you not*; or that *the way of the ungodly shall perish*; or that *God doth laugh at them, because he seeth that their day is coming*. Abundance of the Bible would be wiped out if

carnal self had but the altering of it. Nay, it would be quite made new, and made a contrary thing. The Articles of our Creed would be changed; the petitions of our Rule for Prayer would be most altered; every one of the Ten Commandments would be altered, as I shall after show.

Idolatry should be no sin, but the principal law; for self would be set up as the idol of the world. Will-worship would be no sin; men would be held guiltless that take the name of God in vain. The Lord's Day should be a day of mirth and carnal pleasure. Every subject would be the sovereign, and every inferior the superior. Revenge would be made lawful for themselves, though not for others. Fornication and adultery would be no mortal sin. Stealing would be made tolerable to themselves. It should be lawful to them to do any wrong to the name and reputation of another. In a word, every man would do what he list, and his will should be his law, and himself should be his own judge—a gentle, tender judge, no doubt. Thus would self rule.

But sanctification brings men to deny this self, and to lay down the arms of rebellion against God; and to see how unfit we are to rule ourselves; that we are too foolish, and sinful, and partial to make laws, and too partial also and tender to execute them. And that as we were made to obey, so obey we must, and come again into our ranks, and willingly subject ourselves to the Sovereign of the world.

Self-denial teacheth a man to hate his own carnal wisdom and reasonings that rise up against the laws of God; and to love them the worse because they are thus his own; and to love the laws of God the better, because they are God's, and because they are against his carnal self. The stamp of God on them maketh them current with

him; when, if they had but the private stamp of self, he would disown them as counterfeit or treasonable.

He hath indeed a flesh that is restrained by God's laws, and striveth against them; but he thinks never the worse of the law for that, but approveth and liketh it in the inner man. And if he might have his choice, he would not blot out one commandment, nor one direction, nor one article of faith, nor a tittle of the law, because self is not the chooser in him; but he hath learned to submit to the will and wisdom of the Lord.

And though he love himself, and have a nature that is unwilling of suffering, and feareth the displeasure of God and the threatenings of his holy law, yet doth he unfeignedly justify the law, and acknowledge it to be holy, and just, and good; and would not have the very threatenings of it to be repealed and blotted out, if he had his choice. For he knows that the determinations of God are the best, and that none but he is fit to govern. And therefore he desires that he himself may be taught better to obey, and not that he may rule; and wisheth that he were more conformed to the law, and not that the law were conformed to him; and fain he would have his own will brought up to God's, but wisheth not God's will to be crooked and brought down to his.

As far as men have self-denial, this is so.

9. Moreover, as it is God's prerogative to be the sovereign Ruler of ourselves, so also of all others as well as us. But when sin had set up self, man would not only rule himself, but would rule all others. There is an eager desire in the unsanctified, selfish heart that he might be ruler of town and country, and that all might be brought to

do his will. And hence it is that there is such resisting and grudging at good governors, and that men are so ambitious and fain would be highest—because they would have their own wills fulfilled by all, and therefore would have power to force men to it.

Hence it is that there is such a stir in the world for crowns and kingdoms: and few men have ever been heard of that have refused a scepter when it was offered them; yea, few that would not step out of their way for it, and wound their consciences, and hazard all their hopes of heaven for it, if they found themselves in likelihood of obtaining it. For where self doth reign at home, it would reign also over all others. Nothing more pleaseth the carnal mind than to have his will, and to have all men do what he would have them, and to see all at his beck, each man seeking to know his pleasure, ready to receive his word for law. This is the reign of self.

But sanctification, teaching men self-denial, maketh them look first at the doing of God's will, and would have all the world obedient to that. And for their own wills, they resign them absolutely to God's, and would not have men obey them but in a due subordination to the Lord. As they affect no dominion or government but for God, so they desire not men to obey their will any further than it is necessary to the obedience of God's will, to which they are serviceable and conform.

The self-denying, sanctified man hath as careful an eye up and down the world for God's interest as the self-seeker hath for his own. And as eagerly doth he long to hear of the setting up of the Name, and Kingdom, and Will, or Laws of God in the world, as the ambitious man longs for the setting up of his own. And it as much rejoiceth the

holy, self-denying man to hear that God's laws are set up and obeyed, and that the world doth stoop to Jesus Christ, as it would rejoice the carnal, selfish wretch to be the lord and master of all himself, and his will become the law of the world.

A holy, self-denying man would be far gladder to hear that Africa, America, and the rest of the unbelieving part of the world were converted to Christ by the power of the Gospel, and that the heathens were his inheritance and the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of Christ, than if he had conquered all these himself and were become the king or emperor of the world. For as self is the chief interest of an unsanctified man, so Christ and the will of God is the chief interest of the sanctified. For he hath destroyed the contradictory interest of self, and renounced it, and hath taken God for his end, and Christ for the way, and consequently for his highest interest: so that he hath now no business in the world but God's business; he hath no honor to regard but God's honor; he hath none to exalt but the King of kings; he knows no gain but the pleasing of God; he knows no content or pleasure but God's pleasure. For the life that he now liveth in the flesh, he liveth by the faith of the Son of God, who hath loved him and given himself for him; and thereby hath drawn him out of himself to the Fountain and End of love, so that it is not he that liveth, but Christ liveth in him, Gal. 2:20.

10. Lastly, it is the high prerogative of God to have the honor and power and glory ascribed to him, and to be praised as the Author of all good to the world; and his glory he will not give to another. Man and all things are created, and preserved, and ordered for his glory: nor shall man have any glory but in the glorifying of his Lord. When

we fell short of glorifying the Lord, we also fell short of the glory we expected by him.

But when sin turned man from God to himself, he became regardless of the honor of God, and his mind was bent on his own honor—so that he would have every knee bow to himself, and every eye observe him, and every mind think highly of him, and every tongue praise and magnify him. It doth him good at the heart to have virtue, and wisdom, and greatness ascribed to him, and an excellency in all; and to have all the good that is done ascribed to him, and to be taken to be as the sun in the firmament, that all must eye and none can live without, and to be esteemed the benefactor of all.

When he hears that men extol him and speak nothing of him but well and great things; and when he sees them all observe and reverence him, and take him as an oracle for wisdom or as an angel of God—O how this pleaseth his unsanctified, selfish mind! Now he hath his end, even that which he would have; and verily, saith Christ, *they have their reward.*

But when sanctification hath taught men to deny themselves, they see then that they are vile and miserable sinners, and loathe themselves for all their abominations, and are base in their own eyes, and humble themselves before the Lord, and abhor themselves in dust and ashes, and say, *To us belongeth shame and confusion of face… Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory* (Ps. 115:1; Dan. 9:7–8).

The holy, self-denying soul desireth no glory and honor but what may conduce to the glory and honor of his Lord. His heart riseth against base, flattering worldlings that would rob God and give the

honor to him. Nor can they do him a greater displeasure than to ascribe to him that which belongeth only to God, or to bring to him or any creature his Maker's due. If God be honored, he taketh himself as honored, though he be never so low. If God be dishonored, he is troubled, and his own honor will not make him reparation. As he liveth himself to the glory of God, and doth all that he doth in the world to that end, so would he have others do so too. And if God be most honored by his disgrace and shame, he can submit.

And thus I have shown you the true nature both of selfishness and of self-denial. But observe that I describe it as it is in itself; yet there is too much selfishness in the best, which may hinder the fullness of these effects. But self-denial is predominant in all the sanctified, though it be not perfect.

CHAPTER II.

Reasons of the Necessity of Self-denial to salvation.

III. And now you have seen the description of self-denial, and I hope, if you have studied it, you know what it is that is required. I shall next show you some of the reasons of its necessity, and prove it to you beyond dispute that it is no indifferent thing, nor the high attainment of some few of the saints, but a thing that all must have that will be saved, being of the very essence of holiness itself; so that it is as possible to live without life, as to be holy without self-denial; and as possible to be saved whether God will or no, as to be saved

without self-denial in a predominant degree. And if any of you think it strange that salvation should be laid on so high a duty, and that no man can be a true disciple that denieth not himself, even to the forsaking of his life and all, when God requireth it, I shall show you the reason that should easily satisfy you.

Reas. 1. Till a man deny himself, he denieth God, and doth not indeed believe in him, and love him, and take him to be his God. And I hope you will grant that no man can be saved that believes not in God, nor loves him, nor takes him for his God. He that will deny God and yet think to be saved, must think to be saved in despite of God. The first article of our faith, and of our baptismal Christian covenant, is to believe in God the Father, and take him for our God, and give up ourselves to be his people. But this no man can do without self-denial.

For by all that I have said in the description of it, you may see that selfishness is most contrary to God, and would rob him of all his high prerogatives; and God should be no God if the selfish sinner had his will: and he doth not heartily consent that God shall be God to him. I have formerly told you that self is the god of wicked men, or the world's great idol; and that the inordinate love of pleasure, profits, and honor, in trinity, is all but this self-love in unity; and that in the malignant trinity of God's enemies, the flesh is the first and foundation, the world the second, and the devil the third. Every man is an idolater so far as he is selfish.

God is not a bare name: he that takes away his essence or attributes or prerogatives, and yet thinks he believes in him because he leaves him his name and titles, doth as bad as they that set up an image and

worship that instead of God, or that worship the sun or moon as gods because they somewhat represent his glory. For sure, a bare name hath as little substance as an image; much less can you say it hath more than the sun.

Now selfish, ungodly men do all of them rob God and give his honor and prerogatives to themselves, and put him off with empty titles. They call him their God, but will not have him for their end, their portion, and felicity, nor give him the strongest love of their hearts. They will not take him as their absolute Owner and devote themselves and all they have to him, and stand with a willing mind to his disposal. They will not take him for their Sovereign and be ruled by him, nor deny themselves for him, nor seek his honor and interest above their own. They call him their Father, but deny him his honor; and their Master, but give him not his fear (Mal. 1:6). They depend not on his hand and live not by his law and to his glory, and therefore they do not take him for their God.

And can you expect that God should save those that deny him and would dethrone him—his very enemies?

Reas. 2. Yea more than so: God will not save those that make themselves their own gods when they have rejected him. But all these unsanctified, selfish men do make themselves their own gods; for in all the ten particulars before mentioned, they take to themselves the prerogatives of God.

1. They would be their own end and look no further.

2. They use all creatures but as means to this end; yea, God himself is esteemed but for themselves.

3. They love their present life and prosperity better than God.

4. They would be their own, and live as their own, and not as those that are none of their own.

5. They would have the creatures to be their own, and use them as their own, and not as God's.

6. They cast care for themselves, and shift for themselves, and cast not themselves wholly upon God.

7. They would dispose of themselves and their own conditions, and of all things else.

8. They would rule themselves, and be from under the laws and government of God.

9. They would be the rulers of all others, and have all men do their wills.

10. And they would be honored and admired by all, and have the praise ascribed to them.

And if all this be not to set up themselves as gods or idols in the world, I know not what is. Certainly God is so far from having a thought of saving such vile idolaters (in this condition) that they are the principal objects of his high displeasure, and the fairest marks for his justice to shoot at: and he is engaged to pull them down and tread them into hell. Should God stand by and see a company of rebellious sinners sit down in his throne, or usurp his sovereignty and divine prerogatives, and let them alone—yea, and advance them to his glory?

No. He hath resolved that *he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be brought low*. And what higher self-exaltation can there be than to make ourselves as gods to ourselves? And therefore who should be brought lower than such?

Reas. 3. No man can be a Christian that takes not Christ for his Lord and Savior; but no man without this self-denial can take Christ for his Lord and Savior: and therefore no man without self-denial can be a Christian, and so be saved. He that makes himself his end cannot make Christ, as Christ, his way; for Christ is the Way to the Father, and not to carnal self. Nay, the business that Christ came upon into the world was to pull down and subdue this self.

Moreover, whoever takes Christ for his Savior must know from what it is that he must save him; and that is principally from self. And no man can take Christ for his Savior that renounces not self-confidence, and is not willing to be saved from the idolatry of self-exaltation. No man can take Christ for his Master or Teacher that comes not into his school as a little child, renouncing the guidance of carnal self and sensible of his need of a heavenly Teacher. No man can take Christ for his King and Lord, and give up himself to him as his own and as his subject, that hath not learned to deny that self which claims propriety and sovereignty in his stead.

There is no Antichrist nor false Christ that ever was in the world that doth more truly oppose Christ, and resist him in all the parts of his office, than carnal self. It is this that will not stoop to his righteousness, or to his guidance, and to his teaching and holy government. Self is the false Christ or savior of the world, as well as

the false god. And therefore there can be no salvation where self is not denied and taken down.

Reas. 4. He that believes not in the Holy Ghost and takes him not for his Sanctifier cannot be a true Christian or be saved. But no man without this self-denial believes in the Holy Ghost and takes him for his Sanctifier; and therefore without this self-denial no man can be a true Christian or be saved.

The very nature of sanctification consists in turning a man from himself to God: in destroying selfishness, and devoting the soul to God by Christ. And therefore it is past dispute that none but the self-denying are sanctified; and therefore none but they do truly take the Holy Ghost for their Sanctifier and truly believe in him. So far as men are in love with the disease, it is certain they will not use the Physician.

Reas. 5. No man is a true Christian and in a state of salvation that denies, renounces, or rejects the Word of God. But all men that have not self-denial (that hear the Word of God) do renounce, deny, or reject it; and therefore no man without self-denial is a true Christian or can be saved.

In the Scriptures it is that we have eternal life; it is they that must make us wise unto salvation. The man that will be blessed must meditate in them day and night (Ps. 1:3). And it is not the hearers but the doers of them that are blessed. But nothing is more clear than that the voice of Scripture calls aloud on all men to deny themselves; and that the scope of it is to cry down self and set up God in Jesus Christ. It is the very drift and meaning of it from end to end to take

down self, and abase men in their own eyes, and bring them home to God from whom they are revolted.

Reas. 6. No man can be a Christian or be saved without saving grace. But no man without self-denial hath saving grace. For it is the nature of every grace to carry man from himself to God by Christ.

It is the work of godly sorrow to humble proud man and break the heart of carnal self. It is the work of faith, for a self-denying soul to pass out from self for hope and life to Christ. It is the work of love to carry us quite above ourselves to that infinite goodness which we love. It is the nature of holy fear to confess our guilt and insufficiency, and to suspect ourselves, and dread the fruit of our own ways. Confidence doth bottom us upon God, and hope itself doth imply a despairing in ourselves. Thankfulness pays the homage to him that hath saved us from ourselves. And every grace hath self-denial as half its very life or soul. And therefore it is certain that no man hath any more grace than he hath self-denial.

Reas. 7. They that reject the ministry and the fruit of all the ordinances of God are not true Christians, nor cannot be saved. But so do all among us that have not self-denial. For the use of the ministry is to call home sinners from themselves to God. The use of every ordinance of God is to get or keep down carnal self and exalt the Lord.

Confession is nothing but self-abasing: and he must confess that will have the faithful and just God to forgive him; for he that covers his sin shall not prosper (1 John 1:9; Prov. 28:13). Prayer is a confession of our own emptiness, insufficiency, and unworthiness, and a flying from ourselves for help unto another.

In baptism we come as condemned prisoners for a pardon, as it were with ropes about our necks, and strip ourselves of the rags of our filthiness, that by the blood of the Lamb we may be washed from our blood, and our sins may be buried as in the depth of the sea. In the Lord's Supper we renew the same covenant and receive the same renewed pardon; and still fly from ourselves to Christ for life; and renounce our carnal selves by solemn covenant as a people coming home to God.

So that never was any ordinance of God effectual and saving on the soul of any further than it brought them to self-denial, or preserved, exercised, or manifested it.

Reas. 8. He that can do no work sincerely, nor go one step in the way of life, is no true Christian nor in a state of life. But this is the case of all that have not self-denial. For self is their principle, rule, and end: and he that hath either a false principle, rule, or end cannot be sincere in any of the means; much less when he is out in all of these.

A selfish man is seeking himself in his very religion; and is serving himself when he seemeth to be serving God. And indeed he doth not any service sincerely unto God, because he makes not God his end; and therefore cannot be accepted.

Reas. 9. No man is a true Christian or can be saved that sticks in the depth of his natural misery, in his lapsed state. But so do all men that have not self-denial; for it is self that they are fallen to, and must be saved from.

Reas. 10. No man can be a true Christian and be saved that is not a member of the holy Catholic Church and the communion of saints. But so is none but the self-denying; for every true member of the Church hath a public spirit, preferring the Church's interest to his own, and suffering with fellow-members in their suffering, and having a care of one another (1 Cor. 12). But the self-seeking, unsanctified person is a stranger to this disposition.

Reas. 11. He that is led by the greatest enemy of God and his own soul is not a true Christian nor in a state of life. But so is every man that hath not learned to deny himself. For self is the greatest enemy of God and us. Escape but your own hands and you are out of danger. All the devils in hell cannot destroy you if you would not be your own destroyers.

Reas. 12. Lastly, it is a plain contradiction to be saved without self-denial. For as it is self that we must be saved from, both as our end and means and greatest enemy: so to stick in self is still to be lost and miserable, and therefore not to be saved. So that the case is as plain as a case can be, that no man can be a true Christian or disciple of Christ without self-denial; and consequently none without it can be saved. I have been the briefer upon the arguments, because the matter of some of them may come to be more fully opened anon in the application.

CHAPTER III.

Use I. A general complaint of the Prevalency of Selfishness.

Use I. And now we have seen from the words of Christ the absolute necessity of self-denial, and that there is no true Christianity nor salvation without it; let us next take a view of ourselves, and of the world, and judge of our condition by this certain rule.

Look well into yourselves, and into the world, and tell me whether you find not cause to lament,

1. That true Christianity is so rare a thing, even among the professors of Christianity, seeing self-denial is so rare.

2. That grace is so weak and small in most of the regenerate, seeing self-denial is so little and imperfect.

O if the name of Christians would prove us Christians, and the magnificent titles we give to Christ would prove that we are his true disciples; if reading, and hearing, and outward duties, and a cheap religiousness would serve the turn, we have then great store of Christians among us. If Christ would have left out but this one point of self-denial from his laws and conditions of salvation, what abundance of disciples would he have had in the world? And how many millions might have come to heaven that now must be shut out?

It is this point that hinders all sorts of heathens and infidels from being Christians. The Jews will believe in no Christ but one that will restore their temple and outward glory, and make them great and rulers of the world: and therefore they will not be the servants of that

Christ that calls them to the contempt of all these things, and of life itself, for the hopes of an invisible kingdom.

The Mohammedans had rather believe in Mahomet, that gives them leave to please their lusts, than in Christ that calls them to mortification and self-denial, and tells them of nothing but suffering and patience, duty and diligence, till they come into another world. The idolatrous heathens abhor Christianity when they hear how much they must do and suffer, and all for a reward in the life to come.

It is an informing instance that Pet. Maffaeus gives us in his Indian History of the first King of Congo that was baptized: He quickly received the articles of faith, and the form of worship, and the outside and cheaper part of religion; and so did many of his nobles and followers. But when he was called to confession, and understood that he must leave his gluttony, and drunkenness, and whoredom, and oppression, and inordinate pleasures, he would be a Christian no more. His nobles persuaded him that the forsaking of all this mirth and pleasure and delights of the flesh, and taking up so strict a life, was too dear a price to pay for the hopes of a life to come; and it was better to keep the pleasure they had, and put another life to the venture.

And thus Christianity had been quickly banished that kingdom again, if it had not taken deeper rooting in his son and heir Alphonsus, and made him venture his crown and life for the sake of Christ.

And thus it is at the heart with the most, even of baptized persons and those that take themselves to be Christians. Because it is the religion of the country, and they are taught that there is no salvation

without it, they will be baptized, and be called Christians, and say their prayers, and come to church, and say they believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and they will go as far with you in religion as they can without denying themselves: but for the rest, which is the life and truth of Christianity, they will not understand it, or believe that it is of such necessity.

"God forbid," say they, "that none should be Christians and saved but those that thus deny themselves, and take up their cross, and forsake all they have, and accept not life itself from Christ." They say they believe in Christ, and yet they say, "God forbid his word should be true," or, "God forbid we should believe Christ who hath spoken this in the Gospel!" See what kind of Christians multitudes are!

Every man and woman on earth that take themselves for true Christians, and yet do not deny themselves—even life and all—for the sake of Christ and the hope of everlasting glory, are mere self-deceivers and no true Christians at all. *He that will save his life,* saith Christ, *shall lose it:* that is, he that in his coming to Christ, and covenanting with him, will put in an exception for the saving of his life, and will forsake all for Christ if he be put to it, except life itself—this man is no true disciple of Christ, and shall be so far from saving his life, that he shall lose both heaven and life and all.

The justice of God shall take from him that life which he dared not resign to the will of mercy; and he shall lose that for nothing which he would not lose for Christ and heaven. It is impossible for that man to be Christ's disciple that loves his life better than Christ and the hopes of life everlasting (Matt. 10:37–38; Luke 14:25–26, 33).

Some self-denial there may be in the unsanctified: many of them would leave a little pleasure or profit rather than be damned; and many had rather suffer a little than venture upon eternal sufferings. But I beseech you remember that this is the lowest degree of self-denial that is saving: to set more by Christ and the hopes of glory than by all this world and life itself; and to be habitually resolved to forsake life and all rather than forsake him. No less than this is proper self-denial, or will prove you Christians and in a state of life.

This was the trial that Christ put one to who had thought to have been his disciple, Luke 18:21: *"Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."* Not that every man must actually sell all, but every man must set more by heaven than all, and therefore part with all when Christ would have him; and he that is not thus resolved—let him go never so far in all other things—does yet lack one thing, and such a one thing as he shall never be saved without.

For the meaning of the text is, that Christ would try by this command whether he set more by anything than him, and whether he set more by heaven or earth; and so would have us all judge of ourselves by the same evidence within, though he put not all on the same way of discovering it.

Many a man can deny self the superfluities of pleasure, and as this rich man did, can avoid enormous crimes, and say of whoredom, and theft, and drunkenness, and oppression, and gross deceit, "All these have I avoided from my youth." Education may moderate some selfish desires, and natural temper may further that moderation; and

custom and good company and holy precepts may yet do more; and wit may teach men to do or suffer somewhat rather than to run on the wrath of God.

And therefore many thousands may deny self the pleasure of some inordinate lust, or of some recreation, or excess in meat or drink, and yet be far from denying life and all, and so from the true self-denial of a Christian. Nay, a man may deny self *for self* in many particulars, and so may please self more than he denies it. Many a civil, ingenuous gentleman and other persons will forbear the disgraceful sins of drunkenness, filthy speaking, whoredom, incivility, notorious profaneness, even because they are disgraceful, and therefore against the interest of self. So much as self can possibly spare, a carnal heart may be brought to part with.

But still self is alive and predominant within them; still it is the ruling end and principle. But to go out of self to God, and resign up ourselves to him, and possess no interest but him and in him; and to have nothing that we esteem or love or care for in comparison of him —knowing that for him we were made, redeemed, preserved, and sanctified, and therefore desiring to be wholly and only his, and to have no credit, no goods, no life, no self but what is his, for his service, at his will, and at his disposal and government and provision —this is the true self-denial which the Spirit of God works in a prevailing, though not a perfect measure, in every gracious believing soul.

But alas, Sirs, how strange is this in the world, and how weak and low in the souls where it is found! And what matter of lamentation would a survey of the world, or of ourselves, present us with! Is not

self the great idol which the whole world of unsanctified men does worship? Who is it that rules the children of disobedience, but carnal self? For what is all the stir and stirrings, the tumults and contentions of the world, but for self? This rules kingdoms, and this is it that raises wars; and what is it—except the works of holiness—that self is not the author of?

Look unto the thrones and kingdoms of the earth, and conjecture how many self has advanced and placed there; and how few have stayed till God enthroned them and gave them the crown and scepter with his approbation. Among all the nobles and great ones of the earth that abound in riches, how few are there that were not set a-work by self, and ruled by it, in the getting or keeping or using their riches, dignities, and honors?

Look on the great revenues of the nation, and of the world, and consider whether God or self have the more of it. One man has many thousands a year, and another has many hundreds, and how much of this is devoted to God, and how much to carnal self? And the poor that have but little would think us injurious to them if we should call to them for anything for God, who have not enough for themselves; when indeed God must have all, and self must have nothing but what it has by way of return from God again—and that for God, and not for self, except as subservient unto him.

Alas, of many hundred thousand pounds a year which the inhabitants of a country possess among them, how little has God that should have all, and how much has self that should have nothing! O dreadful reckoning, when these accounts must be all cast up! Judge by the use of all, whether self has not yet dominion of all. If men

throw out to God his tenth, which is none of their own; or if they cast him now and then some inconsiderable alms, when in his members he is fain to beg for it first, they think they have done fairly, though self devours all the rest.

Is it more, think you, for God or for self that our courts of law are filled with so many suits, and lawyers have so much employment? Is it more for God or for self that merchants compass sea and land for commodity? Who is it that the soldier fights for? Is it for God or for self? Who is it that the tradesman deals for, that the plowman labors for, that the traveler goes for? Is it more for God or for self? Who is it that the most of men's thoughts are spent for, and the most of their words are spoken for, and the most of their rents and wealth laid out for, and the most of their precious time employed for? Is it for God or self?

Consider whether it is not self that finally and morally rules the world. What else do most live for or look after? And is not the common piety, religion, and charity of the world a mere sending God some scraps of the leavings of carnal self? If the flesh be full, or have enough, then God shall have the crumbs that fall from its table, or at most so much as it can spare: but till the flesh has done and is satisfied, God must stay even for these scraps and crumbs. And if the flesh but say, "I want it myself, or have use for it myself," they think it a sufficient answer to all demands.

One may see by the irregularity of the motions of the world—the confusions, and crossings, and mutabilities, and contradictions, the doing and undoing again, the differences and fierce contendings—that it is not God but self that is the end and principle of the motions.

Nay, most men are so dead to God, and alive only to themselves, that they know not what we mean when we tell them, and plainly tell them, what it is to live to God, and what it is to serve him in all their affairs, and to eat, and drink, and do all things for his glory. But they ask in their hearts as Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord, that I should serve him?" And when they read these passages about self-denial, and about referring all to God, they will not understand them: for they are unacquainted with God, and know no other God indeed but self, though in name they do.

Nay, it were well if self were kept out of the church, and out of the ministers of the Gospel that must teach the world to deny themselves; that it did not with too many choose their habitations, and give them their call, and limit them in their labors, and direct them in the manner and measure. It were well if some ministers did not study for self, and preach and dispute for self, and live for self, when they materially preach against self, and teach men self-denial.

And then for our people—alas, it rules their families, it manages their business, it drives on their trades. It comes to church with them, and fights within them against the word, and perverts their judgments, and will let them relish nothing, and receive nothing, but what is consistent with selfish interest. In a word, it makes men ungodly, it keeps them ungodly, and it is their very ungodliness itself. O, were it not for carnal self, how easily might we deal with the hearts of sinners? But this is it that overcomes us.

CHAPTER IV.

The Prevalency of Selfishness in all Relations

Beside all the generals already mentioned, it will not be amiss to give you some particular instances of the power of selfishness, and the rareness of self-denial in the world, that you may see what cause of lamentation is before us.

1. How ready and speedy, how effectual and diligent, how constant and unwearied are they in the service of self? And how slow and backward, how remiss and negligent, how inconstant and tired are they in the works that are merely for God and their salvation? Do I need to prove it to you? You may as well call for proof whether there are men in the world. I were best, for instance, begin next home.

Many ministers think it a drudgery and a toil that God requireth at their hands to confer with every family in their parishes, and instruct them privately in the matters of salvation. But see what self can do: If the same men have but their tithe to gather, they will not think it a needless thing to go or send to every family and speak with them all about their own business. At least, if it were any considerable sum, they would not lose it for want of speaking for it.

Our neighbors do many of them think it much that we should call them to be personally instructed or catechized, and they will not come at us; but say, *What needs all this ado? Have we not teaching enough at church? It is children that must be catechized, and we are past children*. You see how little interest God and their ministers and their own salvation have in them. But will you see what carnal self

can do more? Had I but money enough, I would undertake to make them come to me, and follow me as a horse will follow his provender! Had I but ten pounds a piece to give them, yea, or but ten shillings, I do not think I should have any refuse to come and fetch it—unless it were those that now are the forwardest in seeking relief for the wants of their souls. Had I but the estates or lives of all these men in my power, how easily would they be ruled, and how diligently and submissively would they attend, who now, for God and their everlasting life, disdain to come and seek instructions. And yet these men would scarce believe you, if you should tell them that self and the world are made their god, and that God himself is denied and rejected by them.

Moreover, a long time I have been persuading all the families in the town and parish to read the Scripture, and daily call upon God together. I have proved it their duty from Scripture, and this does not prevail. But see what flesh and self can do. If these men were but sure of ten or twenty shillings a time for every morning and evening that they pray together, I warrant you, whatever the heart did, the lips should be taught to do their part. O how busy would all the town and parish be to learn to pray, who now look not after it! I do not believe that there is a house among them all that would not very shortly set up prayer, if they were but paid for it after these rates. Judge now whether God or self bears sway among these men, and whether soul or body is more regarded.

Moreover, we have too many drunkards in the town whom no means that we can use will restrain and keep sober. They love the drink, and they cannot forbear; and tell them of God's Word, that threatens them with damnation, and they will for all that be drunk the next

day. But if one of these wretches might have but ten pounds a week on condition he would forbear, I do not think but he could forbear. Or if he were sure that for every cup of drink he should drink after it a cup of gall or filth, I warrant you he would soon begin to abate.

We have abundance of ignorant sensual men who, for love of sin, refuse church government and will not come under it. But if the magistrate would but make a law that all men shall be members of a particular church and submit to discipline, or forfeit but twenty shillings a month, how few refusers should we have in all the town or country?

We have many that seldom come to hear in the public assemblies; but let the Parliament make a law that they shall pay for their refusal, and how readily will it bring the most of them—unless they have hopes that the law will not be executed. And judge now whether self or God has the greater interest in these men's hearts.

I see but one piece of self-denial among this sort of people in this town, and that is this: Though the officers are to give the money to the poor which they receive from swearers, drunkards, unlicensed and abusive ale-sellers, profaners of the Lord’s Day, etc., yet that sort of the poor themselves do hate those officers that are zealous in their duties. This is strange, that the love of money does not change them. But whether it be that they can deny their flesh for the Devil, though not for God; and in enmity to godliness, though not to further it; or whether it be that the officers do use to give their money to an honester sort of poor, and these have none of it, I cannot well tell.

And having given so many sad instances of the power of self and scarcity of self-denial in others, I hope the magistrates will not take it

ill if we help them to discern this enemy in themselves, nor be offended that they come last, unless it were in a more honorable cause. I hear the best and wisest men that I can meet with complain that in most places ale-houses flourish under the magistrates' noses; and that whoredom, swearing, profaning the Lord's Days shall seldom be punished, except when they are very much urged to it; nor then neither if it will but displease a neighbor or friend, especially if it be a *worshipful* swearer or drunkard that is to be punished.

We see in most places that it is more than the justice can do to put down one ale-house of many that they confess should be suppressed; and I doubt but few can keep them from increasing. Men say that there is so much ado before they can have justice from many of them, and those that seek it are counted but for busy troublesome fellows, that many are ready to let all alone. And whence is all this, that men in power can do so little against those that have no power to resist them? Why, alas, the cause is plain: *Self is against it*. They have none but God and ministers and a few precise fellows to persuade them to it; and they have no greater motives than what is fetched from Heaven and Hell to move them to it; and these are but small matters with them (I speak of the unsanctified). It must be one that hath greater interest in them than God that must persuade them to it. It must be more powerful matters than the promises of Heaven and the threatenings of damnation that must prevail with such moderate gentlemen as these. And who is it that can do this, that God and their salvation cannot do? Why, even *self*, carnal self. If you know but how to engage their own self-interest in the business, I warrant you it will go better on.

Let but every informer be well paid for his pains, and every justice have a hundred pounds from the Exchequer for every due execution of such laws, and how roundly would the work go on? Then they would not say, *We cannot do it,* or, *We are not bound to look after them*. Do you think I wrong them or speak without proof? I will leave it to your judgment when I have given you but these few instances.

Let but the plague break out in the town, and infect but a quarter as many houses as here are infectious ale-houses that harbor tipplers and drunkards, and see whether the magistrates of this or any town will not a little better bestir themselves, and send to search after infected places, and nail up their doors, and write on them *Lord have mercy on us*, that all may take warning and keep away. They will not here be offended with informers, nor say, *Am I bound to look after them?* And why are they not as zealous against sin as against the plague? Great reason! Self is for sin, and God only is against it. But self is against the plague, because it is concerned in it. Sin does but hurt the soul and bring men to Hell-fire; but the plague destroys their body. And this is the greater matter with them, because they have flesh and sense to judge of it; but they have not faith to believe the other.

Again, let but one house in the town be on fire, and all are up to quench it, and the bell is rung, and the magistrate does not think that he wants a call himself to look after it. But when the fire of Hell is kindling in an ale-house, that is nothing, but must be let alone: there is no such zeal, nor no such haste. And why so? Why, one they see in good earnest, and perceive that it is fire indeed; but the other they believe in jest, as if it would prove but a painted fire.

Again, let but an ungodly fellow slander the magistrate or call him all to naught, especially if he give him but two or three boxes on the ear, and see whether he will let that man alone. But let the same man abuse the name of God, and break his laws, and with too many he may be let alone, unless they be urged to do justice. And how comes this difference? Why, *self* is touched in one, and it is but *God*—but God! O atheists!—that is touched in the other. Self can do more with them than God can do.

(Remember still, when I say that self can do more with them than God, that I speak not of what God could do by his omnipotency if he would, but of the final causality, or the small interest that God has in their hearts by holy faith and love.)

Again, let but a servant rob the magistrate and carry his money and goods to an ale-seller to reset; and try whether he will look after him and the ale-seller. And why not as soon and as zealously when ale-sellers reset men's sons and servants, and drown men's understandings and turn them into beasts? Why? Because in one case it is but God and men's souls that are concerned (a matter of nothing), but in the other it is *self* (a greater matter with them).

Shall I give you but one instance more, that the ale-sellers themselves will take my part in, so far as to bear me witness that it is true? Here are Farmers of the Excise who have power to know what ale-houses are in the town, and their gain lies on it; and there shall scarce a man in town or country sell ale so secretly but they will know it, nor sell a barrel but what they are acquainted with. They do not say, "I am not bound to go search after them," nor that they are not able to discover them and bring them to pay excise. But the

justices (too commonly) can overlook abundance that the excise-men can find; and they cannot make one of twenty pay, when the other can. And what is the matter? Why, one works for self and money, and the other works but for God and his own and other men's salvation (a small matter!). See then, beyond denial, what self and money can do with such men, when God and men's salvation can do next to nothing.

But I must desire you not to mistake me, and think I speak this of any honest godly magistrate, and abuse the good by joining them with the bad! No: far be it from me to be so injurious. For it is evident that they can be no good men, nor have any true love of God in their souls, that are such in a predominant sense as I have here described. It is not in my thoughts to lay this blame on any honest godly magistrate; for none but the ungodly would do as I have mentioned, and prefer themselves before the Lord, and the bodies of men before the souls.

And alas, if the sovereign powers of the nations of the world were not too sick of the same disease, gain would not be accounted godliness, but godliness the greatest gain; and carnal policy would not go for piety, but true piety would go for the surest policy. It would not be so common in most nations to have the truth and cause of Christ disowned, and his servants persecuted, and their lives and blood made a sacrifice to carnal self and worldly interests. Nor would the breaches of the churches be so long unhealed, and grow wider and wider, and few much regard them, but all have their own work to do which must be looked after. Yea, and the cause of Christ and the Gospel must be trod down if it stands in the way of their own; and the churches must be set on fire by their wars and contentions for

their selfish interests. And if self were not too strong among us, we should not have had such connivance at doctrinal and practical abominations, nor so much delay or neglect of healing the discomposed churches and uniting the divided Christians, or attempting it more effectually than we have done.

But because I desire to speak to none but those that are within my hearing, I will return home to ourselves.

The holy ordering and instructing of families, and suppressing sin in children and servants, is one of the most effectual works for the building up of the church, and the glory and stability of the commonwealth. O, if parents and masters would but sanctify their houses to the Lord, and teach their families the will and fear of God, and do their best (by punishment when instruction will not serve) to hinder sin, how fast would reformation then go on? And what hinders? Why, carnal self. If it were but for worldly commodities they would do more.

Would you have me prove it? Let experience speak.

Let a servant or child go prayerless to their work, and few regard it; but they will not go without meat, or drink, or clothes. The master will suffer them to neglect God's service; but if they neglect his own, and should do him no more or better service than they do to God, they should soon hear of it, and be turned out of doors; and they were no servants for him. They will teach their children to do their own work, or set them apprentices to learn it; but the work of God and their salvation, they shall for them have little teaching in, how plainly soever God has commanded it them, Deut. 11:18–19; 6:6–8; Eph. 6:4.

Let a servant or child reproach his master or parent, or call them all to naught, and they think it not fit to put up that (nor indeed is it); but let them swear by the name of God or break his laws, and they can patiently bear with it, and a cold rebuke like Eli's will serve the turn. They can get them into field or shop to work together, but they cannot get them before and after to prayer together.

And why is all this? Why, one is for self, and the other is for God. One is for the body, and the other is for the soul. So that you see what self can do, and how commonly it is the master of families, towns, and countries, because it is the master in men's souls.

God must be loved above all, and our neighbor as ourselves. But if God were allowed but so much love as a very neighbor should have, it would not be so ill with the selfish world as now it is.

But because I have been so long on this first discovery of the power of self and the scarcity of self-denial, I will be shorter in the rest that follow.

CHAPTER V.

The Power of Selfishness upon Men's Opinions in Religion

2. Another instance discovering the reign of selfishness in the world is the great power that it has to form men's opinions and conceptions in religion. Though the understanding is naturally

> inclined to truth, yet a selfish bias upon the soul—especially upon the will—does commonly delude it, and makes the vilest error seem to be truth to it, and the most useful truth to seem an error. The will has much command over the understanding; and when selfishness is become the very habit, the bias, the nature of the will, you may easily conjecture how it will pervert the understanding.

But what need we more than experience to satisfy us? Do you not see that where self is but deeply engaged, the judgment is bribed or overmastered, and carried from the truth? So that, as the eye that looks through a colored glass sees all things as if they were of the same color as the glass, so the understanding that is mastered by a selfish inclination thinks everything is truth that savors of its self-interest. And here I shall offer you some more particular instances.

1. We all see that almost all the world is of that religion or opinion which has the countenance of the government they live under, and of the persons who have the greatest power over their reputation—or at least that which is consistent with their safety, if not their rising and prosperity in the world. The Turks are commonly Mohammedans; the subjects of Rome, Spain, Austria, &c. are generally Papists; those in Denmark, Sweden, Saxony, &c. are generally Lutherans; those of Scotland, England, Helvetia, &c. are commonly Calvinists (as they are called).

I know the power of education is great, and hearing evidence only on one side may bias a well-meaning man. But Papists and Protestants (as to the learned part) have the books of the contrary-minded at hand. And therefore, that opinions should run in a stream, and

whole countries almost be of one party, must needs be much from the power of selfishness, because they are swayed by those who have power over their reputation, estates, and liberties in the world.

2. Moreover, when a man by custom is grown self-conceited, or by the power of pride is wise in his own eyes, how hard a matter do we find it to convince such men by the clearest evidence! They will not see, when they can hardly wink so close as to keep out the light. It is *their* opinion, and therefore shall be so; and they will hold it because it is their own.

3. Especially if it be an opinion of a man's own invention, which is doubly his own, both as he is the contriver and the possessor, how closely will he stick to it—too commonly beyond the evidence of truth—because self has so great an interest in it?

4. Yea, if a man is but deeply engaged for it, either by laborious disputes, or confident owning of it, or any way so as that his credit lies on it, how tenacious will he be of it because of the powerful interest of self!

5. And if it be an opinion that seems to befriend any former opinion that we have much engaged for, how much does selfishness usually appear in our inordinate propensity to it!

6. Also, if we live in days of persecution, how easily do we receive those opinions that would keep us from prison and fire? Or if any suffering lies upon it, we commonly take that side to be right which is safest to the flesh (except when self would be advanced by the occasion of sufferings). And in prosperity, if there be any controversy that arises in which our gain is concerned, how

easily do we believe the thriving opinion? If any oath, engagement, or duty be imposed on us by those who have power to do us harm, the generality are for it, be it what it will. In all these cases it is commonly carnal self that is the judge.

And how far self commands in such cases, you may see by these discoveries following.

1. In studying the case, men's thoughts run almost all one way. They study what to say for their own opinions, and how to answer all that is against them; but they study very little what may be said on the other side. They sit at their studies with a biased will, inclining or commanding their understanding what to do—even to prove that to be true which they would have to be true, whether it be so or not.

2. And hence it is that the weakest arguments on their own side seem sufficient, if not invincible; and they stand wondering at the blindness of all those men that cannot see the force of them. But no arguments seem to have any weight that are brought against them. And all this is from the power of self.

3. Yea, sometimes when they are silenced and know not what to say for their opinions, nor how to answer the arguments for the contrary, yet they can say, *We are of this mind, and we will be of this mind.* And why, but because it is espoused to them and their own?

4. And hence it is that if a man is but an admirer of us, or of our own opinion in other things, we are readier to receive an opinion from him than from another.

5. And hence it is that disputations so seldom change men's minds, because they take it to be a dishonor to be changed by another (unless it be a person of great renown). We envy to an opposite the glory of altering our understandings; but if we may have the doing of it ourselves, by the power of our own understandings and studies, we will sometimes yield to change our minds.

He is a stranger to the ungodly world that sees not how much self-interest does to master their understandings and turn their hearts from the holy doctrine of Christ, and how much it does to make them like or dislike their teachers, or any point or practice in religion. And he is a stranger, even among divines themselves, that sees not the sway that self bears in their judgments, and disputes, and course of life, and the choice of their party or society to which they join themselves.

CHAPTER VI.

Men's great averseness to costly or troublesome duties.

3. Another discovering instance of the rarity of self-denial is this: the great averseness of men to any costly, or troublesome, or self-denying duty—how necessary soever, how plainly soever revealed in the Scripture, and how generally soever acknowledged by the Church. As if self had a negative voice in the making of laws for the government of the world, and none

must be binding without its consent. I shall come down to some more particular instances.

4. The great duty of charitably relieving our brethren in necessity to the utmost of our power is commonly made almost nothing of in the world. And men cheat their souls by thinking they are passed from death to life because they love the brethren with such a cold and barren love as will neither lay down estate for them nor venture life for them, but think they are sure Christians because they can say, as the believers that James mentioneth, *Depart in peace: be you warmed and filled,* but give them not that which is necessary thereto (James 2:16).

Though it be told them plainly by Christ himself that it is not a fruitless, ineffectual love, but that which causes them to feed and clothe and visit the saints, that must stand them instead at judgment (Matt. 25), and though the Apostle asks them how the love of God can dwell in that man that sees his brother have need and shuts up the bowels of his compassion from him (1 John 3:17), yet men think that by dropping now and then a penny they have discharged all this great duty. And when they see many ways by which they might promote the Gospel, help the Church, and serve God with their estates, yet self will not let them see the meaning of the plainest Scriptures that require it.

2. When men should practice the great duty of forgiving injuries, trespasses, and debts, and of loving our enemies, blessing them that curse us, and praying for them that hate and persecute us—how stubbornly does selfishness resist these duties! What abundance of words may you use in vain with most men to

persuade them to any of this work? No: they must have their right, and that which is their own, though it be to the undoing of their brother.

Passion and revenge even boil within them, and the thoughts of an injury stick in their minds; and if they do take on them dissemblingly to forgive it, yet they cannot forget it, nor heartily love a brother that displeases them—much less an enemy. And all this is from the dominion of self, and shows that it prevails above God in the soul, and therefore shows a graceless heart.

3. When the Ministers of the Gospel themselves should be painstaking in their great and necessary work, and should watch over all the flock (Acts 20:28), warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that they may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Col. 1:28), condescending to men of the lowest sort, and teaching them in season and out of season—what reasonings and shifts will self bring in to resist so great and excellent a duty, and prove it to be no duty, and that God will give them leave to spare their pains? And all because of the powerful interest of self.

4. And let the same Ministers have a disordered flock that has scandalous members, especially if they be great ones or many, and how rarely will they do their duty to them in plain reproof; and, in case of impenitency and continuance in sin, by public admonition and rejection? What shiftings and cavillings will they find against this displeasing work of discipline—even when they will reproach a man themselves whose opinion is against

discipline, and when they have preached and written and disputed so much for it?

Almost all parties are agreed of the necessity of it in the substance; yet when it comes to practice, it cannot be done without procuring men's hatred and opposition, and laying us open to much incommodity; and therefore self persuades us to forbear. And whether God or self has the more servants even yet in a reformed ministry, I leave you to judge as your observation of the congregations through the land shall direct you.

But were it not for self, I would undertake to do more for discipline and personal instruction with most Ministers by one argument, than I have done by a volume; and you might see an unanimous concurrence in the work, and consequently a great alteration in the Churches.

5. And whence is it but from selfishness that plain and close application in our sermons is taken to be an injury by those that think themselves concerned in it? If a Minister will speak alike to all, and take heed of meddling with their sores, they will patiently hear him; but if he make them know that he means them in particular, and deal closely with them about their miserable state or against any special disgraceful sin, they fall to railing at him and reproaching him behind his back, and perhaps they will say they will hear him no more.

O, says the selfish ungodly wretch, *I know he meant me today: had he nobody but me to speak against?* As if a sick man should be angry with the physician for giving directions and medicines to him in

particular, and say, *Had he nobody to give physic to but me? Were there not sick men enough in the town besides me?*

When Christ told the despisers of the Gospel of the certain and dreadful destruction that was near them (Matt. 21:41, 44–45), it is said that *when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spoke of them!* (A heinous business!) And therefore they sought to lay hands on him, but they dared not do it for fear of the multitude.

6. Nay, let a Minister preach but any such doctrine as seems consequentially to be against self, and to conclude hardly of them, and they are ready to say as Ahab of Micaiah, *I hate him, for he prophesies not good of me, but evil* (1 Kings 22:8). Let us but tell them how few will be saved; what holiness and striving and diligence is necessary—though we have the express Word of God for it (Heb. 12:14; Matt. 7:13–14; Luke 13:24; 2 Pet. 1:10)—yet because they think it makes against their carnal peace, they cannot abide it.

Plain truth is unwelcome to them because it is rough, and grates upon the quick, and tells them of that which is troublesome to know. Though they must know their sin and danger and misery, or else they can never escape it, yet they would rather venture on hell than hear the danger. And as a foolish patient, they love that physician better who will tell them there is no danger and let them die, than him who will tell them, *Your disease is dangerous; you must bleed or vomit or purge, or you will die.*

O what a wrong they take it to be told thus! If a Minister tell one of them who has the death-marks of ungodliness in the face of his

conversation, *Neighbor, I must deal plainly with you: your state is sad; you are unsanctified and unjustified, and in the slavery of the Devil, and will be lost forever if you die before you are converted and made a new creature; and therefore turn presently as you love your soul,* it is ten to one that he should receive a reproachful answer instead of thanks and obedience. And all this shows that self bears the rule.

I will give one instance from the Gospel that will tell you plainly the power of self. In Luke 4:20ff you read of an excellent sermon preached by Jesus Christ himself, so that all wondered at his gracious words; yet few were converted by it. They fell to cavilling against him because of his supposed parentage and breeding. Whereupon Christ tells them that Elijah and Elisha, though most excellent prophets, were sent but for the sake of a few; and therefore it was no wonder if, of all that multitude, it was but a few that should be converted and saved by him.

This very doctrine so nettled these wretches that the text says (vv. 28–29), *All they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong*. See what entertainment such doctrine had, even from Christ himself! As if they should have said, "What! are we all unconverted and ungodly? Shall none be saved but a few such as you?" Self was not able to bear this doctrine; they would have had his life for it.

7. Again, let but a Minister or private Christian deal closely with ungodly men or hypocrites about their particular sins by private

reproof, and see whether self be not lord and king in them. O how scurvily they will look at you! Their hearts presently rise against you with displeasure, and they meet you with distaste and passion, and plead for their sins, or at least excuse or extenuate them; or bethink themselves what they may hit you in the teeth with of your own.

Or if malice itself can fasten nothing on you, they let fly at professors, or those whom they think are of your mind and way. In a word, they show you that they take it not well that you meddle with them and will not let their sin alone. Yet God has expressly commanded us (Lev. 19:17), *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him.* And in Heb. 3:13, *Exhort one another daily while it is called today, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* And Matt. 18:15–16.

Try but plain dealing with your neighbors one twelve-month with as much prudence and love and lenity as will stand with faithfulness; and when you have done, I dare leave it to yourselves to judge whether God or self has the more servants in the world, and whether self-denial and sanctification be not very rare.

8. Yet further, you see it is the duty of Christians to admonish and faithfully reprove one another; but because most men take it ill, and plain dealing will displease and lose a friend, how few even of professors will be brought to perform it—even of those who expect a Minister should reject the offender when it cannot be done until after admonition and impenitency thereupon. No:

this is a troublesome duty, and self will not give them leave to do it.

9. Moreover, you know that Church government and discipline is an undoubted ordinance of Christ which the Church has owned in every age (though in the execution some have been negligent and some injurious), and that open scandalous sins must have open confession and repentance, that the ill effects may be hindered or healed, and the Church see that the person is capable of their communion, and that the absolution may be open and well grounded.

And yet let any man (except the truly penitent and godly) be called after a scandal to such a necessary confession, and how hardly are they brought to it? What cavilling shall you have against the duty? They will not believe that it is their duty—no, not they! And why so? Is it because it is not plainly required by God? No, but because it tends (they think) to their disgrace; and self is against it.

And when you have shown them such reasons for it that they cannot answer, yet the sum is: they will not believe it; or if they believe it, they will not do it. *What! will they make themselves the laughingstock and talk of the country? No, they will never do it.* And it is an injury, they think, for God or man to put them upon it.

God commands, and self forbids. God bids them yield, lest they perish in impenitency; self bids them not yield, lest they shame themselves before men. God persuades, and self dissuades—and which is it that most commonly prevails? (Though to avoid the shame of excommunication, self also will sometimes make them yield.) Did but the Magistrate, by a penalty of ten or twenty pounds

upon refusers, persuade them to this, not one of a hundred would then refuse. But when God urges them with the threatening of hell, the wages of impenitency, they make little or nothing of it—as if they could escape it by not believing it, or some way or other deal well enough with him.

Judge by the performance of this one duty whether God or self has more disciples.

10. Lastly, let me instance in one duty more. Suppose a deceitful tradesman, or an oppressing landlord, or anyone who has gotten unlawfully from another, is told from the Word of God that it is his duty to make restitution—either to the person, or to his posterity (or to God by the poor, if neither can be done)—and to give back all that ever he thus unjustly came by, though he has been possessed of it (without disgrace) never so long. See what entertainment this doctrine will have with the most.

Self will not lose the prey that it has got hold of, until death shall wring it out of its jaws, and hell make them wish they had never meddled with it, or else had penitently and voluntarily restored it. O what abundance of objections has self against it! And no answer will satisfy from God or man. Of a thousand unjust getters, how many do restore, and say as Zacchaeus, Luke 19:8, *Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.*

Nay, let us instance in a duty of lesser self-denial than this of restitution. If two do but fall out, and one give railing words to the other; or if one slander his neighbor and do him wrong—though it be undoubtedly the will of Christ that he penitently ask forgiveness of

him whom he has wronged (Luke 17:3–4)—yet proud-hearted selfish men will refuse it.

What! Will they stoop to such a fellow and ask him forgiveness (especially if he be their inferior)? No; they scorn it. Never talk to them of it more; they will never do it.

And why so? Would not God have them do it? Has not he said, *He that humbleth himself shall be exalted*? Yea, but what do you tell them what God says, and what Scripture says, as long as self, and flesh, and pride are against it?

Judge now by these ten duties that I have named, whether God or self be king with most.

CHAPTER VII.

Men's exceeding tenderness of Self in case of any suffering.

4. Another discovering instance of the dominion of self, and the scarcity of self-denial, is the exceeding tenderness of ourselves in any case of suffering, and the great matter that we make of it, and our displeasure against all that are the causes of it, be it never so just. I shall here also give you some more particular instances.

5. When did you ever see an offender (at least very few) that justified the judge, and heartily confessed that his punishment is due—unless some few at the gallows, when the sight of death takes down their pride? But for the most part, everyone that suffers for his fault does repine at it, and at them that caused it, and thinks he has wrong or is hardly dealt with. If all the swearers, cursers, profaners of the Lord's day, drunkards, or ale-sellers that reset them, or are otherwise guilty, were accused by their neighbors and punished by the magistrate but according to the law—how many of all these is there that would not be displeased with the accusers and with the magistrate, and think himself wronged, and bear them a grudge in his mind that did it?

And why so? Is it not just and according to the laws of God and man? Must we make a stir in choosing Parliament-men? And must they sit there month after month, and use their utmost skill and diligence to make such laws as are necessary for the common good? And when all is done, must not these laws be executed? Why then, it were better to spare the Parliament-men the labor of sitting about them, and ourselves the trouble of choosing Parliament-men, than do all this for nothing.

What—is every ale-seller, or drunkard, or swearer, or profane person wiser than all the Parliament and the Prince? Or are they all better, and juster, and honester than they? No; but it is self that stands up against all. It is in vain to tell them of kings, or parliaments, or laws, or common good, as long as you go about to cross the flesh, and trouble them in their private interest. Set but self against all, and all goes down before it as nothing. There is scarce a thief or murderer

that is hanged, but thinks he has hard measure; because it is against himself.

2. Nay, it is not only penalties, but words, that men are very sensible of, if they be but against themselves. An angry or disgraceful speech, or any contempt or disrespect, does seem a great matter against them; and they have aggravations enough to lay upon it. So tender are they of themselves, that you may see how little they deny themselves.

3. Yea, God's own corrections seem so heavy to them, that they murmur and are impatient under them. A little loss or cross to self lies as a mountain on them. Poverty, or sickness, or disgrace, or troubles, make them complain as if they were almost quite undone. And all this shows how little they have learned to deny themselves.

CHAPTER VIII.

The partiality of men's practical judgment in their own case.

5. Another discovering instance of the dominion of self is the strange partiality of men's practical judgments when the case is their own, and the equity of their judgments when the case is another man's.

For particular instances of this, you may take up those that were mentioned before. I will give you but a few.

1. Take but a dull and backward minister (for I know you will expect I begin next home), and he that is most averse to particular instruction, and discipline, and self-denying duties, will be content that another man should perform them, and will commend and extol him for a worthy man—except he perceive that another's diligence disgraces his selfishness and negligence, and then indeed he may possibly repine at it.

2. A man that will not come near us to be instructed or catechized, will yet let his children or servants come. Why—what's the matter? Does he more regard their salvation than his own? Or has he not a soul to save or lose as well as they? And has he not need of teaching? Yes: but they are not himself. If they learn a catechism, it is no trouble to him. If their ignorance be opened, he takes it to be less dishonor to him than if he show his own. He can yield to their submission without self-denial, but not to his own.

3. Take a common glutton or drunkard, that cannot forbear but must needs have that which the flesh desires, and they can be content that another man be temperate and sober: and if a neighbor should have the cup before him, as they have, or a provocation to their appetite, they could be content that they let it alone; yea, they can tell them that it is the best way, and give them good counsel. And yet when the case is their own, it is otherwise. I have known drunkards that would persuade their children to take heed of it; and swearers that would whip their

children for swearing; and persons that will not read or pray, that would be content to have their children do it. And why is all this? Why—that which goes by *their own* throats must cost them self-denial in the displeasing of their greedy appetites; but that which goes by the throat of another costs them nothing. Self is not so much against *their children's* abstinence and reformation as against their own.

4. The same magistrate that will not trouble himself and displease his neighbors by suppressing alehouses and punishing vice, will perhaps be content if it were done by another—so that self might have none of the trouble and ill will.

5. Some men that will not instruct their families nor pray with them morning and night, will confess it is well done of others that do it. Yea, some that will not be persuaded to a holy, heavenly life, will confess it is the best and wisest course, and approve of it in others, and wish they might but die in such men's case. And yet they will not themselves be brought to practice it. They will commend Peter, and Paul, and the Fathers, and the Martyrs for a holy life, and, as I said, keep holy-days for them, and yet will not be persuaded to imitate them. And why so? Why—it costs them nothing to commend holiness in others; but to practice it themselves must cost them self-denial.

6. If another man be so ingenuous as to forsake an old self-espoused opinion, which their reputation seems to lie upon, and this upon their arguing, or in conformity to their minds, they will commend his great self-denial and sincerity. But yet they

will not do so themselves, where the case is perhaps more clear and necessary.

7. Take a man that is never so worldly and unmerciful, that gives not to the poor any considerable part of his estate, nor does anything worth the mentioning for the Church; and yet this man will consent that another shall be as bountiful and charitable as he will. When you can hardly screw a groat out of his purse, he will be content if another will give a hundred. And he will commend the liberal, and speak well of them, when he will not imitate them. And why is this? Why—it costs him nothing for another to be liberal; and therefore he can advise it, or consent to it, without self-denial: but self is against it when he should do it himself.

8. Take the most selfish unsanctified man, that cannot love an enemy, nor forgive a debt or a wrong, and he will yet commend it in another, and advise them to it, and speak well of those that will do so by him. And why is this? Why—it costs him nothing to have another man love an enemy, or forgive a debt or wrong; but he cannot himself do it without self-denial.

9. Those men that love not to be touched themselves by the minister's application, can yet endure well enough that others be dealt as sharply with as may be. And they are glad to hear any sharply reproved whose sins they dislike. The covetous man loves to hear us reprove the drunkard; and the drunkard is content to have the covetous reprehended. Erroneous professors, dividers, and hypocrites hate the minister that reprehends *their own* sin, and can scarcely endure to hear him,

but say, *He is bitter,* or *a persecutor,* or *raileth at the godly* (alas that wickedness should have so impudent a plea!). But they can freely give us leave to deal as plainly as we will with the openly profane. Scarce any sect can endure you to speak against their own mistakes; but you may speak as freely against the contrary-minded as you please. How easily can Papists endure one to speak against Protestants? Or Anabaptists endure one to speak against infant baptism? And the openly profane can well enough endure to have sects and schismatics and heretics reproved. And why is all this, but from the dominion of self, and the scarcity of self-denial in the world? To have another rebuked toucheth not self, and therefore may be borne.

The poor man loves to hear us preach against the vices of the rich, and to reprehend the luxury of gentlemen and the cruelty of oppressors. The subject too often loves to hear the rulers' faults laid open. The countryman loves to hear the courtiers', the ministers', but especially the lawyers' faults laid open. Here you may speak freely: but self must be let alone, upon pain of their displeasure and many a reproach.

10. So also in case of personal close reproof: those that cannot endure it themselves, do think it the duty of others to endure it, and expect that others should submit to them. And if any will say, *Neighbor, I thank you for your plain and friendly dealing, and having so much compassion on my soul as to help to save me from my sins: I confess I am a vile unworthy sinner; but by the grace of God I will do so no more: or if I be any more overtaken, I pray you tell me of it, and let me not alone in it*—I say, if another should answer them thus and thank them for

their reproof, they would think the better of him and take it well. But yet they will not do so themselves; for it costs self nothing to have another submit and humble himself.

So those that are most backward to the admonishing of others, lest they lose their love, can like to have a minister or another do it: for that does not put them to deny themselves.

12. Nay, take a scandalous professor that is drawn to public confession as a bear to the stake, and if it were another man's case, he would think it but reasonable and meet, and would persuade him to it. If another had committed the same sin against God as he has done, or had slandered or wronged him, and would freely, without urging, confess in the congregation with tears in his eyes, that he has sinfully provoked God, and offended the Church, and wronged his brother, and laid a stumbling block in the way of the ungodly and the weak, and dishonored his holy profession, and is never able to make satisfaction for such heinous sins, and is unworthy any more to be a member of the Church and to have any communion with Christ or them; and should earnestly entreat them to pardon him, and pray for him, and retain him in their communion, and entreat God to pardon him—would not the stander-by think this were well done, and a better way to his recovery than to refuse it? And all is, because self is not touched in another man's case; unless he apprehend it likely to become his own, and then he may be against it, and scorn at this as too precise a course.

13. Take also the extortioner, or any man that has defrauded or injured another, and that will not be persuaded to make

restitution of all that he has got amiss: and let this man hear of the case of Zacchaeus, and he will say, *It was well done.* Or let another's case be propounded to him, and he can tell them that, *Restitution is the safest way: whatever it cost you, it is fit that every man should have his own.* Self will give him free leave to consent to another man's restitution, but not to his own.

14. Moreover, suppose that persecution were afoot, and a man must either knowingly sin against God, or lose his estate, and part with all that he hath in the world, and burn at a stake for the cause of Christ: the selfish unsanctified person will not be persuaded that this is his duty, or at least, he will not be persuaded to submit to it. He cannot suffer nor burn. He will trust God with his soul, rather than men with his body (as such speak that despise God, and reject him, and prefer the world before him, and call this trusting him). But if this were another man's case, they could tell him that it is better to displease men than God, and that it is better to venture a short life than an endless life, and that it is little profit to win all the world and lose his own soul, and that it is the wisest way to make sure work for eternity, and not to venture on endless misery. And they could consent that *another* should rather suffer than sin. Why else do they commend the martyrs for it?

And what is the reason of this strange partiality? Why—self is the great ruler, and God hath but the name. Self is partial in their own cause, but not in another man's; and therefore they can consent to his suffering without self-denial. And hence comes the difference.

15. Moreover, when offenders murmur at their punishment, ask but the standers-by, and they are of another mind. When the ale-seller thinks he is wronged if he be put down, ask but the poor women whose husbands used to be drunk there, and whose children lack meat and drink and clothes, because the alehouse devours that which should buy them, and they will be quite of another judgment, and think you love not God nor the country if you will not suppress them.

16. Also, when you hear men extenuating their sin and excusing it, put but the case as another man's, and let them not understand that it is their own, and you shall hear another judgment. So Nathan came about David, and put but a far lower case as another's—about the robbing of a poor man of his only sheep—and he could presently say and swear, *As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die, because he had no pity,* and his anger was greatly kindled against the man (2 Sam. 12:5–6). But why was he not as angry with himself for a greater sin? O—self had got the better in that grievous fall, until grace broke his heart by true repentance. So when Judah heard of Tamar's fornication, he commanded, *Bring her forth that she may be burnt* (Gen. 38:24). But when he understood that it was by himself, the case was altered.

17. Let a man that is provoked by injuries and ill words have as bad by himself done or spoken against another, and he can make but a small matter of them, or think they should be easily put up or pardoned; when yet the same words spoken against him do seem intolerable.

18. Let a man speak with others in poverty, sickness, or any affliction, and what good counsel can he give them to submit to God and take all patiently! But let the suffering be his own, and he cannot take the counsel that he gives.

19. Nay more: men are not only partial for themselves, but for any that are near themselves, or that self is related to. Let another man's son or servant do evil, and you can be content that he be rebuked or corrected. But if it be a son, or kinsman, or servant of your own, the case is altered; it is then a wrong to punish him, because of his relation to you. Let a stranger do amiss, and you can give way to justice. But if the drunkard, or ale-seller, or swearer be your friend, then he must be borne with and forgiven, and the justice must be entreated for him.

Let a scandalous or insufficient Minister or Schoolmaster be offered to any place: if he be a stranger, you can be content that he be rejected; but if he be a kinsman, or child, or friend of yours, what an alteration doth this make in the case! Then he must be borne with, or tried, and you hope he will mend; and his faults are made the least of, and his virtues more than indeed they are.

Nay, any man that doth but love yourselves and honor you, and think highly of you, shall have a more favorable construction for all his words, and actions, and intentions, than one that you imagine is against you, or hath low thoughts of you, or is against your interest or your opinion.

Sirs, I have run into abundance of instances, but not a quarter so many as might be given; and all is to meet with the turnings and windings of this serpent, Self, and to let you see (if light itself can

make you see, against the blinding power of Self) how rare self-denial is in the world, and what a large dominion Self obtaineth.

I would here have added some more Discoveries, as:
6. From the excessive care, and cost, and labor that almost all the world is at for Self, and the little they are at for God or the good of others.
7. The large proportion that is expended on Self, in comparison of God and others.
8. The zeal of men to vindicate Self, but the little zeal for God or others.
9. The rigorous laws that are made in the cause of Self (thieves and traitors must die), and the remissness of law-givers in the cause of God: blasphemy, malignity, and impiety are not so roughly handled.
10. The firmness of men to carnal Self, and their great mutability and unfaithfulness to God.

But I had rather omit somewhat than be too tedious; and therefore I go no further in these Discoveries, save only to add a few of those Aggravations that show you the extent of Self's dominion, as you have seen the sad discoveries of the reality of it.

CHAPTER IX.

The great Power and Prevalency of Selfishness Discovered.

And that you may see what cause we have for our lamentation: consider the greatness of selfish tyranny in these particulars.

1. **Consider what a power it is that Self beareth down in the world.**
   The commands of the God of heaven are overcome by it. The promises of eternal life are trod underfoot by it. The threatenings of endless torments are nothing to it. It casts by heaven; it ventures upon hell; it tramples upon the precious blood of Christ. It will not hear the voice of wisdom itself, nor the voice of goodness and mercy itself. It refuseth him that speaks from heaven. Love itself is not lovely where Self is judge. It quencheth all the motions of the Spirit. It despiseth ministers. It turneth mercies into wantonness and sin. Like Samson, it breaks all bonds that are laid on it; and till it be weakened itself, there is no holding, no ruling, no saving the soul that is ruled by it.

2. **Consider also the exceeding number of its subjects.**
   Truly, if there were no other proof that the sanctified and the saved are very few, this one is so full and sad a proof that it tempteth me sometime to think them much fewer than willingly I would do. Alas, how few self-denying persons do you meet with in the world—yea, in the Church—yea, among the stricter professors! Look over all the world and see how few you can find at work for anyone but for carnal Self.

If you observe the courts and see whose work is done most there; and look into the armies of the world and see who it is that ruleth there; if you look upon the affairs of nations and the wars of princes and their

confederacies and see who it is that rules in all—how little will you see (save here and there) but carnal Self? It is Self that makes the cause and manageth it. It is Self that maketh wars and peace.

Come down into our courts of justice, and whose voice is loudest at the bar, but Self's? And who is it commonly else that brings in the verdict? at least, who is it else that made and followeth on the quarrel? How many causes hath Self at an Assize, for one that God hath?

Come lower into the country, and who is it that plows and sows? Who is it that keeps house or shop but Self? I mean, what else but carnal Self is the principle? What else but carnal Self is the end? What else but the will of Self is the rule? And what else but selfish commodity or pleasure or honor are the matter—or some provision that is made for these? And consequently, what else but self-respect is the form? For the end informeth the means as means; and therefore all that is done for Self is self-service and self-seeking.

In a word, as God is all in all to the sanctified, so Self is as all in all to the ungodly. And alas, how great a number are all these!

3. **Consider that it is a sin that is nearer us objectively than any other sin; and the nearer, the more dangerous.**
   Alas, that a man should turn his own substance into poison and feed upon it to his own destruction! If you have drunk poison, you may cast it up again, or nature may do much to work it out; but if your own blood and humors and spirits be turned into venom, that should nourish and preserve your life, what then shall expel this venom and deliver you?

4. **Moreover, it is the most obstinate disease in the world. No duty harder (except the love of God) than self-denial.**

   O how many wounds will Self carry away and yet keep life, and heal them all! How commonly do we convince some carnal gentlemen that one thing is needful, and that it is a better part than earth and honor and sensuality that must be chosen, or else they are undone; and that the more they have, the more they must forsake, and the more self-denial is required to their salvation; and that all their lands and wealth and honors, and all their wit and parts and interest must be at the service of their Maker and Redeemer; and that when they have all in the world that they can get, all must become nothing, and God must become all; their treasure must become dross and dung, and Christ must become their treasure, or they are lost.

I say, how often do we convince men of all estates of these important, evident truths? And yet this Self is still alive and keeps the garrison of the heart; and all that we can have from most of them is, as the rich man, Luke 18.23–24, to be very sorrowful that they cannot have heaven at easier rates, and that Christ will not be a servant unto Self, or that they cannot have two masters! They go away sorrowful (but away they go) because they are rich; which makes Christ say upon this observation, *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God?*

But when the disciples were troubled at his observation, he lets them know that it is Self, and not riches, that is indeed the deadly enemy. It is the selfish who trust in riches, and love and use them for themselves, and deny not themselves, and devote not all to God, that

will be kept out of heaven by them. Or, in Christ's own words, Luke 12: *It is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God*. Conquer Self and conquer all.

5. Moreover, Self is the most constant malady; the sin that doth most constantly attend us. Many actual sins may be laid by, and we may for the time be free from them. But selfishness is in the heart, and lives with us continually. It parts not from us sleeping or waking. It goes to the worship of God with us. It will not stay behind in the holiest ordinance. It will not forbear intermixing itself in the purest duties, but will defile them all. So that above all sins in the world, it is this that must have the strictest, constantest watch, or else we shall never have any peace for it.

6. Yea, this Self does lamentably survive even in the sanctified soul, among the special graces of the Spirit, and lamentably distempers the hearts and lives of too many of the godly themselves. Not that any godly man is selfish in a **predominant** sense, or that Self is higher or more powerful in his heart than God—for that is a contradiction: such a man cannot be a godly man without conversion. But yet the very remnants of conquered Self—what a smoke do they make in our assemblies, and what a noisome scent in the lives of many godly men!

What a stir have we sometimes with those whom we hope are godly, before we can get them to an impartial judgment; to lament their own foul words or other miscarriages, and to humble themselves, or freely to forgive another that has wronged them—especially to confess disgraceful sins in any self-denying manner? How closely do

they stick to their own conceits? How lamentably do they improve them, to the contempt of ministers, and to the trouble and division of the Church? How wise are they in their own eyes, and how hardly do they yield to any advice that crosses Self? How hardly are they brought to any dear and costly duty? How much do they indulge their appetites and passions? And how cheap a religion do many think to come to heaven with!

We can scarcely please some of them, they are so selfish: either because we cross them in their opinions or in their ways, or because we allow them not so much special countenance and respect as Self would have, or deny them something which Self desires. If they have any use for us, if we leave not more public or greater work which God has set us on, and allow them not that part in our time or labors, or other helps, which God and conscience will not allow them, they are offended and take it ill that Self is not preferred before God and the public service. Their selves are so dear to themselves that they think we should neglect all to serve them.

Let the most useful minister live in a place that has the plague or other contagious mortal sickness; and most that are visited will take it ill if the minister come not to them, though they know that his life is hazarded by it, and that his loss to the whole Church is more to be regarded than the content or benefit of particular persons; and it is not the pleasing of them, nor their benefit by him then, that will countervail the Church's loss of him. What is this but too much preferring Self (I hope not habitually, but in that act) before the Church and honor of God?

Let a minister or any other man resolve to bestow all that God has given him for His service, on the poor or on pious uses: perhaps he shall displease as many as he pleaseth, because he has not enough for all. And if he give to nineteen, the twentieth will say, *"He passed by me; and I am never the better."* And thus this insatiable, unreasonable Self will hardly be pleased.

And among the godly, how much does it prevail! O how many ministers in England can tell by sad experience how much of Self survives in professors: so much that we can hardly rule them or keep them from breaking all to pieces, and every man running his own way. The ruin of England's expected Reformation, the fall of our hope in too great a measure, the multiplying of sects, the swarms of errors, the rage against the faithfullest ministers, the neglect of discipline, and obstinate refusal of penitent confessions and humbling, self-denying duties; the backwardness to learn, the forwardness to be teachers; the high esteem of weak parts and weaker grace; the commonness of backbiting, censuring, and slandering—especially those that are not of their fond opinions; the rising designs of many; the tenderness of their reputations; the contendings for preeminence—all these, with many others, do too loudly tell the world how much of Self, and how little self-denial, is in many that seem godly.

7. But yet this is not the highest discovery of the power of carnal Self. Though it is sad to think that it should be so potent in any that have grace, yet it is sadder to think that it has too much power in the wisest and most learned Magistrates and Ministers, who should be the greatest enemies of it in the rest.

A Magistrate, as a Magistrate, is for the common good. Political societies consisting of Sovereign and Subject are therefore called *Commonwealths*, from the final cause, which is the common good or weal of all; so that it is essential to a Magistrate to be for the common good. And yet Self creeps in and makes such work with many of them, that it is hard to judge whether it has left them the essence of the Magistracy, and whether they should be called Magistrates or no.

But yet it is sadder still, that the learned, godly preachers of self-denial should have so little of it as too many have. Alas, that Ministers do not remember how ill Christ took the first contendings among His disciples, who should be the greatest; that they do not imprint upon their minds the image of Christ's setting a child before them, and afterward girding Himself and washing their feet. I think those men that make a sacrament of this do err much less than those who forget it. And I suspect that our contrariety to this example will tempt some ere long into the contrary extreme, and it may be set up as a sacrament indeed.

O woeful case, to be daily lamented by all the compassionate members of the Church: that the learned, zealous pastors of it are the leaders, fomenters, and continuers of her divisions; and when they have opportunity to seek for healing, they want a will. Such a measure of Self survives in them, that though God calls to them for peace and unity, and the bleeding Church is begging it of them on her knees, yet Self has such power over them that God is not heard, and the Church cannot be regarded; but peace, and piety, and all must be sacrificed to the will and interest of Self. As if they were the priests of Self, and the honor of God and the peace of the Church were the daily sacrifice they have to offer!

Not a motion can be made for reformation or unity, but some selfish Ministers rise up to strangle it under pretense of mending the terms. Not a consultation can be held, but Self creeps in—yea, openly appears—and ravels the work, and will needs be the doer of all that is done, or nothing must go on that is done against it.

O blessed Nation, if self-denial were more eminent and predominant therein! O precious Ministry, and great and honorable, if we truly sought our honor in the habit of children, and by being the servants of all! O happy Churches, abounding in holiness and peace, if once the pastors and people were better skilled in the practice of self-denial!

I must confess, to the praise of God's grace, that many such Ministers and people I have had the happiness to converse with; and how sweet the fruit has been both to them and me, both they and I are ready to confess. But one self-seeking, unmortified Minister is enough to disturb a whole society, and break the good endeavors of many. And alas, how many such are abroad, that talk of almost nothing but their opinions, or parties, or carnal interests; and are not in the harvest as reapers to gather, but as wild beasts that are broken in to make spoil, or as Samson's foxes to set all on fire—running up and down from country to country with firebrands at their tails and stings in their mouths, which they call by the reverend name of *Zeal*.

But you may think I have been long in discoveries, aggravations, and complaints; and therefore I will go no further in that sort of work, but only adjoin these three or four practical consectaries following.

CHAPTER X.

Some Weighty Consectaries.

Consect. 1. So common and potent is selfishness in the world, that it is enough to convince a rational, considerate man of the truth of the doctrine of the fall of man, and of original corruption, against all the objections that all the Socinians or Pelagians in the world can make against it. He that thinks that God made man in this distempered, distracted state that selfishness holds the world in, has unreasonable thoughts of the workmanship of God. He that sees even children, before they can speak or go, so selfish as they are, and all mankind without exception to be naturally as so many idol-gods in the world, and can believe that this is the Image of God in which they were created, does make the image of Satan to be the image of God. No wiser, no better is the doctrine that denies original sin, when Self has such a tyrannical, universal reign in all the world.

Consect. 2. So deep-rooted, and powerful, and universal is this abominable vice, that it must teach us what to expect in all places we live in, and may help us to make the truest prognostics, or the most probable conjectures, of any mutations where the will of man is like to be the determiner. Know but once where self-interest lies, and you may know what almost all men will endeavor, and might write a probable prognostication of the changes that are like to be in states and kingdoms, and anywhere in the world—were it not for the interposition of two greater powers that have gotten the victory over Self: that is, Grace, and Divine over-ruling Providence. I say, were it

not that these step in and cross Self and hinder its designs, you might foresee in self-interest the changes that are made in human affairs.

Consect. 3. And so potent and common is the dominion of Self that it may warrant an honest, moderate incredulity and jealousy of almost all men, in cases where the interest of Self is much concerned. Let him be never so ingenuous, let his parts and profession be never so promising, let his former engagements to you be never so great, let him be your own brother—yet be not too confident of him, if his carnal Self be concerned or engaged against you. For you shall see by experience, as long as you live, that Self will still bear dominion in the most.

Consect. 4. Above all, every wise and godly man should herein maintain the greatest jealousy of his own heart. *Keep the heart above all keepings;* and keep out Self above all sins whatever. Take heed of selfishness, as ever you would be Christians, and live as Christians, and have the peace of Christians. And to that end, be always suspicious of every cause, opinion, controversy, or practice where Self is much concerned. The very names of *SELF* and *OWN* should sound in a watchful Christian's ears as very terrible, awakening words, that are next to the names of *Sin* and *Satan,* and at least carry in them much cause of suspicion.

And this has led me up to the next Use of the Point.

CHAPTER XI.

Use 2. To try our self-denial: the sincerity of the least degree.

Use 2. Of Exhortation.

Beloved hearers, I have now before me as great a sin and danger to deter you from (even selfishness and its effects) and as great a duty to offer to your entertainment (even self-denial) as any (save one) that I am acquainted with in the world. The raising up of the soul to God is indeed the greatest work: but the mortifying of the flesh, and the denying of self, is surely the next to it, being a real part of the change.

You hear Ministers tell you of the odiousness, and danger, and sad effects of sin: but of all the sins that ever you heard of, there is scarcely any more odious and dangerous than this; and yet I doubt there are many that never were much troubled at it, nor sensible of its malignity. My principal request therefore to you is, that as ever you would prove Christians indeed, and be saved from sin and the damnation that follows it, take heed of this deadly sin of selfishness, and be sure you be possessed with true self-denial: and if you have it, see that you use and live upon it.

And for your help herein, I shall:

1. Tell you how your self-denial must be tried; and
2. How it must be exercised; and
3. Give you some further reasons to persuade you to it; and
4. Some directions for procuring and strengthening it.

5. **The trial of your self-denial** may be performed by the help of the signs that have been given you before. In the ten particulars mentioned in the beginning, you may see what is selfishness, and what is self-denial. But for your further satisfaction, I shall only tell you in a few words, how the least measure of true self-denial may be known. And, in one word, that is thus:

Wherever the interest of carnal self is stronger and more predominant habitually than the interest of God, of Christ, of everlasting life, there is no true self-denial or saving grace. But where God's interest is the strongest, there self-denial is sincere.

If you further ask me, *How this may be known?* Briefly thus:

1. **What is it that you live for?** What is that good which your mind is principally set to obtain? And what is that end which you principally design and endeavor to obtain, and which you set your heart on, and lay out your hopes upon? Is it the pleasing and glorifying of God, and the everlasting fruition of him? Or is it the pleasing of your fleshly mind in the fruition of any inferior thing? Know this, and you may know whether Self or God has the greatest interest in you. For that is your God, which you love most, and please best, and would do most for.

2. **Which do you set most by?** The means of your salvation and of the glory of God, or the means of providing for Self and Flesh? Do you set more by Christ and holiness, which are the way to God? or by riches, honor, and pleasures, which gratify the flesh? Know this, and you may know whether you have true self-denial.

3. **If you are truly self-denying, you are ordinarily ruled by God, and his Word and Spirit, and not by carnal Self.** Which is the rule and master of your lives? Whose word and will is it ordinarily that prevails? When God draws, and self draws, which do you follow in the tenor of your life? Know this, and you may know whether you have true self-denial.

4. **If you have true self-denial, the drift of your lives is carried on in a successful opposition to carnal Self,** so that you not only refuse to be ruled by it, and love it as your god, but you fight against it, and tread it down as your enemy. So that you go armed against Self in the course of your lives, and are striving against Self in every duty; and as others think it then goes best with them when Self is highest and pleased best, so you will know that it then goes best with you when Self is lowest and most effectually subdued.

5. If you have true self-denial, there is nothing in this world so dear to you, but on deliberation you would leave it for God. He that has anything which he loves so well that he cannot spare it for God, is a selfish and unsanctified wretch. And therefore God has still put men to it, in the trial of their sincerity, to part with that which was dearest to the flesh.

Abraham must be tried by parting with his only son. And Christ makes it his standing rule, *"He that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple"* (Luke 14:33). Yet it is true that flesh and blood may make much resistance in a gracious heart; and many a striving thought there may be, before with Abraham we can part with a son, or before we can part with wealth or life. But yet, on

deliberation, self-denial will prevail, and there is nothing so dear to a gracious soul which he cannot spare at the will of God and the hope of everlasting life.

If with Peter we should flinch in a temptation, we should return with Peter in weeping bitterly, and give Christ those lives that in a temptation we denied him. For habitually God is dearest to the soul.

6. In a word, true self-denial is procured by the knowledge and love of God, advancing him in the soul to the debasing of self. The illuminated soul is so much taken with the glory and goodness of the Lord, that it carries him out of himself to God, and as it were estranges him from himself, that he may have communion with God. And this makes him vile in his own eyes, and abhor himself in dust and ashes. He is lost in himself; and seeking God, he finds himself again in God.

It is not a Stoical resolution, but the love of God and the hopes of glory that make him throw away the world, and look contemptuously on all below, so far as they are mere provision for the flesh.

Search now, and try your hearts by these evidences, whether you are possessed of this necessary grace of self-denial. O make not light of the matter, Sirs, and presume not of it till you find good grounds. For I must tell you that self is the most treacherous enemy, and the most insinuating deceiver in the world. It will be within you when you are not aware of it, and will conquer you when you perceive not yourselves much troubled with it; and of all other vices, it is both the hardest to find out and the hardest to cast out: the hardest to discover, and the hardest to cure.

Be sure therefore in the first place that you have self-denial; and then be sure that you use it and live in the practice of it. And for this I must give you more particular advice.

CHAPTER XII.

In what respect self must be denied.

II. And here I beseech you, take heed of Self in all these following respects.

1. You must deny Self as it is opposite to God, and a competitor with him, and the idol of the soul and of the world; and this is in all the ten respects which I mentioned in the beginning, and therefore shall not now rehearse. And this is the principal part of self-denial.

2. Self must be denied as it is conceived as separated from God, and would be an end in a divided sense from God. For ourselves and all things else are created, contingent, dependent beings, and must not be once thought of as if we were either our own beginning, or end, or in any capacity but subservient unto God. Self becomes a Satan when it would cast off its due subordination to God, and would be any other than the workmanship of God—depending on him, ruled by him, living to him, loving him, desiring him, and seeking after him, and either mourning when we miss him, or rejoicing when we find communion with him.

3. Self must be denied as it stands up against the truth of the Gospel, and blindly and proudly quarrels with that word which faith relies upon for justification and salvation. Carnal self is both the most incompetent judge of the Word of God and of spiritual affairs, and also the most forward, arrogant, and audacious, for all it is so incompetent. And this is the damnable fountain of unbelief.

That self is an incompetent judge of the Word and ways of God is evident. For:

1. It is a natural enemy to them; and an enemy is no competent judge (Rom. 8:7): *"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be."* Deny therefore this enemy the power of judging the Word of God. Ill-will never speaks well. Enmity is credulous of all evil, and overlooks the good, and is accompanied with false surmises, and wrests every word, and suspects or makes an evil sense where there was none. There is not a worse expositor in the world. And therefore no wonder if such a nature of enmity can find matter of quarrel with the very Scripture itself, and with a holy life—yes, with God himself; for it is him especially that the enmity is against.

2. Moreover, self is a party, and therefore an incompetent judge. It is self that the Scripture principally speaks against. All over the Gospel there are the words of disgrace, and the arrows of death directed against the very heart of carnal self. God there proclaims and manages an open war against it. And shall a party be the judge? Shall the traitorous delinquent be the judge? A child will hardly speak well of the rod, whatever he do by the corrector; but it's not to be expected that a thief should love the halter or the gallows. God's Word is the weapon that self must be slain by; and therefore self is an incompetent judge of it.

3. Moreover, self is quite blind in the matters of God: *"The natural man discerneth them not, neither can he, because they are spiritually discerned"* (1 Cor. 2:14). And the ignorant and blind are incompetent judges.

4. And the selfish man is no good student in the Laws of God. Even when he reads the letter, he does not mind or savor the spirit of them (Rom. 8:5): *"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."* A fair world it would be, if every collier should judge the Privy Council and the Judges of the land! Or if every thief should sit upon his accuser and his judge, and every traitor should judge the prince. And a thousand-fold more insufficient is self to judge the Word of God.

And yet, as insufficient as it is, it is exceedingly arrogant, and steps up into the judgment-seat at every CHAPTER that is read or heard. And if this blind and malicious judge be unsatisfied, forsooth the Scripture must be dark, or contradictory, or what he pleases. This horrible presumptuous arrogancy of self is it that has opened so many mouths against the blessed doctrine of salvation, and made so many wretched apostates in the world, and cast so many others into doubtings of that Word by which at last they must be judged, and which should have been the ground of their faith and hope.

4. Moreover, self must be denied as it stands up against the Lord Jesus Christ. When Christ is presented in his wonderful condescension—in his incarnation, and mean despised life, and in his ignominious death—proud self is offended at so low a Savior, and disdains that humiliation which his own necessities required, and despises Christ because he became despised and a man of sorrows in our stead.

When he is proposed as the remedy of a miserable soul, and as our only life, and righteousness, and hope, self seduces the soul to

undervalue him. It will not easily be convinced of so much misery as to need such a remedy; it is too well to value such a physician; it is too righteous to value the righteousness of a Mediator; it has too much life and hope at home, in its own supposed innocence or sufficiency, to set much by the hopes that Christ has purchased, and to live in him.

O down with self, that Christ may be Christ to you. How shall he come in, while self is the porter that keeps the door? How shall he pardon you, when self will not suffer you to feel the want and worth of pardon? How shall he bind up your hearts, when self will not suffer them to be broken? How shall he clothe you with his righteousness, while self keeps on your own defiled, rotten rags?

Down therefore with self, that Christ may be exalted. Away with your own conceited righteousness, that he may be your righteousness. Down with your selfish, foolish wisdom, that the supposed foolishness of God may be your wisdom. Level this mountain which Satan has built up in enmity against the holy mountain of the Lord.

5. Moreover, Self must be denied as it is the great resister of the Holy Ghost. The sanctifying Spirit has no greater enemy—at least, except the Devil himself. One half of the work of sanctification is to destroy this carnal self. And therefore, no wonder if from hence it finds the chief resistance. Not a holy motion can be made to the soul but self is against it. No work has the Spirit to do upon us, but self is ready to gainsay it, and contradict it, and work against it. Whenever therefore this mortal principle is contending against the Spirit of God, dishonoring holiness, dissuading you from duty, persuading you to

sin—down with it, and deny it, as you would be true to the Spirit and to yourselves.

6. Moreover, self must be denied as it traitorously complies with the enemies of Christ and your own salvation: when it takes part with Satan, and pleads for sin, and says as wicked men say, and enters a conspiracy with all that would undo you—and all this under the pretense of your own good. Whenever it speaks for sin, you may be sure it speaks against God and you; and therefore, it is reason you should deny it. Self also must be denied when it rises up against the supposed tediousness or difficulty of duty: when it grudges at a holy life, and says, *"What a stir is here? What a weary life is this? What do I get by serving God?"* Now self is playing the traitor against God and you; and therefore deny it.

7. Moreover, when self rises up against sufferings, and makes you believe that they are intolerable, and that it is unreasonable for a man to forsake all that he has for fear of a sinful word or deed, when we sin every day even when we have done our best—it is time now to stop the mouth of self; for it plays the Devil's game against God and you, and would persuade you to prefer a short, uncertain, miserable life before eternal life, and to give up yourself to willful sin because God bears with the sins of men's infirmity. It is reason that you should deny so unreasonable an enemy to God and to you.

8. Moreover, self must be denied when it stands up against the ordinances of God. When it pleads against the arguments of the Word, and finds fault with the Law that it should obey, and quarrels with prayer and all holy duties, and would make all instituted means ineffectual for your saving good—it is time now that you deny it.

9. When self rises up against the officers of Christ, and would make you believe your teachers fools and you are wise; that they are beside the truth, and you are in the right; or that they speak against you out of malice or singularity, or some such distemper, and so would deprive you of the saving benefit of their doctrine and office—it is time now to deny self, if you know but what belongs to your peace. And though I grant that you must not follow a teacher into a certain sin and error, yet when it is not God but self that rises up against your teachers, and possesses you with a spirit of bitterness, disobedience, contradiction, and malignity, this self must be denied.

10. Lastly, as self is against the good of our neighbor or human societies, it must be denied. For we must love our neighbor as ourselves: that is, both self and neighbor must be loved in a due subordination to God, as means to his glory; and in this notion of a means, the love should be equal—though there is also a natural love, in order to self-preservation, put into us by the Creator, which our love to every neighbor is not to equal in degree. Yet our love to societies should exceed it; and our love to a neighbor should come so near it that we should *diligere proximum proxima dilectione*—love him with the nearest love—love him as a second self, and so study his welfare as to promote it to our power, and not to covet or draw from him for ourselves, nor do him any wrong. This is the sense of the tenth Commandment, and the sum of the second Table.

CHAPTER XIII

I. Selfish Dispositions must be Denied; and, 1. Self-love

HAVING seen in what respects and upon what accounts it is that self must be denied, I am next to tell you the particulars of that selfish interest that must be denied, and the parts that are contained in this needful work.

And here you must remember what saving faith is, that seeing how self opposeth it, you may know wherein it must be denied.

'Saving faith is such a belief in Christ for reconciliation with God, and the everlasting fruition of him in glory, as makes us forsake all the things of this world, and give up ourselves to the conduct of the word and Spirit, for the obtaining of it.'

When a man can strip himself of all the pleasures, and profits, and honours of this world, first in his estimation, and love, and resolution, and then in the actual forsaking of them at the call of God, because of the firm belief and hope that he hath of the fruition of God in glory, as purchased and promised by Jesus Christ; this is a Christian, a disciple of Christ, a true believer, and none but this. And (as I have told you) as God in unity, and Father, Son and Holy Ghost in Trinity, is the object of our saving faith, so carnal self in unity, and pleasure, profits and honours in trinity must be renounced by all true Christians; as being that which we turn from, when we turn to God. So that, in brief, to deny yourselves doth generally consist in denying all your own dispositions and interests whatsoever, as they are against God the Father, Son or Spirit, or stand not in a due subserviency to him. And this interest which you must deny, consisteth in your pleasures, profits and honour; of these therefore I shall speak distinctly, though but briefly.

I. You must begin at the denial and mortification of your corrupt and selfish disposition, or else you can never well deny your selfish interest. It is not enough to keep under this selfishness by denying it somewhat that it would have, but the selfish inclination or nature itself must be so far mortified and destroyed, that it shall not reign as formerly it did. For this which we call selfishness is not your very persons, nor any spiritual or right natural desire of your own good; but it is the inordinate adhering of the soul to yourselves, by departing from God, to whom you should adhere, and so a carrying over God's interest and honour to yourselves. Holiness is an inclination and dedication to God, by which two we are said to be separated to him: and wickedness is an inclination, and addictedness or devotedness to ourselves above God, or as separated from God; and this inclination, disposition or separation of man to himself instead of God, is it that I call self or selfishness; and this self must itself be destroyed as to the predominant degree.

And therefore let us first observe wherein this selfish disposition doth consist, which must be destroyed; and then secondly, wherein the selfish interest doth consist that must be denied.

And first, the selfish disposition consisteth in these several parts that follow.

1. The principal part of it consisteth in an inordinate self-love. This is a corruption so deep in the heart of man, that it may be called his very natural inclination, which therefore lieth at the bottom, below all his actual sins whatsoever; and must be changed into a new nature, which principally consists in the love of God. This is original sin itself, even in the heart of it. This speaks what man by nature is;

even an inordinate self-lover; and as he is, so he will act. In this, all other vice in the world is virtually contained; even as all grace is in the love of God; which made the schoolmen say, that love is the form of all grace; not as they are this or that grace in particular; not of faith as faith, nor of hope as hope; but of faith, hope, &c. as vital or gracious acts. Because the respect to the end is essential to the means as a means; and therefore the respect to God as the end, is essential to faith, hope, &c. as a means to him: and therefore that grace (of love) which is terminated on the end, must have an essential participation, concurrence or influence on those that are directly terminated on the ways or means, and must convey somewhat of its very essence to them; and so far as they partake of that essence of love, so far are they indeed those special graces which carry the soul to God its end. And in this sense we may allow the distinction between 'fides,' 'spes,' &c. 'formata charitate' (which is true Christian faith and hope), and 'fides,' 'spes,' &c. 'informis' (which is but an opinion and a dream). And so it is in the body of sin; when self-love doth reign, it is the heart of wickedness: and though every sin hath its own specific nature, yet all are virtually in self-love, and are so far mortal, or prove men graceless, as they are informed by the essential communication of self-love; for self being the end, informeth all the means as they respect it. I say the more to you of this, because indeed it is a weighty truth, for the right understanding of the true nature of grace and sin; and I doubt many are in the dark for want of understanding and considering it. A man that feareth and loveth God, and an unsanctified man may be both overtaken with the same sin; perhaps a gross one, as Noah's, or David's and Peter's was; and this may be a mortal sin in the ungodly, I mean, such as proves him in a state of death, and yet not so in the gracious person. The wicked

will deride this in their ignorance, as if we made God partial; but it is no such matter. The Papists cannot endure it, but suppose Peter, David and Noah, were quite without the love of God, and so were again unsanctified men; but this is their error. It was not from the power of reigning self-love, and the habitual absence of the love of God, that these men (or any saints) did sin, but from a particular act of mortified self-love by a surprise upon the neglect of the actual exercise of the love of God. But all the sins of unsanctified men, or at least their common sins, are from the habitual reign of self-love, and the habitual absence of the love of God; and therefore the sins of the saints are, as the schoolmen speak of the graces of the ungodly, unformed: they be not mortal sins in the sense aforesaid, because they be not naturalized, informed, animated by the malignity and venom of the mortal end and principle, which is habitual, reigning self-love: but those of the wicked are sins informed by this inordinate self-love as an habitual, reigning sin; and therefore being animated by its malignity are mortal: yet say not that this makes God partial, and not to hate the same sin in one as he doth in another. For two things must be taken in, 1. Where the heart is sanctified, such sins are strangers: perhaps one godly man of ten or twenty may be guilty of one of them, as Noah was of drunkenness, once in all his life (since his conversion); for it will not stand with grace to live in them; for such as a man's love, and inclination, and nature is, such will be the drift of his life. And would not you have God make a difference between those that sin once, and those that live in it? 2. Besides, will not any honest man make a great difference of the same acts according as they come from different hearts? You will not take a passionate word from a father, husband or wife, so ill as the same word from a malicious enemy. If an unthrifty son should spend you

twenty shillings wastefully, you will not prosecute him as you would do a thief or an enemy that takes it from you violently. Wilful murder and casual manslaughter have not the same punishment by the law of the land. If you will make such a difference yourselves of the same words or deeds as they come from different meanings and affections, quarrel not with God for doing that which you confess is just and necessary to be done.

The faculty where this disposition is principally seated, is the will; which in man is the heart of morality, whether good or evil. And the principal act is an inordinate adhesion of man to himself, and complacency in himself: and this is the inordinate self-love that must be first mortified.

2. The next faculty that self hath corrupted, is the understanding; and here we first meet with the sin of self-esteem, which is the second part of selfishness to be mortified. It is not more natural for man to be sinful, vile and miserable, than to think himself virtuous, worthy and honourable. All men naturally overvalue themselves, and would have all others also overvalue them. This is the sin of pride. But of this I must speak by itself.

CHAPTER XIV

Self-conceitedness must be Denied

3. THE next part of selfishness to be mortified, is in the same faculty, and it is called self-conceitedness. And it consisteth of two parts: the first is a disposition to selfish opinions or conceits that are properly

our own. And the second is to think better of those conceits than they do deserve.

1. Naturally men are prone to spin themselves a web of opinions out of their own brain, and to have a religion that may be called their own; and it is their own in two respects; 1. Because it is of their own devising, and not of God's revealing or appointing. 2. Because it suiteth with their own carnal ends and interests. Men are far readier to make themselves a faith, than to receive that which God hath formed to their hands. And they are far readier to receive a doctrine that tends to their carnal commodity, or honour, or delights, than one that tends to self-denial, and to abase themselves, and exalt the Lord.

2. And when they have hatched or received such opinions which are peculiarly their own, they are apt to like them the better, because they are their own, and to value them because of the interest of self. O sirs, that you did but know the commonness and danger of self-conceitedness in the world! Even with many that seem humble, and verily think that it is the Spirit of God that beareth the greatest sway in their understandings, yet self doth there erect his throne! O how secretly and subtilely will self insinuate, and make you believe that it is a pure self-denying light which guideth you, and that what you hold, is merely by the cogent evidence of truth, or the illumination of the Spirit, when it is but a viper that self hath hatched and doateth on, because it is her own. Because the Papists have gone too far in teaching men to depend on the church and on their teachers, therefore self-conceitedness takes advantage of their error, to draw men into the contrary extreme, and make every infant Christian to think himself wiser than his most experienced brethren and teachers,

and every raw, unstudied Christian to think himself wiser than those that have been searching into the word of truth by study and prayer almost all their days, and therefore to cry down that learning, wisdom and study, which they are unacquainted with; that seeing they have it not themselves, they may at least be thought as wise men without it, as those that have it, and so may provide for the reputation and interest of self. O what sad work hath this great sin of self-conceitedness made in the world! In too many places men make it their religion to strive who shall be greatest for wisdom and abilities in the eyes of men! and it is the very work of their prayers, and conference, and teaching to exercise self-conceitedness, and to make it appear that they are somebody in knowledge; hence is it that they are so apt to fall upon novelties which either few receive, or none before themselves devised, that being singular, self may be the more observed, and they may have something which may be called their own. Hence also it is that they are so little suspicious of their own opinions, never bending their studies impartially to try whether they are of God or not, but rather to maintain them, and to find out all that can be said for them, and against the contraryminded. Hence is it that men have such light and contemptuous thoughts of the judgment of those that excel them in knowledge, and that the voice of Corah, and those other conspirators (Numb. 16:3.), is grown so common in the mouths of ignorant proud professors. "Ye take too much upon you (say they to their guides and teachers) seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" It is the holiness of the congregation, and all its members, and the presence of God himself among them, that is pleaded against the superiority of Moses and Aaron, as if with so holy a people, that

had God himself to be their Teacher and Guide, there were no need of men to be lift up above the congregation of the Lord; but it was self that was intended, whatever was pretended. From this self-conceitedness also it is that the weightiest common truths that self hath no special interest in, are so little valued, and relished, and insisted on; and that a less and more uncertain point which self hath espoused, shall be more relished, insisted on, and contended for; hence also is most of the common confidence of men in their own opinions; that when the point is doubtful, if not certainly false, in the eyes of wiser men than themselves, yet "the fool rageth and is confident," Prov. 14:16. He can carry on a conceit of his own with as brazen a face, and proud contempt of other men's arguments, as if he were maintaining that the sun is light, and other men pleaded to prove it dark, when, alas, it is self-interest that is the life, the strength, the goodness of the cause. Hence also it is that men are so quarrelsome with the words and ways of others, that they can scarce hear or read a word, but these pugnacious animals are ready to draw upon it, as if they had catched an advantage for the honouring of their valour, and were loath to lose such a prize and opportunity for a victory and triumph: hence it is that hissing at the savings and doings of others, is the first, and most common, and most sensible part of their commentaries; and that they can make heresies and monsters not only of tolerable errors, but of truths themselves if they have but the inexpiable guilt of crossing the wisdom of these self-conceited men. Hence it is that opinions of their own are more industriously cultivated and studiously cherished, by a double if not a tenfold proportion of zeal and diligence, than common truths that all the godly in the world have as much interest in as they, though the common truths be incomparably the greater. And hence it is that

men are so tenacious of that which is their own, when they more easily let go that which is God's; and must have all come to them, and every man deny his own judgment, except themselves; and that it must be the glory of others to yield to them, and their glory to yield to none, but to have all men come over and submit to them. All these are the fruits and discoveries of self as it reigns in men's understandings, who possibly may think that it is Christ and the Spirit that is there exalted.

Yet mistake me not; I do not say or think that a man should forsake a certain truth for fear of being accounted self-conceited, nor that he must presently captivate his own understanding to a more learned man, or the stronger, or more numerous side, for fear of being self-conceited. Much less must I deny that grace of God that hath made me savingly wise by his illumination, that was formerly foolish, disobedient, and deceived in the days of my ignorance. The world must give us leave to triumph over our own former folly with Paul (Tit. 3:3–7); and say with the same Paul, that we were no better than mad when we were enemies to the Gospel (Acts 26:11.), and with the man in John 9:25, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." It is no self conceitedness for a man that is brought from the blind distracted state of sin, into the light of the sanctified, to know that he is wiser than he was before; and that he was formerly besides himself, but now is come to his understanding again. Nor is it any self-conceitedness for the meanest Christian to know that a wicked man is more foolish than he; or for a minister or any man that God hath caused to excel in knowledge, to hold fast the truth he knows, and to see and modestly oppose the errors of another, and to know that in that he is wiser than they. God doth not require that we shall turn to every man's opinion, and reel up and down from sect to sect,

and be of the opinion of every party that we come among, and all for fear of thinking ourselves wiser than they. David knew he had more understanding than his teachers (Psal. 119:98, 99.); and true believers fear not to say, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness;" 1 John 5:19. 3:19. 2:3. And Paul would not forbear the reproving of Peter, for fear of being thought to be self-conceited; Gal. 2. Some men are so desperately self-conceited that they take every man to be self-conceited that is not of their conceits.

But when self is men's instructor, and chooseth their text, and furnisheth them with matter, and nothing is savoury but what is either suited to the common interest of self, or which it hath not a special interest in; when men are absolutely wise in their own eyes, and comparatively wiser than those that know much more than they; when self-interest serves instead of evidence to the receiving, retaining, or contending for a point; when men think they know that which indeed they do not know, and observe the little which they do know, more than an hundredfold more that they are ignorant of; doubtless here is self-conceitedness with a witness; and they that will not see it in a lower degree, methinks should see it in such a case as this. He that will not believe that a man is drunk when he reels and stammereth, may know it when he lieth spewing in the streets.

Well, sirs, I beseech you see that self in the understanding be mortified and pulled down. It is the throne of God, the lanthorn of holy truth, the temple of the Spirit, and shall self rule there? The understanding is it that guideth the soul and all the actions of your lives; and if self rule there, what a ruler will you have; and what a case will heart and life be in! If your eye be dark, your light be dark,

how great will be your darkness! and if it be selfish, it is certainly so far dark. O believe the Holy Ghost; "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him;" Prov. 26:12. For a mere fool that is ignorant only for want of teaching hath no such prejudice against the truth, as the self-conceited have; nor is it so hard to make him know that he is ignorant, nor yet to make him willing to learn. He that knoweth himself to be blind, is willing to be led. Moreover the self-conceited have much to unlearn, before they can be fit to receive the truth in a saving manner. O how many thousands are undone by self-conceitedness! It is this that keeps out knowledge, and every grace, and consequently all true peace and comfort; and this it is that defendeth and cherisheth all sin. Let us shew men the plainest word of God for duty and against sin, and shew them the clearest reasons, and yet self-conceitedness bolts the door against all. Yea, so wonderfully doth this sin prevail, that the ignorant, silly people, that know almost nothing, are as proudly self-conceited as if they were the wisest men. They that will not learn, and cannot give an account of their knowledge, in the very catechism or principles of Christian religion, neither can pray, nor scarce speak a word of sense about the matters of salvation, but excuse themselves that they are no scholars, yet these very people will proudly resist their teachers, though they were the wisest and most learned men in the land. Let us but cross their conceits of doctrine or practice in religion, about their own title to church privileges, or fitness for them, and they are confident and furious against their ministers, as if we were as ignorant as they, and they were the wisest men in the world. So that pride and self-conceitedness makes people mad, or deal like madmen. We cannot humble men for sin, nor reclaim them from it, till they know the sin, and the danger of it. And self-

conceitedness will not let them know it, no, nor let them come to us to be taught; but they are wise enough already; and if we tell them of the sin and danger, they are wiser than to believe the word of God or us! They will tell us to our faces, they will never believe such and such things, which we shew them in the Scripture. O the precious light that shineth round about you all, and would make you wise, if self-conceitedness did not keep it out by making you seem wise already! These men that thus deceive themselves, by seeming wise to themselves, must become fools in their own eyes, if ever they will be truly wise (1 Cor. 3:18); and confess themselves, as Paul himself did, that they were foolish and deceived, when they served their lusts and pleasures; Tit. 3:3. This pride and self-conceitedness is like the barm in the drink, that seems to fill up the vessel, but indeed works it all over: this is the knowledge that puffeth up (1 Cor. 13:4.), like the pot that by boiling seemeth to be filled, that was half empty before, but it is empty in the bottom, and presently boils over, and is emptier than before. So is it with the self-conceited, that have a superficial knowledge, while they are empty at the bottom, and by the heat of pride, that little they have boileth over to their loss. It is the humble that God reveals his secrets to, and the hungry that he filleth with good things, and the full that he sendeth empty away. He will have no disciples that come not to his school as little children, teachable and tractable, not thinking themselves too old, or too wise, or too good to be taught. If you would see the mysteries of the Gospel savingly, you must even creep to Christ on your knees, and cry, "Lord be merciful to me a sinner!" He will not lift up your minds and hearts to heaven, till you think yourselves unworthy to lift up your very eyes to heaven, because you have sinned against heaven. And if you were even lifted to heaven, should you there but be lifted up with pride or

self-conceitedness, you should soon have a prick in the flesh, to let out that dangerous, venomous wind that puffs you up.

And if you should have any knowledge of the most precious truths, as long as you are thus proud and self-conceited, it will not be savoury and effectual on your hearts. Humility feedeth, and pride starveth every grace. The Spirit of God will not dwell with the proud: he will beat you out of yourselves, unless you drive him away from you. Some seeming raptures and comforts the self-conceited have, which are but the deluding flatteries of self, and the encouragements that satan giveth to his servants. (For satan will needs be a comforter for a while, as the Holy Ghost is to the saints; and his followers also have their joys.) But it is the humble soul that hath the solid comforts; from the dust of humiliation, we have the clearest sight of glory, and consequently, the sweet tastes of it. As high as the rain comes from it, it is the lowest vallies that receive it most, and retain it. Faith itself will not prosper in the proud and self-conceited; to such the Gospel will be foolishness or an offence. It is only the humble that savingly close with its mysteries. Humility cherisheth the fear of God, and makes us say, 'How shall we do this evil? or neglect this duty?' But self-conceitedness and pride is blind and bold, and destroyeth in men's apprehensions, the difference between things sacred and common, the holy and the unclean; it disposeth them to such an unreverent boldness with holy things, as usually ends in a profane contempt: so that such can at last despise holy ordinances which they should live upon. Repentance and this pride are deadly foes. To be penitent and proud, is to be hot and cold, alive and dead. Though Christ love not to find you in the dust of earthlymindedness, yet he loves to find you in the dust of humility. The publican that hanged down the head, did hit the way better to the sight of God, than the

self-conceited Pharisee. The most self-denying humiliation is the nearest way to heaven, and the most self-exalting pride is the surest and nearest way to hell. I would rather sit with Mary washing and wiping the feet of Christ, than ask, as the mother of James and John, to sit at Christ's right hand and left hand in his kingdom. Mary was in a manner thanked for the love of her humility; and they were in a manner denied the request that so little savoured of self-denial. Our Lord does not use to thank people for their service, and yet he did that which was next to it, to this humble, self-denying, penitent woman. He doth not use to deny his own disciples an heavenly request; and yet he did that which was next to a denial, when self brought him the petition. He that hath taught us not to press to the highest room, lest with shame we hear, 'Sit lower,' doth hereby tell us what we must expect from himself. And he that hath bid us sit down at the lower end, that we may hear "Friend sit up higher," doth express his purpose for humble, self-denying souls. I had rather from the dust hear his 'Come up higher, than from self-exaltation to hear "Come down lower." O! you that are proud, self-conceited wretches, did you but know what good it doth an humble soul, to feel Christ take him up from the dust, you would soon fall down that you might taste their comforts in his lifting up. O what a blessed feeling it is, to feel one's self in the arms of Christ! Our compassion that makes us run to take up one that falls before us, is a spark of that compassion in Christ. Who meddles with him that walks before us? but a man that falls down in a swoon, we are all ready to lay hands on! O happy fall, that makes us feel the arms of Christ! Though the fall into sin be never the better, that occasioneth it, yet the fall into humiliation is better, that prepareth for it. He that in his agony had an angel to minister to him, will not leave the self-denying humble soul, without

his angel, or some way of relief that is suitable to the necessity. Christ himself will not communicate himself to the proud and self-conceited. He is wisdom, but not to them that are wise in their own eyes already. He is righteousness, but not to them that justify themselves. He is sanctification, but not to those that never found their own uncleanness. He is redemption, but to none but those that feel themselves condemned. He hath the white raiment, and the treasures of grace and glory; but it is only for those that penitently feel that they are poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. Truly sirs, though I have no mind to trouble the well-grounded peace or comfort of any of your souls, yet I would advise you, if you have never so good thoughts of yourselves, suspect lest it should be the fruit of self-conceitedness; and if you should have never so much peace and joy, look well whether it come from God or self-conceit! And if it come not in against self, it is ten to one but it comes from self. If your peace and comfort be not won from Christ, in a way of self-denial, and as the spoils of the flesh, you have it not in the ordinary way of God. Did you come to your joy and peace by humility, and self-denial, and patience, and mortification, and by becoming little children, and the servants of all, and by learning of Christ to be meek and lowly? If not, take heed lest you nourish a changeling, an imp of hell, and a selfish brat, instead of the fruit of the Spirit, the peace and joy of the Holy Ghost. If you feel no great matter at home to trouble you, you are too righteous to be justified by Christ. If you groan not under your ignorance and unbelief, you are too wise to be Christ's disciples. If you mourn not under the load and pain of sin, you are too well to be Christ's patients. If you are readier to justify and excuse yourselves, than to condemn yourselves, and had rather hear yourselves praised, than reproved, admonished,

or instructed, and like Diotrephes, love to have the pre-eminence, you are too high for Christ to take any acquaintance with you; and too full of self to have any room for his love, and Spirit, and heavenly consolations. He that gave us the parable of the importunate widow (Luke 18:2–5.), would have us understand that bare necessity is not enough to fit us for relief (for then the worst of men should be the fittest), but it must be necessity so felt, as to humble us, and drive us to importunity with God. The prodigal was miserable when he was denied the husks; but he never felt his father's embracements till he came to himself by denying himself, and returning to his father. And this the self-conceited will not be persuaded to. The first that must touch Christ after his resurrection, is not a king, nor a lord, no, nor a man, but a woman that had been a sinner. When she held him by the feet, love did begin low in humility, but it tended higher, and ended higher. Christ hath told us that where much is forgiven, there will be much love. For there is most of the fruits of God's love, and least of self, and most to abase self. It is not possible that love to Christ should dwell or work in any but the humble, that feel at the heart that they are unworthy of love, and worthy of everlasting wrath. The proud and self-conceited cannot love him; for they cannot be much taken with Christ's love to them, except as the Pharisee, in a way of self-flattery. But the poor soul that was lost, will heartily love him that sought and found him; and he that was dead, will love when he finds himself alive; and he that was condemned both by God and conscience, will surely love the Lord that ransomed him! And it is the apprehensions that men have of themselves that much causeth all this difference. The self-abhorring, self-judging, self-denying sinner is melted with the love of God in Christ, because it is to such a worthless, sinful wretch. 'What Lord,' saith he, 'is the blood of Christ,

the pardon of sin, the Spirit of grace, the privileges of a child, and everlasting glory for such an unworthy wretch as I, that have so long offended thee, and so much neglected thee, and lived such a life as I have done, and am such an empty unprofitable worm?' O what a wonder of mercy is this! But the full soul loathes the honeycomb. The self-conceited unhumbled sinner looks as mindlessly at Christ, as a healthful man at the physician, or an innocent man at a pardon.

And that good that is in the proud and self-conceited doth seldom do much good to others (much less to themselves). As such do but serve themselves, so ordinarily God doth not bless their endeavours; but as they are perverted, they are the likest to pervert others, and propagate their self-conceitedness: two words from an humble self-denying man, doth oftentimes more good than a sermon from the self-conceited.

I admonish you therefore in the name of God, that you take heed of this part of selfishness and mortify it. It will else keep out God, and almost all that is good. If you are proud and self-conceited, you will hear a minister rather to cavil with him, than to be edified: and when any thing from God doth cross your foolish wisdom, you will but slight it, or make a jest at it: and if any truth of God do strike at the heart of your selfish interest, you will but fret at it, and secretly hate it, and perhaps, as the devil's open soldiers, publicly reproach it; and as the Jews did against Stephen (Acts 7:54.), even gnash the teeth at the preacher, or as they did by Paul; "They gave him audience to that word (even that word that made against themselves) and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live;" Acts 22:22. This entertainment we

still meet with from our hearers, when self hath brought them the next step to hell.

O sirs, suspect your own understandings; think not of them beyond the proportion of your attainments, nor beyond your experience, and the helps, and time, and opportunities which you have had for knowledge, nor beyond the measure of your diligence for the improving of these; for these are God's ordinary way of giving in a ripeness in knowledge. Read and study Heb. 5:12. 14. 1 Tim. 3:6. Set not up your own conceits too boldly against those of longer standing and diligence in holy studies, much less against your teachers, and much less against a multitude of ministers; and much less against all the church of God; and least of all, against God himself, as speaking to you by the Holy Scriptures. O take warning by the swarms of heresies and scandals that have been caused by self-conceitedness and pride.

Object. 'If you may think yourself wiser than me and others without self-conceitedness, why may not I think myself wiser than you and such others, without self-conceitedness?'

Answ. I may not do it in the cases before-mentioned. I may not think myself to be what I am not, nor exalt myself above them that are wiser than I, nor against my guides, or the church of God.

Object. 'But it is but your conceit that you are wise enough to be a teacher, or wiser than others, and why may not I as well conceit it?'

Answ. No man on his own conceits must become a teacher; but the judicious of that calling must call them, and judge of their abilities. And conceits are as the ground of them is. The true understanding of

the grace that we have received is a duty, and fitteth us for thankfulness; but the false conceit that we have what we have not, is a dangerous delusion; "For he that thinketh he is something when he is nothing, deceiveth himself;" Gal. 6:3. What if a blind man should argue as you do with one that sees, and say, 'You say that you see so far off, and why may not I say so too?' Would you not answer him, 'I know that which I say to be true, and so do not you?' And what if he still go on and say, 'You think that I am blind, and I think that you are blind; and why may not I be believed as well as you?' Would this kind of talk prove the man to have his eyesight, or should it make me question whether I have mine? He that seeth knoweth that he seeth, whoever question it; and if another make doubt of it, let men that have eyes in their head be judges, but not the blind. But I confess, spiritual blindness hath this disadvantage, that whereas I can easily make any other blind man know that he is blind, and therefore be willing to be led or helped, here the more blind men are, most commonly they are the most confident that they see, and scornfully say, as the Pharisees to Christ, "Are we blind also?" John 9:40. For pride will not let them know their ignorance. The same light that cureth ignorance must reveal it. Especially when men are born blind and never knew the saving illumination of the saints, they will not believe that there is any other light than they have seen. But I have been somewhat long on this part; I pass now to the next.

CHAPTER XV

Self-will to be denied

4. THE fourth part of selfishness to be mortified, is self-will. And this is the fruit of self-conceit, and also a natural corruption of the soul;

and a most deep-rooted obstinate vice it is. Every wicked man is a self-willed man, against God, and all that speak for God. And till self be mortified in the will, there is no saving grace in that will.

Quest. 'But what will is it that is to be called a self-will?'

Answ. Not that which is from God and for God; but all the rest. 1. That will that is not fetched from God, and moved by his will, as the lesser wheels in a clock are moved by the first wheel and by the poise, is no better than self-will. A will that is not dependent on God's will, is an idol, usurping the prerogative of God; for it is proper to him to be dependent upon none, and to have a will that is not ruled by a superior will. Little do the most know how great a sin this is, to be self-willed. You have a will to something or other continually; and it is your will that ruleth the rest of your faculties and actions: but what is it that ruleth your will? whence do you fetch the rise and reason of your desires? Is it from God's will, or is it not? You pray to God, "Thy will be done," and do your own wills answer these prayers? or are they hypocritical, dissembling words? If indeed it be God's will that you would have fulfilled, then will the knowledge of that will of God determine your own wills. As a servant dependeth on his master's will, for all the work that he is to do, and doth not what he will himself, but what his master will have him do; and as a scholar dependeth on his master's will, and learneth only such books and lessons as he sets him; so must we depend on the will of God, and know what is his will, before we give way to any will of our own. The reason why you choose any trade or calling, or course of life, should be the will of God. If you are in poverty, and desire to be richer, and that to please your own will, and not that you think that it would be any more pleasing to God, this is self-willedness. If you desire any

change in your condition, if you undertake any thing in the world, know why you do this; whether it be principally because you think it is the will of God, or because it is your own will. I tell you again, you should not have one wish or desire in your souls, till you can prove or find that God would have it so; and if your own wills be made the absolute rulers of your ways, you make gods of yourselves, and God will deal with you accordingly.

2. Yea, if you think the will of God is according to your will, and you are moved the more to it on that account, yet if your own wills do lead and make the first choice, and God's will be brought in but to follow and encourage yours, this is still self-willedness and self-idolizing. This is the common trick of the ungodly. They first give way to their own self-will, and then they will go to Scripture for somewhat to bear them out; and will needs believe that God's is agreeable to theirs, that so they may go on with peace of conscience. They go for counsel to God as Balaam did, not sincerely to know the will of God, with a resolution to obey it, but with a desire that God would conform his will to theirs. I tell you if the matter be never so much commanded in the Scriptures, and never so agreeable to the will of God, Yet if you desire, and do it from yourselves, and not for this reason, because it is the will of God, and do not let God's will lead your own, but let your own will lead, and God's will follow, this is no better than self-willedness, were the matter never so good in itself.

3. If the end that moveth your will, be not the service and glory of God, but only your own interest, this is but self-will. God giveth you leave to look to yourselves as his servants, in a due subserviency to him. But if you will principally look at your own interest, and make

light of God's, and fetch the reason of your will and desires from your own ends and commodity, rather than his glory, this is an ungodly selfish will. And yet alas, how many are there that know not any better frame of will than this! If they were truly to give an account of the principal reason and motive of every desire of their hearts, why they would have this, or why they would do that, must they not confess it is for themselves, because it serveth their own ends or interests, and because it pleaseth their own wills, and not because it furnished them better to serve and please the will of God? If you ask men in their buying and selling, and marrying, and trading, and dealing with men, why it is that they do this or that, can they truly say, 'I do it because I think in this way I can do God the best service, and the church and commonwealth most good, and this is my chief reason?' Alas, I fear they are too few that have any higher principal end and motive than self. Self-will is the spring of their whole conversations, that sets them upon all they do. Nay doubtless, in the very duties of religion, in praying, hearing, reading and the like, they are but serving self, while they take on them to serve God; and their holiest devotions are but such a serving of God, as flatterers will serve their prince or landlord with, merely that he may do them a good turn, and may serve their ends, and be serviceable to them; or else as some Indians serve the devil, for fear of him lest he should do them a mischief. The will that is moved chiefly by self-interest, is a self-will.

4. And much more is it self-willedness, when men contradict the will of God; when Scripture saith one thing and they another; when they disrelish God's laws, and dislike the work that he sets them on; when they have a will to that which God forbids, and would fain be doing with unlawful things; yea, and it doth not satisfy their corrupt desires

to see that the express will of God is against them; this is self-will in a high degree.

5. So also when men's wills are to that which is against the honour and interest of God; which would hinder his Gospel, and the saving men's souls, and is displeasing to him, this is self-willedness in a high degree.

And thus you see what it is to be self-willed. And now do but consider whether this part of self be commonly denied in the world. Among the millions of desires that are in men's hearts, how few of them are kindled by the commands of God, or moved by his interest and glory! How commonly are the word and ways of God distasteful to the world! How ill do men like the disposals of his providence! And what a striving is there in their wills against him! And were it not that God is above them and unconquerable, and they know that striving will not help them, you should have most of the world in open war against the God of heaven; I speak no more than I am able to prove. The dominion of self is so great in the wills of all that are unsanctified, that their wills are utterly against the will of God; and it is merely because there is no remedy that they submit to him so far as they do. These very persons that think they love and serve him as well as the precisest, would be in arms against him before to-morrow, and pull God out of heaven, if it were in their power: or if they had but as much hope to prevail against God, as they have against his servants, what work would be in the world! I know these men will not believe this by themselves: no, self is too strong in them to let them so far know themselves; but the case is plain. For as God himself tells us, that ever since the fall an enmity is put between Christ and this serpentine seed; so we see it manifested by daily sad

experience. How generally is the will of God disliked by the world. What hath God spoke against in his word but sin? and what else hath he commanded his messengers to cry out against? And yet what is there that more pleaseth the minds of the most? And how stubbornly do they resist not only God, but magistrates and ministers that would draw them from it? What is it that God commendeth to the world so much as an holy and heavenly life? And what is the heart of most men more against? and how much do they strive against all our persuasions that would bring them to it? and how obstinately do they resist us, if not deride and scorn that holiness which the will of God hath so abundantly commended to them? His whole word speaks for it; his prophets, apostles, and all his servants are examples of it; his son Jesus Christ in his sacred person, and office, and holy life, hath yet more notably commended it to the world; and it was a principal part of his business in the flesh, to set men a pattern of holiness and self-denial: and yet many scorn it, and hate it, and most dislike it, and even fight against this holy will of God, that is, against God himself, if they had but any hope to get the better. There is no doubt of it, though they will not know so much by themselves. Do you think it is for nothing that God calleth them his enemies, and resolveth them the reward of enemies, even because they would not have Christ to rule over them? Luke 19:27. Doubtless God sentenceth no man unjustly: if he say they are such, and condemn them as such, it is certain that they are such. O but the infinite dreadful God is out of their reach; but they be not out of his reach. Their malice cannot hurt him any more than it can stop the course of the sun; but his displeasure will quickly bring them down. In the meantime, these wretches should consider what a God they have had to do with, that beareth with their malignity. The sun or moon forbear not to shine

even on the dogs that bark at them. Thy rebellious self hath hitherto been maintained by the mercy of that will of God which thou hast resisted; but this patience will not always last: take therefore this necessary advice in time. Down with thine own idolatrous self-will; know not a will or desire in thyself, that is not moved by the will of God, even by his word as thy ground, and his pleasure and honour as thy chiefest end. Destroy that will that springs but from self, and is moved but by the interest of self. Slay it before the Lord as his enemy, as Samuel did Agag. Though an hypocritical Saul will spare this king of rebellion, designed to destruction, yet so will not an obedient servant of God. I will not bid thee offer it in sacrifice to God's will, for it is too vile to be an acceptable sacrifice; but utterly destroy it as the accursed thing. Know not hereafter such a thing within thee as a will that is originally or finally thine own. If the word and the glory of God be the movers of it, thou mayest call that God's will, as well as thine own; it is thine subjectively, but it is God's as the principal efficient and end. O that you did but know what your own wills are, and what they have done against you, and what they may yet do, if they be not mortified! You would not then be so indulgent to them, and pamper and please them, and be so desirous to have your own wills as you have been. To this end I pray you consider but of these particulars following.

1. The will of man is the terrestrial throne of God. It is there that he must reign. The will is to rule all the inferior faculties; and God is to rule the will. And shall self presume to dethrone the Lord, and sit down in his place? He that rules the will rules the man. And shall self be thy ruler? And will God put up all this?

2. It is God only that hath the sovereign authority, and self hath none but under him. We are not our own; and therefore have nothing to do with ourselves but at the will of God that is our owner. Take heed therefore of this usurpation.

3. Thy own will is a corrupt and sinful will, and therefore unfit to be thy governor: what, wilt thou chuse an unjust, a wicked, and unmerciful governor, that is inclined to do evil? Why such is thine own will; but the will of God is perfectly good, that hath not the least inclination to evil, nor possibility of such a thing. Be ruled by it, and you are most certain to have the most just, and holy, and faithful, and merciful ruler in the world. To prefer self-will before the will of God, is as the Jews, to prefer a murderer, Barabbas, before the Lord of life.

4. Moreover, our own wills are guided by a dark understanding: and therefore ready on every occasion to turn aside. Though the will commandeth, yet the understanding guideth it: and therefore as the dark understanding is commonly at a loss, or quite mistaken, judging evil to be good, and good to be evil; so the will must be an unhappy governor, that followeth the direction of so ignorant a counsellor. But if you will deny your own wills, and be ruled by the will of God, you need not fear misleading, seeing his wisdom is infallible and infinite. Chuse not a blind guide then, when you may have the conduct of wisdom itself; when God is content to be your governor, prefer not such foolish sinners as yourselves before him.

5. Moreover, your self-will hath almost undone you already; it hath been the cause of all your sin and misery: never any hurt befell you, or any man on earth, but from self-will. And yet will you follow it

still, and take no warning, as if it had not done enough against you? But on the contrary, you were never hurt in all your lives by following the will of God; unless it be such a hurt as the searching or cleansing of a sore, without which it cannot be healed; or such a hurt as the taking of physic, without which you can have no cure. Tell me if you can, whenever the will of God did wrong you? when did you speed the worse for the following of his counsel? Look back upon your lives, and tell me whether all your smart and loss have come from your following God's will or your own; and which you think you have more cause to repent of.

6. There is none followeth self-will to the end, but is everlastingly undone by it; it leadeth directly to the displeasing of God's will, and so to hell: but on the contrary, there is none that sincerely and finally follow the will of God, that ever do miscarry; he is the safest conductor; he never led a soul to hell. All that follow him, live with him; for whither should he lead them but to himself? And where God is, there is life and glory. To obey his will, is to please his will; and to please him, is our very end. It cannot go ill with them that please the Lord and Judge of all the world, the dispenser of all rewards and punishments.

7. Your own wills are so mutable as well as misguided, that they will bewilder you, and toss you up and down in perpetual disquietness; though I know you think that is the only way to your content, and nothing will content you unless you have your will. But you are lamentably deluded; your wills are like the will of a man in a fever, that would fain have cold water, which pleaseth him in the drinking, but afterwards may be his death. You love that which hurteth you; yea, that which is no better than poison to your souls. You would

soon undo yourselves, if you had your own wills. It is none of the least of God's mercies to you to cross your wills, and to deny you that which you have a mind to. You will not let your children eat or drink what they will, but what you will, that know better what is good for them. A patient can deny his own will for his health, and submit himself to the will of his physician; and should not you much more submit to God? Yea, you should desire him to deny your own wills, whenever he seeth them contrary to his will, and to your own good: had you but the skill of judging aright of God's dealings, I am persuaded that upon the review of your lives, you would find, that God hath shewed you more mercy in the crossing of your wills, than in accomplishing them. Be not therefore too eager for the time to come, to have what you love, till you are surer that you love nothing but that which is good for you, and which you should love. The present contenting of diseased self-will, is but the breeding after disquietness. But in the will of God you may have full and durable content. For his will is always for good, and therefore hath nothing that should cause your discontent. His will is still the same and unchangeable; and therefore will not disquiet you by mutations. He knows the end at the beginning, and sets you upon nothing but what he is sure will comfort you at the last. It belongeth to his will and not to yours to dispose of you and all your affairs. And therefore there is all the reason in the world, that God's will should be set up, and in it you should rest yourselves content, and that self-will should be denied as the disturber of your quietness.

8. Moreover, self-will is satan's will, and stirred up by him against the Lord. How else do you think the devil rules the children of disobedience, but by self-conceit and self-will? If therefore you would deny the devil, deny self-will; for in being ruled by it you are

ruled by him; and in pleasing it, you please him. God himself tells you this in plain expressions, Eph. 2:1–3. They that walk in trespasses and sins, and so are dead in them, according to the course of this world, and in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, these the Holy Ghost there tells you, do walk according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

9. It is the very perfection and felicity of man, to be conformed to the will of God, and to rest with full content therein; and it is the corruption and misery of man, to have a selfish misguided will of his own, and strive against his Maker's will. And so far as you stick in your own wills, and are set upon them, and must have them fulfilled, and cannot rest in the will of God, so far you are still unsanctified and unsaved, and in the power of your great disease. And so far as you are dead to self-will, and look up to the will of God both for direction and content, and will that which he willeth, even because he willeth it, and would have you will it, and can rest your souls in this as full satisfaction. 'It is my Father's will, and therefore best;' so far are you sanctified and restored to God.

10. Lastly, let me tell you, that it is best for you to deny self-will in time, and give your wills to the will of God; for when you have done all that you can, God will have his will, and you shall not have your own will long. You may strive against the will of God, but you shall not frustrate it. You may break his laws, but shall not escape his judgments. You may rebel against his commanding will, but you cannot resist his punishing will. When you have done your worst, it is God's will that must stand; and such a will as is little to the pleasure of your wills. But self-will is never of long continuance; its content is

short. Now you will have your will, let God say what he will to you; you love to please your appetite in meats and drinks; you love to be carnally merry, and spend your time in vain sports and pleasure; you love to be respected and humoured by all, and to be honoured and counted somebody in the world; you love to be provided for, for the time to come, and to be wealthy that you may take out of a full heap, or at least not want for the contentment of your flesh; and therefore you must have your wills, and have that you love, if you can tell how to get it: but how long will you have your wills? How long will you have that you love, though God forbid it? When death comes, will you have it then? When you lie in pain, expecting every hour to appear in another world, will you then have your wills? When you are in hell, will you then have your wills, or that you love? O sirs, self-will is short-lived, as to its delights and pleasure; but the will of God is everlasting. And, therefore, if you take up with your own wills, how short will be your content! But if you look for content in the will of God, you will have everlasting content. Your own wills may be crossed by every trifle; any man that is greater than you can cross them; yea, those that are under you, can cross them. The poorest beggar can rob you, or scorn you, or raise a slander of you, or twenty ways can cross your self-wills; a hundred accidents may cross them. Your very beast can cross you; and almost any thing in the world can cross you; much more can God at any time cross you; and cross you certainly he will: so that in your own wills there is no rest nor happiness. But if you could bring your wills to God's, and take up your full content in this, 'It is the will of God,' then what a constant, invincible content might you have! Then all the world could not disturb you and rob you of your content, because they cannot

conquer the will of God: his will shall be done; and so you should always have content.

CHAPTER XVI

Selfish Passions to be Denied

5. ANOTHER part of selfishness to be mortified and denied, is, selfish passions. The soul is furnished with passions by God, partly for the exciting of the will and other faculties, that they do not sluggishly neglect their duties; and partly to help them in the execution when they are at work: so that they are but the wheels or the sails of the reasonable soul, to speed our motion for God and our salvation, and not to be employed for carnal self. When passions and affections are sanctified and used for God, they are called such and such particular graces, and the fervour of them is an holy zeal; but when they are used for carnal self they are our vices; and the heat of them is but fury, or carnal zeal, and the height of vice. But how rare is it to meet with men that are meek and patient in their own cause, and passionate in a holy zeal for God! I know many are passionate in disputes and other exercises about religion, and think that it is purely zeal for God, when self is at the bottom of the business, and ruleth as well as kindleth the fire, when they scarce discern it, and little know what spirit they are of; but pure zeal for God, conjoined with self-denial, is exceeding rare. How few can say, that their love to God is greater and hotter than their love to themselves! The desires of men are strong after those things that supply their own necessities, and please their own corrupted wills; but how cold are they after the honour of God! How averse are men from that which hurteth the flesh; as to go into a pest-house, or to take deadly poison, or to suffer

any pain; but few are so averse to the breaking of the law of God. A hard word, or a little injury done to themselves, will put them into a passion, so that their anger is working out in reproach, if not in more revenge: but God may be abused from day to day, and how patiently can they bear it! There are few carnal minds but can more patiently hear a man swear, or curse, or scorn at Scripture and a holy life, than hear him call them rogue, or thief, or liar, or any such disgraceful name. It seems an intolerable dishonour with selfish persons that are advanced by pride to be great in their own eyes, for a man to give them the lie, or to reproach their parentage, or make them seem base; but they can hear twenty oaths and reproaches of the truths or ways of God, as quietly and patiently as if there were no harm in them. Their own enemies, whom God commandeth them to love, they hate at the heart; but the enemies of God and holiness, whom David hated with a perfect hatred (Psa. 139:21, 22.), do little or nothing at all offend them. It is not thus with self-denying gracious souls. When David heard Shimei curse him, he commanded his soldiers to let him alone, for God had bidden him; that is, by that afflicting providence on David he had occasioned it, and by the withdrawing of his restraint, he had let out his malice, for a trial for David. Thus David could endure a man to go along by him cursing him, and reviling him as a traitor, and a man of blood, and throwing stones at him: and he rebuked Abishai that would have taken off his head; 2 Sam. 16:7–10. But when the same David speaks of the wicked, the froward, the slanderer, the proud, the liar, and the deceitful, he resolveth that he will not know them, they shall not dwell in his house, nor tarry in his sight; he hateth them; they shall depart from him; he will cut them off, and early destroy them from the land, and from the city of the Lord; Psal. 101. So was it with

Moses: when God was offended by the idolatry of the Israelites, he was so zealous that he threw down the tables of stone, in which God had written the law, and broke them; but when Miriam and Aaron spake against himself, he let God alone with the cause, and only prayed for them; for saith the text, "He was very meek above all the men that were on the face of the earth;" Numb. 12:3. Phineas's zeal for God did stay the plague, and was imputed to him for righteousness; when the selfish zeal of Simeon and Levi was called but a cursed anger, and brought a curse on them instead of a blessing from their dying father, that they should be divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel; and left them the name of instruments of cruelty; Gen 49:5–7.

Take warning then from the word of God; and use your passions for God that gave them you; but when it is merely the cause of self, be dead to passion, as if there were no such thing within you. If the wrong be done to you, think then with yourselves, 'Alas, I am such a silly wretched worm, that a wrong done to me is a small matter in comparison of the least that is done to God; it is not great enough for indignation or passion.' Remember, that it is God's work to right your wrongs, and your work to lament and hinder the abuse of God. And therefore if men curse you, or revile you, or slander you, if God's interest in your reputation command you to seek the clearing of it, then do it, but not for yourself, but for God: but otherwise, be as a dead man that hath no eyes to see an injury, nor ears to hear it, nor heart to feel it, nor understanding to perceive it, no, nor hands to be revenged for it: this is to be mortified, and dead to self. When passion begins to stir within you, ask, 'What is the matter? who is it for? and who is it that is wronged?' If it be God, ask counsel of God, what he would have you to do, and let your passion be well guided

and bounded, and then it will be acceptable holy zeal: but if it be but self that is wronged, remember that you are not your own; and therefore take no thought of the business, but leave God to look to his own, and do with it as he please: if you are his, your cause is his, and therefore let him look to it that is concerned in it more than you, and that hath said, "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay."

CHAPTER XVII

Self-imagination to be Denied

6. ANOTHER part of self to be mortified and denied, is self-imagination. It is the selfishness of men's thoughts, that is the vanity of their thoughts; and these are the imaginations that are only evil continually. The thoughts should be let out on God and his service; so that our meditation of him should be sweet, and we should delight in the Lord (Psal. 104:34.); and in the multitude of our thoughts within us, his comforts should delight our souls (Psal. 94:19.). His word should be our meditation all the day (Psal. 119:97. 99.); and in his law we should meditate day and night (Psal. 1:2.). God should be the spring, the end, the sum of all our thoughts; if we find a thought in our minds that savoureth not of God, yea, that is not sent by him, and doing his work, we must disown it, apprehend it, and cast it out. But alas, how contrary is the case with the most! As self is advanced highest in their imagination, so doth it there attract and dispose of the thoughts. What are all the thoughts of unsanctified men employed for, but for themselves and theirs? Their fantasies hunt about the world; but it is their own game and pleasure that they range about. The thoughts of one man run upon his covetousness, and another man's upon his filthy lusts, and another man's on his

sports and pleasures, and another man's upon his honour and reputation with men! They feed the imaginations of their mind upon almost nothing but selfish things; sometimes delighting themselves with the very thoughts of men's esteem of them, or of their worldly plenty, or of their sinful lusts and pleasures; and sometimes troubling themselves with the thoughts of their wants, or low condition, or crosses, or injuries from men; sometimes contriving how they may attain their desires, and carking and caring for accomplishing their selfish ends: morning and evening, at home or abroad, as the thoughts of the sanctified are on God, and heaven, and the way thereto, so the thoughts of the unsanctified are all upon self, and the interest of self, and the means thereto. O cleanse your minds, sirs, of this great self-pollution; keep them more clean and chaste to God. Deny self this room in your imaginations, and waste not thoughts and precious time, on such unjust and unprofitable employment. It is an impertinency, to be so much solicitous about the charge of God, and to care so much when he hath bid us "be careful for nothing." It is a debasing of our minds to feed them so long on so low an object, when they might be taken up with God. Care not therefore what you shall eat or drink, or wherewith you shall be clothed; for after all these things do the selfish unsanctified Gentiles seek; and our Father knoweth that we have need of all these things: but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you; Matt. 6:31–33. Self doth but rob you of the fruit of your thoughts which you might reap by feeding them on God.

CHAPTER XVIII

Inordinate Appetite to be Denied

7. THE last part of self to be denied, is your inordinate appetites, excited by the senses, commonly called the sensitive appetite. These are not to be themselves destroyed; for the appetite is natural and necessary to our welfare: but the inordinate desire is to be denied, and the appetite restrained, and no further satisfied than is allowed by the word of God; and by this means the inordinacy of it may come to be mortified. Though selfishness hath defiled the whole man, yet sensual pleasure is the chief part of its interest, and therefore by the senses it commonly works, and these are the doors and windows by which iniquity entereth into the soul. And therefore a principal part of self-denial consisteth in denying the sensitive appetite.

Quest. 'But how far is this appetite to be denied?'

Answ. 1. Whenever it craveth any thing that is forbidden: this is past doubt. It must not be pleased to the disobeying of God. 2. When it enticeth us towards that which is forbidden, and would be feeding on the baits and occasions of sin; unless the thing desired be necessary, it is here to be denied. For sin and hell are dangers that no wise man will draw too near to. 3. Whenever the pleasing of the sense conduceth not to God's service, and doth not fit or furnish us for our duty, it is unlawful.

Quest. 'But may not the creatures be received for delight as well as for necessity?'

Answ. It is an ill-expressed question; as if delight itself were never necessary. Necessity is either absolute, as of those things without which we cannot be saved; or it is only to our bettering and the

greater securing of our salvation; and so it is taken for that which is any way useful and profitable to it; directly and indirectly. We may and must make use of the creatures, 1. Not only for our own necessity, but principally for the service and glory of God; 1 Cor. 10:31. And 2. Not only for our absolute necessity, but also when they in any measure further us in or to the service of God; so be it they be not on any other account unlawful. 3. We may use the creatures for delight, when that delight itself is a means to fit us for the work of God, and is sincerely sought for with that intent. But we may not use them for any other delight, but that which itself is necessary or useful to God's service. Reasons are evident. (1.) Because we should else make that delight our ultimate end, which is as bad as brutish; for either it must be an end, or means. If it be not used as a means to God as our ultimate end, it must be our ultimate end in itself, which is no better than to take his place. (2.) That action is idle, and consequently a sinful misemploying of our faculties, which doth not conduce to the end that we were made for, and live for. (3.) It is a misemploying of God's creatures, and a sinful casting them away for any end which is not itself a means to the great end of our lives. All is lost that is no way useful to God and our salvation. It is contrary to the end of their creation and ours. (4.) It is a sinful robbing God of the use of his talents, if we use them for any end that is not subservient to himself as the chief end. For certainly he made all things for himself, and that which is not employed for him, is taken from him injuriously. All men must answer for the mercies which they have received; whether they have so used them for God, as that they can give him his own with the improvement. (5.) The sensitive appetite by reason of its inordinacy, is grown a rebel against God and reason; and an enemy to him and to ourselves. And no man should

unnecessarily please or feed so dangerous an enemy. Sin doth most make its entrance this way; and most men lie in sin before our eyes, by pleasing their senses: and shall we run ourselves on such a great and visible danger, against the warning of so many experiences? Yea, we know that we have been often this way overtaken ourselves, and that abundance of sin hath crept in at these passages; and yet shall we plead for liberty to undo ourselves? The godly are so conscious of their weakness or proneness to sin, that they are jealous of themselves; and therefore it beseemeth not such to do any thing needlessly that may tempt them to it, and is so likely to prove a snare. If Paul must beat and tame his body to bring it into subjection, lest when he had preached to others, he should be cast away himself (1 Cor. 9:27.), much more have we need to be watchful that are more weak. We are commanded expressly to make no provision for the flesh, to satisfy the lusts (or desires) thereof (Rom. 13:14.); and therefore they that eat, or drink, or do any thing else for the mere satisfaction of the desires of the flesh, and for its delight, do break this express command of God. And how is it said, that they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts, or desires thereof, if they may use the creatures merely to delight and please the flesh? this is not crucifying its affections and desires; Gal. 5:24.

Job's covenant with the eyes that they gaze not on alluring objects (Job 31:1.), was an act of self-denial that others need as well as Job. Such a covenant with our taste, and with our ears, and with every sense, that they move not but by the consent of God and reason, and let not in any sin into the soul, is a most eminent part of this necessary duty. David's adultery and murder did first make its entrance at the eye. Had Noah more jealously watched his appetite,

he had not by drunkenness been a warning to posterity. It was Achan's eyes that betrayed his heart to gold, and silver, and rich attire, though an accursed thing; Josh. 7:20, 21. What sin almost doth not enter at some of these ports?

Be sure therefore that no sin be without its guard: accustom yourselves to deny them, and the conquest will be easy. It is not to deny them any thing that is useful to you for God's service, and a true means to your holy ends, that I advise you to; but only that which would betray you by delighting in them. It is not to destroy the body, but to tame it, keep it under, and bring it into subjection: and this must be done. To move to this, consider yet further these three or four things more distinctly.

1. It is for want of this part of self-denial that the world is so full of scandals, and the consciences of men so full of wounds, and professors walk so unevenly with God, and seem to be but as other men. Here one drops into tippling, if not stark drunkenness; and there another into wantonness, if not fornication; and many live in gluttony, and never see it nor repent of it; and many are drowned in covetous desires and practices; and some give up themselves to sensual pastimes; and all because they do not make this covenant with their senses, nor have ever yet learned to deny themselves; but because it pleaseth them, they think it is not displeasing to God; and that it is no sin, but a part of their Chistian liberty: yea, many of them think that by this doctrine of self-denial, we would deny them the use of the mercies of God, and consequently hinder them from thankfulness for them: and thus they make a religion of pleasing the flesh, which is the deadly enemy to God and religion. They imagine a liberty purchased them to please it, and fulfil its desires; and they

measure out mercies as they please it, and they would return God a fleshly thanks for these mercies, and offer him a sacrifice as the heathens did to Ceres and Bacchus; whereas the Gospel knoweth no mercy, but either eternal mercy, or that which is a means to it; nor will it call that a mercy which hath not a tendency to God; nor did Christ purchase us any liberty, but what is from sin or punishment, and is for his service: he did not suffer in the flesh to procure us liberty unprofitably to indulge and please the flesh, and to strengthen our enemy, and by use to give it the mastery, when this mastery is the damnation of most of the world. If Christians had learned more to deny their senses, they would walk more blamelessly and inoffensively in the world: if they would keep at a distance from the bait, and when they can not do so, yet shut up these doors, that it may be at a distance from their minds, how safely would they walk that now are stumbling at every creature that is given for their relief! The objects of sense are these lower things, so contrary to the objects of faith, that the more we love one of them, the less we shall regard the other; and therefore these are always working against each other. And as the objects of faith are then most sweet and powerful with us, when faith is set most fully upon them; so the objects of sense are then most powerful to draw us from God, when the doors of sense are set wide open, and the appetite let loose upon them.

2. And you may further observe, that almost all the grossest sins in the world, do begin with some little liberty of the senses, which at first we take for a lawful or indifferent thing. The filthiest whoredoms do usually begin in lustful looks, and thoughts, and speeches, and so proceed to lascivious behaviour, and so to filthiness itself. And the glutton and the drunkard are first ensnared by the eye, and then by tasting, and so proceed by little and little to excess: see

therefore that you keep as far from the baits of sensuality as you can: and lay a command upon your senses to forbear: if you look upon it, you are next to touching it, and if you touch it, you are next to tasting it, and if you taste it, you are like to let it down, and if you let it down, you are like to venture again, and let down more; and all must up again, or you are lost. And therefore keep out the first beginnings, and think with yourselves, 'If sin be the poison of my soul, the digesting of it will be my ruin: and if I cannot digest it, why should I let it down? And if I may not let it down, what reason have I to be tasting it? and if I should not taste it, why should I touch it or be meddling with it? and if I may not meddle with it, why should I look upon it or hearken to them that would entice me to it?' So that the denying of your senses and your appetite, is the sure and easy way to prevent those dreadful gripes that else may follow.

3. Moreover, if you deny not your sensitive appetites, you will never be acquainted with heavenly delights. The soul cannot move two contrary ways at once, towards earth and towards heaven. When you gaze upon this world and feed your appetites with fleshly delights, you have no heart or mind to the delights above. It is the soul that retires from creature, and sensual objects, that is free for God, and ready to entertain the motions of grace. Not that I would have you turn hermits and monks, and forsake the company of men and all worldly business; no, it is a higher and nobler course that I propound to you: even in the midst of the world to live as without the world, and as if there were nothing before you for sensuality to feed upon: to live so fully to God in the world, that you may see God in all the creatures, and converse with him in those same objects, by which the sensual are turned from him: and to live in the greatest fulness of all things, as if there were nothing but penury to your flesh, and seeing

God in all, and using all for God, and denying self, where you have opportunity to please it; this is the most noble life on earth. But if you find that you cannot attain to this, and that you cannot deny yourselves the delights of earth, unless you withdraw from the sight of the objects; do so and spare not, so far as may consist with your serviceableness to God and human society: but still you shall find that whether earthly delights are present or absent, your minds must retire from that which doth allure and gratify the flesh, if ever you would enjoy communion with God, and taste of the delights of an heavenly conversation.

4. And by pleasing your senses, you will increase their vicious, inordinate desires. The more you gratify them, the more they will crave: you feed the disease by yielding to such desires; but never think to quiet it by contenting it. The more the flesh hath, the more it would have. The only way to abate the rage of sensual desire, is to deny them, and use them constantly to that denial. The safest food and raiment is that which best strengtheneth and furnisheth us for God's service, with the least consent and pleasure to our sensual appetites and desires. And the same I must say of house, and lands, and labours, and friends, and all the creatures; that is the best state of life in which God is served and pleased best, with the least content and pleasure to the flesh. Carnal delights and spiritual are so contrary; the one so drossy and sordid, and the other so sublime and pure, that they will not well consist together; but the delights of the flesh do corrupt or weaken the spiritual delights.

5. Lastly consider, what a base unmanly thing it is for man to be a slave to his sensitive appetite. As truly as the horse was made to be ruled by the rider, and all the brutes to be under man, so was the

appetite and all the senses made to be ruled by reason; and no sense should be pleased till reason do consent: a beast has no rule for his eating and drinking but his appetite; and therefore man's reason is to moderate him: but a man hath a better guide than appetite or sense to follow: you should not eat a bit or drink a drop merely because the appetite would have it, but reason must be advised with, and God must give advice to reason. A swine that will drink whey till he burst his belly, is blameless, because he knew not the danger, and had not reason to restrain him: but a man that hath reason, and yet will eat, and drink, and sleep, and use the creatures merely to please the appetite of his flesh, is utterly inexcusable. What must the light of reason be put out, or put under the cover of sensual concupiscence? Must a nature that is kin to angels, be enslaved to that which is kin to beasts? Unworthy is he of the honour or glory of a saint, that casteth away the honour of his manhood, and makes himself a very beast. What else doth that wretch, that when he seeth a dish before him that he loves, doth never ask whether it be wholesome or unwholesome, but eats it as a horse doth his provender, merely because his appetite would have it; yea, perhaps though he know, or be told that it is unwholesome, yet as long as it pleases his taste, he cares not? And what else doth that wretch, that when he sees the cup, must needs be tasting? he loves it, and that is reason enough with him. What a base unmanly thing is it (much more unchristian), to be a slave to a fleshly appetite! Would one of these gentlemen-gluttons, drunkards, or whoremongers, or any of our voluptuous epicures, that must needs have that they love, be contented to become a servant to a beast? Would you take a dog or a swine for your master, and serve them, and obey them, and do what your brutish master would have you? Why, what is the matter that many of our worshipful and

honourable beasts do not see that they do as bad? What is your own fleshly sensual appetite any better than that of a beast? A dog hath as a good a scent as you; and a swine hath as good a taste or sight as you, also as strong a lust as you. What great difference is there betwixt the serving your own flesh and another's, your own brutish part, or any other brute that lives about you? Wonderful! if the favour of God be nothing with you, and if damnation be nothing with you, that yet you are insensible of your honour in the world, and that you that cannot put up a disgraceful word or blow, can yet put up at your own hands such a bestial indignity, as the subjecting of a rational immortal soul, to that brutish flesh, which was made to be its servant!

CHAPTER XIX

II. Self-interest. And 1. Pleasure. And 1. Of the Taste to be Denied

I HAVE told you what the selfish disposition is that must be mortified and denied; and now I must tell you what is the selfish interest that must be denied: having described self-denial from the faculties, I must now describe it by its objects.

The selfish interest consisteth in this trinity of objects, pleasure, profit, and honour, not spiritual, but carnal; not heavenly, but worldly pleasure, profit, and honour. Sometimes, all these are comprehended in the word 'pleasure' alone; and then it is taken more comprehensively, and not only for sensual pleasure, called voluptuousness, as it is here in this distribution; and sometimes all is comprehended in the term 'world,' and selfishness in the word 'flesh;' the world being that harlot with which the flesh commits

adultery. So 1 John 2:15, 16. "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, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world: and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever." To these three heads therefore we shall reduce all that we have to say of this matter.

1. The selfish, fleshly pleasure that must be denied, consisteth in these particulars following, which I shall but briefly touch, because they are so many. 1. One principal part of sensuality or self-interest, consisteth in meats and drinks to please the appetite. So far as these are taken to fit us for God's service, and used to his glory, so far they are sanctified, as before was said; but when they are merely to please the appetite, they are offered to an enemy, and are a fuel to lust. Do you see any thing that your appetite desireth, whether meats or drinks, whether for quality or quantity? Take it not, touch it not, merely upon that account; but enquire whether it tend to the strengthening and fitting your bodies or minds for the service of God; and if so, take it; if not, let it alone. If your appetite had rather have wine than beer, or strong beer than small, take it not merely on that account: if your appetite would fain have one cup more, when nature hath as much as is profitable, deny that appetite. If your appetite would fain be tasting of any thing that is not for your health, deny that appetite. If it would fain have one bit more, when you have had as much before as is wholesome or useful to you, deny that appetite: or else you are guilty of flesh-pleasing, and plain gluttony.

Quest. 'But is it not lawful at a feast to taste of another dish, or eat another bit, when I think that nature needs no more? What

perplexities then will you cast men into, to know how many morsels they may eat?'

Answ. It is gluttony, and no better, to take the creatures of God in vain, and sacrifice them to a devouring throat, which should be used only for his service. That which is a man's ultimate end, is his God. What would you have plainer than express words of Scripture, that tell you, that whether you eat or drink, it must be all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31.); and that the fleshly do make their bellies their gods (Phil. 3:19.); and therefore when you have taken as much as suiteth with your end, the service and glory of God, you must not take more for another end, the pleasing of your fleshly desires. But for the scruples that you mention, about the just proportion, we need not be disquieted with them; for God hath given sufficient means to direct us, to know what is for our good, and what is superfluous; and it is our duty in an even and constant way to use our reason, and keep as near the due proportion as we can; and when we know that this is our desire and endeavour, it were a sin against God to trouble ourselves with continual or causeless scruples or fears, lest we do exceed or miss the rule. For what can we do more, than go according to the best skill we have, and if for want of skill we should a little mistake, it is pardoned with the rest of our daily infirmities; and to trouble and distract ourselves with causeless fears, would more unfit us for God's service, than some degree of mistake in the proportion would do, and so would be as great a sin as that which we feared. And therefore our way is quietly and comfortably, without distracting fears or scruples, to do our best, and use our prudence with self-denial, and remember that we have to do with a Father that knows the flesh is weak when the spirit is willing. But yet wilfully to cast away one cup or one morsel, on the pleasing of our appetites, when it

no way fits us for the service of God, and will do us no other good, this is not self-denial but sensuality.

Quest. 'But nature knows best what is good for itself, and therefore that which it desireth is to be judged best: a beast liveth as healthfully as a man, that obeyeth his appetite only. Is it not lawful to take either meat or drink on this account, that the appetite is pleased with it?'

Answ. 1. Some beasts would presently kill themselves in pleasing their appetites, if man that is rational did not rule, restrain and moderate them. A swine will burst himself with whey in half an hour. A beast in new after-grass will surfeit, if he be suffered. No beast knows poison from food, but would soon perish by it, in obeying his appetite. 2. And yet as a beast has no reason, so he is better provided to live without reason, than man is. His appetite is not so corrupted by sin as ours is! Original sin hath depraved and enraged our appetites. And if man hath not more use for his reason than a beast, even in ordering his natural actions, God would not have given him reason to rule his appetite, and commanded him to use it herein. And who knows not that if man did follow his appetite alone as beasts do, he were like to murder himself the next day or week, or at least in a very little space? The appetite would presently carry us to that for quality, or quantity, or both, that would cast us into mortal diseases, and soon make an end of us; and in those diseases, the pleasing it usually would be certain death. And indeed this is a beastly doctrine, that man that hath reason to rule his sensual inclinations, should lay it by, and please his appetite without it like a brute! What more do all gluttons, drunkards, and whoremongers, but follow their fleshly desires? And if the desires of the flesh might be followed, who would

not be such as they, in some measure? That which is no sin in a beast, is a heinous sin in a man, because man hath reason to rule his appetite, and a beast hath none, and therefore is not capable of sin. And for the body, it is certain that most of the diseases in the world are bred and fed by the pleasing of the appetite; and I think that there are few that are laid in their graves, but this was the cause of it, though the ignorant know it not, and the sensual are loath to believe it.

And for the question, 'Whether we may not take any meat or drink purposely to please the appetite?' I answer, yes, as a means to fit us for duty; but not as your chief end. 1. Sometimes, especially in weak bodies, the very pleasing of the appetite doth recreate nature, and further strength. 2. And sometimes the appetite shews what sort of food nature will best close with and concoct, so that as to the quality, if reason have nothing against it, it hath something for it; because it is a sign that it is like to be best digested, which is more desired. And so if you thus far follow the appetite, as a sign directing your reason what is best, and take nothing ultimately to please it, but by pleasing it to preserve the health or vigour of your bodies for God's service; thus you may do, and yet be self-denying: for this is not a sensual serving of our flesh. But if you will, 1. Take that which reason tells you is unhealthful in quality. 2. Or that which reason tells you is either hurtful, but needless and unprofitable in the quantity. 3. Or have mastered your reason so far by your appetite, that you will not believe that is hurtful or needless which you love, but judge what is good for you, merely by your appetite, as a beast. 4. Or if you make the pleasing of your appetite your chief end, in any meat or drink that you take; all this is bestiality, sensuality, carnality, gulosity, and contrary to true moderation and self-denial.

Live therefore like men, and not like beasts; like Christians, and not like atheists and epicures: he hath as base a god as most of the vilest heathen idolaters, that makes his belly his god. He that cannot deny himself a delicious cup or morsel, would ill deny himself a kingdom if it were made the bait of sin. He that will not displease his appetite in so small a matter, would hardly leave his estate, or liberty, or life, if he were put to it, either to sin, or leave them. As he is a faithful servant to God indeed, that will not displease him in the smallest matter, so he is most fully obedient to the flesh, that cannot deny it the least thing that it desireth. Though I know that the smallness of the matter doth often so relax the cautelousness of the godly, that they venture on a small thing, who would not on a greater: yet even with them it is some aggravation of the sin, that they cannot bear so small a matter as the displeasing of their appetites in such a trifle: and that they cannot deny themselves, where they may do it at so cheap a rate; and that they have the hearts to displease God, and wrong their souls, for a cup or a morsel which their appetite hath a mind to. He sets little by heaven or the favour of God, that will venture it for so small a thing. It hath ofttimes abated my compassion to dying men, when I have known that their death was caused by a wilful obeying their appetite against the persuasion of their physician; and be the person never so dear to me, I feel that there is a somewhat in nature that inclineth us to consent to the sufferings of the wilful, or abateth our pity of them in their misery. It was an aggravation of Adam's sin, that a forbidden morsel could entice him to venture on the wrath of God, and the ruin of himself and his posterity. And it will be a double aggravation of your sin, if you will take the same course, and take no warning by him, or by the sinning world that hath followed him to this day, "When the woman

saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eye; and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat;" Gen. 3:6. Thus entered sin, and death by sin.

2. Another part of self-interest to be denied, is the pleasing of lustful venereous inclinations. Not only in avoiding the gross act of adultery and fornication itself, but also in avoiding the pleasing of any of the senses by lascivious actions that lead to this: especially some men that are naturally prone to lust, have need to set a work both faith and reason, and sometimes call for help from others to quench the dangerous hellish flames; for it is a sin that God hath spoken terribly against, and that so often that intimateth man's proneness to it, and expresseth God's detestation of it. And seldom doth Paul rebuke it, but he reckoneth up the several kinds, that he may make it odious, and none may escape. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, &c. of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God;" Gal. 5:19. The sins which he would not have the Ephesians name, are, "Fornication and all uncleanness, neither filthiness nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: because no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God;" Eph. 5:3–5. So "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness which is idolatry; for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience;" Col. 3:5, 6. "Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, &c. shall inherit the kingdom of God;" 1 Cor. 6:9, 10. "The law is

made for whoremongers, for them that defile tWhoremongers and adulterd," &c. 1 Tim. 1:10. "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge;" Heb. 13:4. Read also, 1 Cor. 5:11. Matt. 15:19. Heb. 12:16. 1 Thess. 4:3. Rom. 1:28, 29, &c. 1 Cor. 6:13, 18. and 10:8. "These filthy dreamers defile the flesh," &c. Jude 7, 8. "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness—Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin;" 2 Pet. 2:10. 14. Abhor therefore this filthy damnable sin, which God abhorreth. And to that end please not the flesh by any beginning of it, or any thing that savoureth of it, or makes way to it. Chambering and wantonness are mentioned by the apostle among the fulfilling of the fleshly lusts; Rom. 13:13, 14. The allurements of the lusts of the flesh and wantonness was the course of the wretched apostates, 2 Cor. 12:21. Mark 7:22. And Christ himself hath told you, that "he that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already in his heart;" Matt. 5:28. Suffer not therefore your eye to entice your hearts, by gazing on beauty or any alluring objects; touch them not, come not near them without necessity. The fire of lust doth need no blowing up; but in some it needeth all that ever they can do to quench it. Fly therefore from the temptations and occasions, if you would escape; cast not yourselves upon opportunities of sinning; let temptations have as little advantage as you can. A weak Christian may walk more evenly that flieth from temptations, and keeps at a distance from that which would ensnare him, than a strong Christian that suffers the bait to be near him. David's woeful experience could tell you, what it is to give way to a wandering, lustful eye, when Joseph's resolution may tell you what an advantage it is, to fly away and not to stand a parley with temptations. As ever you would escape this sin, this horrible soul-destroying sin, keep off from all

opportunities of committing it, and live not with temptations near you: especially take heed that you suffer not an unclean spirit to possess your minds; but cast out the first impure thoughts with abhorrency. O the daily filthiness that lodgeth in the thoughts and imaginations of some men! They can scarce look on a woman of any comeliness, but they have presently some filthy thought. If they attempted actual uncleanness, a chaste person may easily reject them with detestation; but in this secret way of heart-filthiness, they will commit fornication with whom they please, and as many as they please, and as often as they please; but the ruin and sin are only their own. As you love the favour of God, the credit of the Gospel, and the peace and salvation of your own souls, deny yourselves not only the lust of uncleanness, but of unchaste behaviour, and wanton dalliance, and the filthiness of your thoughts. For how unfit is that mind to converse with God, and to be employed in holy ordinances, that cometh but newly from thinking of filthiness, and feeding on lust!

CHAPTER XX

Wanton Discourse, Songs, &c. to be Denied

3. ANOTHER part of self-interest or sensuality to be denied, is, the use of wanton, filthy discourse, and of wanton books, and songs, and ballads, commonly called love-songs. As these are the fruits of vain minds that do invent them, so do they breed and feed the like vanity in others. Indeed they are the devil's psalms and liturgy, in which he is served with mirth and jollity, by persons of corrupt and sensual minds. They that will not be at the pains to learn a catechism, will learn a wanton song or ballad, which one would think should be as

hardly learned. When we desire them to learn any thing that is necessary to their salvation, they tell us that they are no scholars, and they have weak memories, and they cannot learn. But they can learn an idle tale, or a filthy song, though they are no scholars, and though their memories be weak. Their weak memories are strong enough to keep any thing that is naught; like a riddle that will not hold the corn, but it will hold the straws and rubbish; or like a sieve that will not hold the milk, but it will hold the hairs and filth. And so much greater is this sin than many others, because it is studied for, and laboured for, and therefore is committed purposely, resolvedly, and with delight, and not as some other sins which men are tempted to by sudden passions or surprisal! What abundance of children are sent to school to the devil, and must bestow many days and hours in learning their lessons; and when they have learned them, he must hear them say them over, usually more than once a day! As they are at work in their shops or fields, they are at it, either by wanton songs, or ribald, filthy talk: yea, they be not ashamed to sing them as they go about the streets: mark this, you that are the servants of Christ! Will you evermore be ashamed of your Master, or of his holy service? will you be ashamed to confess him in the open streets, or to be heard at prayer, or reading, or singing the praise of God in your houses; when the devil's servants are trained up in their very childhood to sing his psalms in the open streets, and publicly to serve him without fear or shame? May not a man conjecture by their education, what trade they are intended for? They that serve an apprenticeship to a trade, are sure intended to live upon it. One would think by the talk and the songs of many of our children in the streets, that the parents had bound them apprentices to a brothel-house, and intended that their trade should be fornication,

whoredom, and all uncleanness! why else do they learn the art of talking of it, but in order to the art of practising it? Sure I am, they are the apprentices of satan: and a doleful case it is to think on; that as the Turks do take the children of Christians, and breed them up to be their army of janizaries, to fight against Christians, as their stoutest soldiers, when they come to age; so the devil and their own parents do take the children that in baptism were dedicated once to Christ, and listed under his command, and they teach men to fight against Christ, by cursing, and railing, and swearing, and mocking at godliness, and by bawdy songs and ribaldry. Christ telleth us that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" and therefore they cannot in reason blame us, if we judge of their hearts by their tongues: for though the tongue be too often better than the heart, it is seldom worse. And surely if many of our wretched neighbours may be judged of by this rule of Christ, we must needs conclude that they have lustful, filthy adulterous hearts; what else can we think of them when their discourse and songs are filthy, but that their hearts are filthy? Christ hath warranted us to conclude, that rotten speeches come from the abundance of a rotten heart. Young people, I beseech you regard your credit, if you regard not your salvation. Will you openly proclaim in the ears of the world that you are trained soldiers of the devil, learning to be whores or whoremongers, or that you have lust and whoredom in your hearts? Is it your meaning to tell this to all the town? what doth it in your mouths, if it be not in your hearts? will you not judge by a man's language what countryman he is? If he speak Welch, you will think he is a Welchman: if Irish, you will think he is an Irishman; if English, you will conjecture he is an Englishman: and if you speak the language of harlots and brothel-houses, what can we think but

that you are such yourselves, or at least that you are learning to be such? For shame do not so disgrace your parents that breed you up, and the houses that you live in! What may folk think and say, when they hear you talk filthily, and singing filthy songs? will they not think that you have adulterers or filthy persons to your parents, that teach or suffer you to learn such things? and that they are bringing you up for their own profession? Will they not think that you live in whore-houses, and not in Christian families? Do not for shame proclaim this suspicion of your parents, or the families you dwell in, in the hearing of the world, unless you think it an honour to be harlots. It would make the ears of a modest person glow on his head, to hear the ribbaldry that is ordinary in some profane families; especially in many inns and alehouses, where the quality of the company and the nature of the employment is such from whence no better can be expected.

Let all that would be accounted Christians, deny and abhor this part of sensuality in themselves and theirs. Again consider the command of God; "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not once be named amongst you, as becometh saints: neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks:" Eph. 5:3, 4. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers; and grieve not the holy Spirit of God:" Eph. 4:29, 30. Mark here, how such filthy speech is called 'corrupt' communication, or rotten like carrion in a ditch, which should cause all that pass by to stop their noses. And yet this is our people's sport: what say these wretches, 'May we not jest and be merry, when we mean no harm, without all this ado?'. Have you no honester mirth than this? nor more cleanly

jests than these? will you feed upon that which is carrion, or corrupt, and make it your junkets to delight your palate? will you make merry with that which God condemneth, and threateneth to shut you out of his kingdom for, and makes the mark of the unsanctified, and chargeth you not once to name it, that is, not without distaste and rebuke? Have you nothing but filthiness, and the service of the devil, and the wrath of God to play with, and to make merry with? "It is a sport to a fool to do mischief;" Prov. 10:23. I may well say of this, as Solomon of another sin, "As a madman that casteth firebrands, arrows and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?" Prov. 26:18, 19. It is mad sporting with sin, especially to choose it purposely for a recreation; and especially such an odious sin as this, that infecteth others, and banisheth all gracious edifying conference, and increaseth the corruption of the mind, and prepareth people to actual whoredom, self-pollution, and abominable uncleanness: for thoughts and words are but preparative to deeds.

CHAPTER XXI

Idle and Worldly Talk to be Denied

4. ANOTHER part of sensuality to be denied, is, idle and worldly talk, which most men make their daily recreation. It is not to be made light of that Christ himself hath told you, that for every idle word men shall give account in the day of judgment (Matt. 12:36, 37.); such an account as that they shall be charged on you as sins; and if they be not repented of, and pardoned through the blood of Christ, they will be your condemnation, as well as greater sins. By idle words is meant, not only all wicked, and all lying words, which

are vain in a high degree and worse; but also useless unprofitable speeches, that tend not to any good, and which you have no call to speak (Tit. 3:9.); and that which the apostle calls 'foolish talking,' Eph. 5:4. When that Christian wisdom is left out that should guide and season our speech, and direct it to some good end: especially when by vain jesting men will make fools of themselves to please others: or when they lay by Christian gravity, and by jesting affect to become ridiculous (Eph. 5:4.), much more when men jest with holy things, and speak unreverently, contemptuously or scornfully of the matters of God, which is impiety in a high degree: the same may be said of proud boasting words, and of multitude of words, even when the matter is good, but the multitude of words unseasonable and unprofitable; as also of rash unconsidered words, that tend to stir up strife and passion: as also censuring, backbiting, reproach, flattery, dissembling, and many the like: but the thing that I principally speak of now, is the pleasing of a man's self by a course of idle, unprofitable talk. And alas, how common is this sin! Not only the foolish multitude are guilty of it, but persons of judgment, and gravity, and reputation. How many may you come in company with, before you shall have any edifying communication, that tends to minister grace to the hearers! Vanity is become the common breath of the greatest part. What the better can any man be for their discourse, unless by taking warning by them, to avoid the vanity which we hear them guilty of? Even ancient persons, with whom the words of wisdom should be found (Job 12:12.), and who should be examples unto youth, are yet given up to idle talk; and an old story is more savoury with them than heavenly discourse: even parents and masters that should be examples to their families, will in their hearing multiply idle words, as if they would teach to be vain as they are; when alas,

the souls of those about them have need of other manner of discourse; and it is another task that God hath set them; Deut. 6:6–8. and 11:18, 19. Whence is it that children learn a course of idle, foolish talking, more than of their own parents? For one word of God, and the doctrine of the Gospel, and the matters of salvation, that their families hear from most of them, they hear a hundred, yea a thousand of the world, and of unprofitable things. Had God but the tithe of their words, we should account them very pious. And they that cannot spare him the tithe of their words, I doubt do not allow him the tithe of their affections, and would not allow him the tithe of their increase, if they could tell how to keep it. Not but that with some persons, that are called to much worldly business, more than ten parts of their daily speeches may lawfully be about the creatures: but then even those with godly men are ultimately for God, and so are sanctified, and not unprofitable: and also they are glad to redeem what time they can for speeches of a higher and more excellent subject.

And the commonness of this sin of idle talk, yea, with many that we hope are godly, doth make me think that it is thought to be a smaller matter than it is; and I doubt this conceit is it that makes it to be so common. And therefore I shall here give you some of the aggravations of this sin, that you may hereafter judge of it as it is, and not be encouraged in it by false apprehensions.

1. A custom of vain words, is a sign of a vain and empty mind: were the heart but full of better things, the tongue would be employed in better speeches. Either the head or heart, or both is empty and vain, in that measure as the tongue is vain. "A dream cometh through the multitude of business, and a fool's voice is known by the multitude of

words;" Eccles. 5:3. "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself;" Eccles. 10:12. "A fool is full of words;" Eccles. 10:14. And therefore Solomon opposeth the tongue of the just, and the heart of the wicked, "The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth;" Prov. 10:20. See Prov. 17:27, 28. "The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh judgment:" and whence is this? "The law of his God is in his heart: none of his steps shall slide;" Psal. 37:30, 31. It is a sign that a man hath little feeling of the greatness of his own sin, of the greatness of God's love in Christ, of the greatness of the joy that is set before him, of the greatness of duty that lieth on him, when he can spend so much of his time in talking of mere vanity. You cannot get a dying man, or a man that is taken up with any important business, to jest and prate with you of idle matters. It is only alienated idle minds that can give way to a course of idle words: nay, it is a sign that conscience is not so tender as it ought to be, when men can knowingly go on in a course of sin: doth not conscience ask you what you are doing, and whether this discourse do tend to edification, and the cherishing of grace? What consciences have you that look no better after your tongues, but will let them wander so long after vanity, before they call them to account? Do you remember God's presence, and withal his holiness and jealousy? Can you talk so idly and God stand by, and hear every word, and put down all? How can you be so contemptuously fearless of his presence?

2. The tongue of man is a noble member, called our glory, Psal. 30:12. and 56:8., given us for the praise of our great Creator, and for other high and noble ends. And should it be abased and abused to idleness and vanity? You will not take the clothes that adorn your

bodies to clothe a maukin, or sweep the oven, or wipe your dishes with; and why should you use your tongues to filth, or base unprofitable things, that are given you for the noblest uses in the world, even the honour of God, the edifying of your brethren, the reproof of sin, and your own salvation?

3. Consider, what abundance of great and needful employment you have for your tongues, and then tell me, whether you should spare them to idleness and vanity? O what work hath that little member to perform! what matters have you to mind and talk of! what transcendent subjects! what matter of highest excellency, and greatest necessity! You have a life of sin to look back upon and lament: you have many a sin to confess to others: you need much help against temptations, and for the strengthening and exercise of your graces: what need to make sure of your title to salvation! and to prepare for death, and to get ready the graces that you must use in your last necessities! and yet have you words to spare for vanity? What abundance of poor souls about you are ignorant, hard-hearted, sensual, covetous, empty of grace, in a state of death, and need all that ever you can do for their recovery, and all too little; and yet can you find in your heart to talk with them of vain, unprofitable things? Alas sirs, most of the persons about you are within a step of death, and going to the bar of God, and want nothing but one stroke of death to make them past help, and send them to damnation: and can you find in your hearts to talk idly to such men? O cruel unmerciful people, that regard no more your neighbours' miseries! If you came to them at the point of death, or if their houses were on fire, would you sit down and tell them an old tale, or talk of the weather, or this trifle, or that? what an absurdity would this be, and insensibility of your brethren's case? And will you do so in a case ten thousandfold

greater? Can you find in your heart to stand jesting and prating with a poor unregenerate man that is within a step of hell? Have you not more need to call to him to look about him in time, and to remember eternity, and to turn and live? If you see but the nakedness of the poor, or the sores of a cripple, it should move you to compassion: and will not men's ignorance and ungodliness move you? Their miseries cry aloud to you for pity, though themselves are silent, 'O help to save us from sin and hell, as you have the hearts of men,' and yet will you stop your ears, and fall a prating and jesting with them? you rob them of the means that God hath commanded you to use for their recovery. God hath commanded, that "the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another" (Col. 3:16.); yea, that you "daily exhort one another while it is called to day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin;" Heb. 3:13.

Nay, you have the great mysteries of the Gospel to discourse of with the godly; the glorious things of everlasting life to make mention of to one another; yea, you have the high praises of God to advance in the world, and all his blessed attributes to magnify, and all his glorious works to praise, and all the experience of your own souls to lay open, and his many and great mercies towards you to admire and thankfully confess. And yet have you leisure for idle talk? For number of objects, you have God and all his works in heaven and earth (that are revealed) to talk of; you have all his providences, all his judgments, all his mercies, and all his word: and is this not field large enough for your tongue to walk in, but you must seek out more work in vanity itself? For greatness, you have the greatest things in all the world to mind and talk of: for necessity, you have the matters of your own and other men's salvation to discourse of: for excellency,

you have God and his image, and works, and ways, and heaven itself to talk of: for delightfulness, you have the sweetest objects in the world, even goodness itself, salvation, and the way to it, to be the matter of your discourse. And lest one thing should weary you, you have a world of variety to employ your speeches on; even God, and all his works, and word, and ways before-mentioned. And is it not a shame to talk of vanity, yea, to go seek for recreation in vanity, while all these stand by, and offer themselves to be the subjects of your wise, and fruitful, and delightfullest discourse. Consider whether this be wise or equal dealing.

4. Moreover a course of idle talk, is a thief that robs us of our precious time. And he that knows what God is, or what duty is, or what his soul is, or what everlasting joy or torment is, will know that time is a commodity of greater worth than so contemptuously to be cast away for nothing. O remember when thou art next in idle talk, did God make thee for this? doth he continue thee among the living, and keep thee out of hell, and yet prolongeth thy days, that thou shouldst waste thy time in idleness and vanity? Hast thou so many sins to mortify, and so many other works to do, which heaven or hell lieth on, and so short and uncertain a time to do them in, and yet hast thou leisure for idle talk?

5. Moreover, this sin is so much the greater, because it is not a rare or seldom sin, but frequently committed and continued in. It is not like the sin of David or Noah, that though greater, yet was but once committed: but this is made great by the number and continuance. How many thousand idle words have you been guilty of in your time!

6. And it is a sin that tendeth to greater sins. For idle words are the ordinary passage to backbiting, railing, lying, and contentious words, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin, but he that refraineth his lips is wise;" Prov. 10:10. Thus "a fool's lips enter into contention; his mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul;" Prov. 18:6, 7. "In the multitude of dreams, and many words, are divers vanities: but fear thou God;" Eccles. 5:7. "The lips of a fool will swallow up himself; the beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness, and the end of his talk is madness;" Eccles. 10:12, 13. Idleness is the beginning, but worse than idleness is the end.

7. It is a sin that habituateth the speakers and hearers both to vanity: use makes us disposed to that which we use. It will grow strange to you to speak of better things when you are used to vanity. And the use of hearing you, is an exceeding wrong to the souls of the hearers. And a small matter confirmeth such bad hearts as the most have, in the vanity that they are in. You cast water on their graces and your own, if there were any. If any of them had better thoughts, your idle talk doth drown and divert them.

8. And it is a sin that hindereth abundance of edification that holy conference might bring. It is a precious striving course for Christians to be communicating experiences, and declaring the exercises and lovingkindness of God, and exciting one another: and this you lay by, and turn to vanity. Nay, perhaps some other that is in the company may be purposed to set upon such profitable discourse, and your idle talk doth hinder them, and suppress the exercise of God's graces for your good. At least there may be much precious matter in them, that wants but vent, and if you would but begin, it may be poured forth as

precious ointment. Many wise and able men are too backward in beginning edifying discourse, that yet are exceeding fruitful when you have once set them a-work. And idle talk is the hinderer of this.

9. And it is a very fruitless sin. You offend God for nothing. What get you by an hour's idle talk? or what have you to tempt you to it?

10. And it is a wilful sin, and usually accompanied with much impenitency, which makes it much the greater. Men use not to lament it, and call themselves to account for it, and say, 'What have I done?' but go on in it as if it were no sin.

And now you see the greatness of the sin, I beseech you make more conscience of it than you have done. And that you may avoid it, observe these brief directions.

Direct. 1. Labour for understanding in the matters of God: for that is it that must furnish the tongue, and prevent vanity; Prov. 11:12. 10:19. A foolish head will have a foolish tongue.

Direct. 2. Get a deep impression and lively sense of the matters of God upon the heart. For a man never talks heartily, that talks not from the heart. He that is full of the love of God, possessed of the Spirit of Christ, taken up with the riches of grace and of glory, will scarce want matter to talk of, nor a holy disposition to set him a-work: for the word of God will be as a fire in his heart; he will be weary with forbearing, till the flames burst out, Psal. 119:11. 40:8. 57:7. 119:111. 39:3. Jer. 20:9. The hearty experienced Christian is usually the fruitful Christian in word and deed.

Direct. 3. Preserve a tender conscience, that may check you when you begin to turn to vanity. The fear of God is the soul's preserver; Psal. 19:9. Prov. 16:6. 23:7.

Direct. 4. Walk as before the Lord: live, and think, and speak as in his presence. If the presence of an angel would call you off from idle words, what then should the presence of God himself do! Dare you run on in idle, foolish prating, when you remember that he heareth you?

Direct. 5. Keep out of the company of idle talkers, lest they entangle you in the sin: unless when you have a call to be among them; Prov. 13:20. We are apt to let our discourse run with the stream.

Direct. 6. When you are with the ungodly, maintain in you a believing compassion to their souls; and then the sense of their condition will heal your discourse.

Direct. 7. Provide matter of holy discourse of purpose beforehand. As you will not travel without money in your purses to defray your charges; so you should not go into company without a provision of such matter as may be profitable for the company that you may be cast upon. Study and contrive how to suit your speeches to the edification of others, or else to draw good from others, even as ministers study for their sermons.

Direct. 8. Speak not until you have considered what is like to be the effect of it, and weighed the quality of the person, and other circumstances to that end. Do not speak first, and consider after, but first think, and then speak.

Direct. 9. Be still sensible of the worth of time and opportunity, and then you will be as loath to cast it away on idle talk, as a good husband will be to cast away his money for nothing.

Direct. 10. Keep up a sense of your own necessity, which may provoke you to be better husbands of your tongues and time: and engage those you converse with, to mind you of your idle talk, and take you off it as soon as you begin.

Direct. 11. See that your heart and tongue, and all be absolutely devoted to God; and then you will question any by-expense of words: and "Whatsoever you do in word or deed, you will do all in the name of Christ, and to the glory and praise of God;" Col. 3:17. 1 Cor. 10:31.

Direct. 12. Be resolute for God, and be not ashamed to own him and his cause. A sinful bashfulness hinders much good. Observe these directions for this part of self-denial.

CHAPTER XXII

False Stories, Romances, and other tempting Books

5. ANOTHER point of sensuality to be denied, is, the reading or hearing of false and tempting books, and those that only tend to please an idle fancy, and not to edify. Such as are romances, and other feigned histories of that nature, with books of tales, and jests, and foolish compliments, with which the world so much aboundeth,

that there are few but may have admittance to this library of the devil. Abundance of old feigned stories, and new romances are in the hands, especially of children, and idle gentlemen, and filthy, lustful gallants, or empty persons that savour not greater matters, but have spirits suitable to such gauds as these. But if they were only toys, I should say the less; but having seen by long observation the mischief of them, I desire you to note it in these few particulars.

1. They ensnare us in a world of guilt, by drawing us to the neglect of those many, those great and necessary things that all of us have to mind and study. O! for a man or woman, that is under a load of sin, unassured of pardon and salvation, that is near to death, and unready to die, to be seen with a story or romance in their hand; what a gross incongruity is this! It is fitter the book of God should be in your hand. It is that which you must live by and be judged by. There is much that you are yet ignorant of, which you have more need to be acquainted with than fables. Are you not ignorant of a hundred truths that you should know, that God hath revealed to further your salvation: and can you lay them all by to read romances? Are you travelling towards another world with a play-book in your hand? O that you did but know what greater matters you have to mind and to do! Do all that you have to do first, that is of a thousand times more worth, and weight, and need; and then come to me, and I will answer your objections, 'What harm is it to read a play-book?' First, quench the fire of sin and wrath that is kindled in your souls; and see that you understand the laws of God, and read over those profitable treatises of divines, that the world aboundeth with, and your souls more need, and then tell me, what mind or time you have for fables.

2. Moreover it dangerously bewitcheth and corrupteth the minds of young and empty people, to read these books. Nature doth so close with them, and delight in them, that they presently breed an inordinacy of affection, that steal away the heart from God, and his holy word and ways. It cannot be that the love and delights of the heart can be let out on such trash as these, and not be taken off from God and the most needful things. That is the most dangerous thing to the soul, that works itself deepest into the affections, and is most delighted in, instead of God. And therefore I may well conclude that play-books, and history-fables, and romances, and such like, are the very poison of youth, the prevention of grace, the fuel of wantonness and lust, and the food and work of empty, vicious, graceless persons; and it is great pity that they be not banished out of the commonwealth.

3. Moreover they rob men of much precious time, in which much better work might be done: much precious knowledge might be got while they are exercised in these fables. Those hours must be answered for: and there is not the worst of you but then had rather be able to say, 'I spent those days and hours in prayer, and meditating on the life to come, and reading the law and Gospel of Christ, and the books which his servants wrote for my instruction,' than to say, 'I spent it reading love-books, and tale-books, and play-books.' All these considered, I beseech you throw away these pestilent vanities, and take them not in your hands, nor suffer them in the hands of your children, or in your houses, but burn them as you would a conjuring-book, and as they did, Acts 19:19. that so they may do no mischief to any others.

CHAPTER XXIII

Vain Sports and Pastimes to be Denied

6. ANOTHER part of fleshly interest to be denied, is, vain sports and pastimes, and all unnecessary recreations. For this also is one of the harlots that the flesh is defiled with.

Recreations are lawful and useful if thus qualified. 1. If the matter of them be not forbidden: for there is no sporting with sin. 2. If we have a holy, Christian end in them, that is, to fit our bodies and minds for the service of God: and do not do it principally to please the flesh. If without dissembling, our hearts can say, 'I would not meddle with this recreation, if I thought I could have my body and mind as well strengthened and fitted for God's service without it.' 3. If we use not recreations without need, as to the said end; nor continue them longer than they are useful to that end; and so do not cast away any of our precious time on them in vain. 4. If they be not uncivil, excessively costly, cruel, or accompanied with the like unlawful accidents. 5. If they contain not more probable incentives to vice than to virtue: as to covetousness, lust, passion, profaneness, &c. 6. If they are not like to be more hurtful to the souls of others that join with us, than profitable to us. 7. If they be not like to do more hurt by offending any that are weak, or dislike them, than good to us that use them. 8. If they be used seasonably, in a time that they hinder not greater duties. 9. If we do it not in company for us to join with. 10. Especially if we may make a right choice of recreations, and when divers are before us, we take the best; that which is least offensive, least expensive of time and cost, and which best furthereth the health of our bodies, with the smallest inconvenience.

These rules being observed, recreations are as lawful as sleep, or food, or physic.

But, alas, they are made another thing by the sensual ungodly world. Sometimes they must sport themselves with sin itself, in the abuse of God's name, and servants, and creatures: tippling, and profane courses are some men's chiefest recreations: and though the law of the land forbid most of their sports, and the law of God commandeth them to obey all the laws of men that are not against the law of God, yet this is a matter of nothing to their consciences. And let the matter be never so lawful, they make all impious by a carnal end. It is none of their intention to strengthen and fit themselves for the service of God, and a holy, righteous life, by their recreations; but it is merely because their fancy and flesh is pleased in them: even as the drunkard, glutton, or whoremonger, that have no higher end than pleasure, and can give no better account why they feed their lust, but because they love it, and it is their delight; just so is it with sportful youths and gallants. How few of many thousands can you come to that are at cards, dice, or dancing, that can truly say, they would not do any of this but for God, and to fit themselves for his service! Did you ever know such a one? I believe in some better kind of recreations you may know some such; but scarce in these. Alas, this sin is not of so small a stature as too many impenitent souls imagine. It is one of the crying sins of the land, and I believe one that brought down the vengeance of the late war upon us; and yet it is not half cured after all. The gentry of England, that should have been educated in learning and the fear of God, and been the examples of the people in temperance and holiness, have been lamentably brutified and drowned in this (with other parts of gross) sensuality. Instead of serious prayer, and holy conference, and instructing of

their families, cards and dice took up the time, and cursing and swearing were the common attendants of them; and their children and servants learned of them, and took the same course. They bestowed more time in these, and in hunting, hawking, bowling, cocking, stage-playing, and such like, than they did in the serious worshipping of God; yea, than they did in the works of any lawful calling: for indeed they lived as without a calling, doing very little else but rise, and dress them, and compliment those about them, and drink, and eat, and so to their sports at home or abroad, and then to eating and drinking again, and so to their vain discourses, and so to their beds again: and this was the ordinary course of their lives: "they sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play," Exod. 32:6. 1 Cor. 10:7. In the sins of Sodom did they live, "pride, fulness of bread, and idleness," Ezek. 16:49. They trod the steps of him that Christ had told them, did cry in vain for a drop of water to cool his tongue (Luke 16:19.), gallantly clothed, and fared deliciously every day (or sumptuously). Their whole life almost was a sacrifice to their flesh, to their belly, their fancies, and their lusts; till God broke in upon them in his wrath, and found them another employment, and shortened their store, and diminished their full estates, and brought them into contempt and trouble; and yet how common is the sin to this day? "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink, that continue till night, till wine inflame them; and the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands: therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge, and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst: therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure, and

their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it;" Isa. 5:11–14. "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion,—that stretch themselves on their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the stall, that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music —that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph;" Amos 6:1. 4–6.

The precious time that this sort of men lay out in their needless sports and recreations, is more worth than all their estates; and if their sin had no other aggravation but this, I confess I should take it for a far greater sin than any that thieves are usually hanged for at the gallows! What! for men that have received more from God than others, and are obliged more to him, and are capable of doing him more eminent service, for such as these to live like epicures! and when they are hastening to an endless life, to waste the most, yea, almost all this precious time in flesh-pleasing sensuality! I think it is one of the greatest sins in the world! And no wonder that Christ made such a choice of such a one as these, to acquaint them who they are that shall be damned, Luke 16. And if conversion make not a wonderful change on them, they must look undoubtedly to speed as he; and to have the same account of the cause of their misery, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented;" Luke 16:25.

Abundance of them bestowed more upon hawks and dogs, than would have maintained many poor families: and play for large sums at cards, and dice, and cockings, and horse-races. Covetousness, and

luxury, and passion, and swearing, and cursing, were the virtues that their sports did exercise: and others must be their companions in the same impieties, that they perish not alone. Unmerciful and oppressing they are in their very sports, treading down the hedges and corn of poor men, in following their game, and never making them reparation for their loss, but raging at them if they do but complain. No fitter company for them, than the most impious swearers, and ribald filthy speakers, and the like: who was offended at it, they cared not; but made it an additional part of their sport, to cast a scorn at those that durst not and would not be as bad as they. And all this is, when they have variety of civil, cheap, inoffensive recreations at hand, which might better have fitted a Christian's end.

And the youthful part of the vulgar, are, in their degree, of the same spirit with those epicures, and of the like practice, as far as their estates and leisure will allow them. Witness the eagerness of the rabble in following after wakes, and may-games, cock-fighting, dancing, dice, and cards, and such like exercises. And more pleasure they have in these than in prayer, or God's praises, or holy instructions, or conferences. As much as the most sordid whoremonger or drunkard is enslaved in his proper flesh-pleasing sin, so much are our voluptuous youths and others addicted to gaming, sports, and pastimes, and enslaved to this flesh-pleasing sin of theirs. Ah poor people! Doth time run on so fast, and are you hastening to the dreadful bar of God: and do you want pastime? Is your work so great, and your time so short, and utterly uncertain; and yet must you hunt about for pastime? Must it go with you in heaven or hell for ever, as you spend this hasty inch of time, and yet have you days or hours to spare for needless recreation? O what a cursed thing is sin, that can so bereave men of the use of reason, in

that one thing for which their reason was given them! Yea, we can scarce convince these poor deluded souls that they do amiss; but they say, 'What harm is there in cards, or dice, or hunting, or bowling, or such like recreations? How shall we live without recreation?' Answ. But is there no harm in needless flesh-pleasing, and in the loss of precious time, to men that are ready to step into eternity? O that ever men should make such a question! Suppose your recreations were the most lawful in the world in their own nature? Can there be a greater villany, than to set your hearts on them, and make a god of them, and cast away precious hours on them, in using them needlessly? Recreations are your physic, or your sauce; and therefore must not become your food, nor made a meal of. They are only as whetting to the mower, which must never be used but when there is need; to spend half a day in needless whetting, deserves no wages. O did you know but what is your work, and time, and what is before you, you would be better husbands; and then you might so contrive your business, as to lose no time in recreations. For either your calling puts you on the labour of the mind, as students, or of the body, as labouring men. If study be your calling, you need no exercise of recreation but for your bodies, for variety of studies is the best or sufficient for the mind: and two hours' walking is bodily recreation enough in a day, for almost any student that is in a capacity to labour: and if you be labouring men, or your calling lie in bodily motion, then you need no recreations for your bodies besides your callings, but only for your mind: and if you love God and his word, what better recreation for your minds can you devise, than thinking of the love of God in Christ, and meditating on the law of God (Psal. 1:2.), and calling upon him, and rejoicing in his praises, and the communion of his saints? Is not a day in his courts, better

than a thousand any where else? The Spirit of God by David said so, Psal. 84:10. But alas, it is this unmortified flesh, and tyranizing sensuality that blindeth you, that you cannot see the truth: or else all this would be as plain to you as the high way.

CHAPTER XXIV

Vain Company to be Denied

7. ANOTHER sensual vice to be denied, is, a love to vain, ungodly company. This is a sin that I think none but utterly graceless men are much carried away with. For the godly are all taught of God to love one another (1 Thess. 4:9.), and to delight in the saints as the most excellent on earth (Psal. 16:2, 3.), and to take pleasure in their communion: and to look on the ungodly with a differencing belief, as foreseeing their everlasting misery, if they return not: so that it is the ungodly that I have now to speak to. Some fall in love with the company of good fellows, as they call them: and some love the company of harlots, and some of gamesters; and most of merry, pleasant companions, and men that are of their own disposition: and the love of such company, enticeth them to the frequent committing of the sin. They would not go to gaming but for company; they would not go to the alehouse but for company; and when they are there, perhaps they will swear, and drink, and mock at godliness for company. But are you willing also to go to hell for company? Is the company of those sinners, better than the company of God, and his favour? Were it not better to be that while with him in prayer, or about his work? If you love a tippling fellow better than God, speak out, and say so plainly, and never dissemble any more, nor say that you love God above all, or that you are Christians. Have you more

delight in the company of them that would entice to sin, than in the company of the godly that would draw you from it? This is a most certain mark, that yet you are the children of the devil, and in a state of damnation. It is not possible for a sanctified child of God to do so. See the description of the man that shall be saved, in Psal. 15:4. "In his eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord." Birds of a feather will flock together. The company which you love, shews what courses you love, and what you are. You delight in the company of those that Christ will judge as his enemies; and how then will he judge of you? You delight most in the company of those notorious fools, that know not the plainest and most needful things in all the world; that know not that God is better than the world, and holiness than sin; and know not the way of their own salvation. If you are content to have the company of the ungodly for ever, you may take it here. But if you would not dwell in hell with them, do not go on in sin with them. O when you shall see those very men arrested by death, and haled at the bar of God, and cast into damnation, then you will have no mind of their company! Then, O that you could but say, that you were none of them! Like a man that is enticed by thieves to join with them; but when the hue and cry overtakes them, and they are apprehended, how glad would he be then to be from among them! I tell you sinners, if grace recover you, you shall wish in the sorrow of your hearts that you had never seen the faces of those men that enticed you to evil; but if grace do not recover you, you shall wish ten thousand times in hell that you had never seen their faces: but then your wishes will be in vain. In the name of God bethink yourselves, whether your companions can bear you out at last, and save you from the wrath of God, and warrant your salvation? Nay, whether they can save themselves; alas, you

know they cannot: God saith, "If you live after the flesh, ye shall die" (Rom. 8:13.); and if these men say (as the devil to Eve) "You shall not die," are they able, think you, to make it good? What! can they overcome the God of heaven? O sirs, away, as you love your souls, from such mad and miserable company as this.

CHAPTER XXV

Pleasing Accommodations, Buildings, Gardens, Houses, &c.

8. ANOTHER sensual delight to be denied, is, pleasing accommodations, in buildings, rooms, walks, gardens, grounds, cattle, and such like. It is lawful to be thus accommodated, and lawful to desire and use such accommodations, with such cautions as I gave before about recreations, 1. If you do not with Ahab desire to be accommodated by that which is another man's, coveting your neighbour's possessions, or unlawfully procuring it. 2. If you be not at too much cost upon such things, expending that upon them that should be laid out upon greater and better things. 3. But especially, if you desire such accommodations for right ends, sincerely referring all to God's honour, and desiring them, not principally to please your own fancy, and carnal mind, but for the enabling you the better and more cheerfully to serve God. Nothing but God may be loved for itself. When the pleasing of the flesh and fancy is the utmost thing we look at in any of our desires, they are wicked and idolatrous. Our houses therefore must be fitted to necessary uses, and not to inordinate delights. Our gardens, orchards, walks, and such like, must be first suited to necessity, and then so much delight as is useful to us for the promoting of our holiness; but not to any useless tempting delight.

But worldlings and sensual persons will not be tied to these Christian rules. Alas, it is the farthest matter from their minds, to make heaven the end of all their earthly possessions and accommodations. They may hypocritically talk of God, and of serving him by their estates; but really it is the pleasing of a fleshly mind that is the thing which they intend. They have more delight in their houses, and gardens, and lands, and cattle, than in God and the hopes of life everlasting. They desire fair houses that they may be thought to be no mean persons in the world, and that they may please their humours that run after creatures for felicity and content. I would desire such men to consider these things.

1. All these are but the baits of satan to delight you and entangle your desires, and find you work in seeking after them, while you neglect far greater matters. Can you have while to look so much after superfluities and delights in the world, when you have necessaries yet to look after for your souls? Have you not greater things to mind than these, which these occasion you to neglect?

2. Do you really find that they conduce to your main end, even to make you more holy, or more serviceable to God? Nay, do not your own consciences tell you, that they hinder you, and cross those ends? And yet will you go against your experience?

3. If you are humble, conscionable Christians, you feel cause enough already to lament, that your love to God and delight in him, is no more; and yet are you preparing snares for your souls, to steal away that little remnant of your affections, which you seemed to reserve for God?

4. If you have any spark of grace in you, you know that the flesh and the world are your most dangerous enemies; and you know that the way that the world doth undo men, is by enticing them to over-value it and over-love it; and that those that love it most, are deepest in a state of condemnation; and the less men love it, the less they are hurt or endangered by it. And do you not know that you are liker to over-love a sumptuous house, with gardens, orchards, and such accommodations, than a mean habitation? Why should you be such enemies to your own salvation, as to make temptations for yourselves? Have you not temptations enough already? Do you deal with those you have so well, and overcome them so easily and so constantly, as that you have reason to desire more? If Christ your general send you upon a hotter service, you may go on with courage, and expect his help; but if you will so glory in your own strength, as to run into the hotter battle, and call for more and stronger enemies, it is easy to conjecture, how you will come off. If you are Christians, know yourselves; you know that in the meanest state, you are too prone to over-love the world, and that under God's medicinal afflictions, you cannot be so weaned from it as you ought! Are you not daily constrained to groan and complain to God under the burden of too much love of the world, and too much delight in worldly things? If this be not your case, I see not how you can have any sincerity of saving grace. And if it be your case, will you be so sottish, and hypocritical, as to complain daily to God of your sin, and in the mean time to love and cherish it? to groan under your disease, and wilfully eat and drink that which you know doth increase it? What will you think of a man that will pray to God to save him from uncleanness, and yet will dwell no where but in a brothel-house? What do you better, that must needs have the world in the loveliest

garb, and must needs have house, and grounds, and all things in that plight, as are fittest to entice the heart; and then will complain to God, that you over-love the world, and love him too little? To your shame you may speak it, when you do it so wilfully, and cherish the sin which you thus complain of. If God call you into a state of fulness and temptations, watch the more narrowly over your affections, and your practices; and use no more of the creatures for yourself, if you have ten thousand pounds a-year, than if you had but a hundred; but do not seek and long for temptations: wish not for danger, unless you were better able to pass through it.

5. Remember when your fancies desire such things, not only that it is an enemy that desireth them, and to please your enemy is not safe for you; but also that it is the way that most have perished by, to have the world before them in too pleasing and lovely a condition. Remember Nebuchadnezzar's case (Dan. 4:30.), that for glorying in his pompous buildings, was turned as a madman among the beasts. Remember the rich man's sad example, Luke 12:20. and 16 and think whether it be safe to imitate them. If men must perish for loving the creature more than God, methinks you should long most for that condition, in which the creature appeareth least lovely, or is least likely to steal your love from God, and in which you may love him and enjoy him most.

6. And bethink you how unsuitable it is to your condition, to desire sumptuous buildings, and enticing accommodations to your flesh. Have you not taken God for your portion, and heaven for your home? And are you not strangers and pilgrims here? And is not God and everlasting glory sufficient for you? You profess all this, if you profess to be Christians; and if you be not, you should not profess

that you are. And what! do you begin to repent of your choice? Must you yet turn to the pomp and vanity of the world again? And will you quit your hopes of God and glory? Ah, poor souls! what little need have you of such great matters on earth? You have but a little to do with them! and but a little while to stay with them! And will not a mean habitation, and shorter accommodations serve you for so short a time? Stay but a while, and your souls shall have house-room enough in heaven or hell, and a narrow grave of seven feet long will serve your bodies till the resurrection. And cannot you make shift with an ordinary habitation, and with small and common things till then? Naked you came into the world, and naked you must go out: make not then so great a stir in dressing, and undressing, and feathering a nest, that will be so soon pulled down.

7. And it is a dangerous sign that your time on earth is short, when you have most content in outward things. I have told you once in another discourse (which I have since seen more of) that people that much set their hearts upon any earthly thing, do use to be snatched away by death just when they have attained it, before they can have the comfort of possessing it. Just when their houses are built; just when their debts are paid, and their estates cleared and settled; just when they have such and such a thing which they earnestly desired, then they are gone; as the fool in Luke 12:20. "This night shall thy soul be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"

8. And you do but prepare for a double sorrow, when you must leave all these. Do you think that the more you love or delight in any thing below, you will not be the more loath to leave it? Do not think only of the present content, but ask your hearts, 'Shall I be more willing to

part with a sumptuous house, and commodious gardens, walks, and fields, than with a mean habitation, and less pleasing things?' O, how it tears the very heart of the worldling, when he sees that he must for ever leave all that which he set so much by, and which hath cost him so dear! If he set his heart but on a horse, or any creature, the loss of it is a double suffering. Much more will he be wounded with the loss of all, that his mind was so much set upon.

Remember, therefore, Christians, that as these accommodations are mercies which you must faithfully use, when they are cast upon you; so they are snares not to be sought after; and matter for your self-denial to neglect. As they are provision for the flesh to fulfil its desires, you must not know them. You have a building of God to mind and look after; a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, and it better beseemeth you, earnestly to groan, to be so clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up of life, 2 Cor. 5:1, 2. 4. Possess present things as not possessing them; and use them as not abusing them, for the form of them passeth away.

CHAPTER XXVI

Apparel as used for this Carnal End, &c.

9. ANOTHER object of sensuality to be denied, is apparel, as desired for this carnal end. Though clothing be a consequent of sin, yet now to man in this necessity it is a mercy and a duty, so be it we use it with such cautions as in the foresaid cases is expressed. 1. That our end be the furnishing our frail bodies for the work of God, and the preserving them from that shame, and cold, and hurt which would unfit us for his service. 2. And that our apparel be fitted as near as we

can to these ends; that is, to healthful warmth, and comeliness; and that under the name of comeliness we do not fit them to carnal ends, to set us out to the eyes of men, and to raise their esteem of our worth or comeliness of person: but be satisfied if we avoid the shame of nakedness and contemptible unhandsomeness. 3. To which end we should see that we affect not to rise above those of our own rank, nor equal ourselves in apparel with our superiors; but go with the lower sort of our condition. 4. And that we imitate not the fashions of light and vain persons; but keep company in our attire with the most wise and sober, and grave persons about us. 5. And that we bestow no needless cost upon our attire, because we must be accountable for all that God entrusteth us with. 6. And that we change not causelessly. Thus must apparel be used: the cheapest that is warm and comely, according to the fashion of the gravest persons of our rank, and the lowest of them.

But alas, this childish trifle the devil hath made a bait of sensuality. The care that people have about it, the cost they bestow on superfluities, their desire to go with the highest of their rank, to say nothing of mutable and immodest fashions, do shew to what end it is that they use it. I desire these kind of people to think of these few things that I shall say to them.

1. This vanity of apparel, is the certain effect of the vanity of your mind; you openly proclaim yourselves to be persons of a foolish, childish temper, and poor understanding: among the most ungodly people, they that have but common wisdom, do look upon this vanity of inordinate apparel as quite below them. And therefore it is commonly taken to be the special sin of women, and children, and lightheaded, silly, empty men. Those that have no inward worth to

commend them to the world, are silly souls indeed, if they think any wise folks will take a silken coat instead of it! It is wisdom, and holiness and righteousness, that are the ornaments of man; and that is his beauty which beautifieth his soul. And do you think that among wise men fine clothes will go instead of wisdom, or virtue, or holiness? You may put as fine clothes upon a fool as upon a wise man; and will that, think you, make him pass for wise? When a gallant came into the shop of Apelles, that famous painter, to have his picture drawn, as long as he stood silent, the apprentices carried themselves reverently towards him, because he shone in gold and silver lace; but when he began to talk, they perceived he was a fool, and they left their reverence, and all fell a laughing at him. When people see you in an extraordinary garb, you draw their observation towards you, and one asketh, who is yonder that is so fine? And another asks, who is yonder? And when they perceive that you are more witless and worthless than other folks, they will but laugh at you and despise you. Excess in apparel is the very sign of folly, that is hanged out to tell the world what you are, as a sign at an inn-door acquaints the passenger that there he may have entertainment. You draw folks to suspect that all is not well with you, where there needs all this ado. It is sure a sorry house that needeth many props; and a diseased body that needeth so much medicining; and a deformed face that needeth painting; and what is gaudy attire to the body, but such as painting is to the face? If I see artificial teeth in your heads, I must think that you want natural ones that were better. If I perceive your breath to be still sweetened by art, I shall suspect that it would stink without it. And if I see people inordinately careful of their apparel, I must needs suspect there is some special cause for it: all is not well where all this care and curiosity is necessary. And what is

the deformity that you would hide by this? Is it that of your mind? Why you bewray it more? You tell all that see you, that you are empty, silly souls, as plainly as a morrice-dancer, or a stage-player, doth tell folks what he is by his attire. Is it the deformities of your bodies that you would hide this way? I confess, that is the best excuse that can be made for this excess: for apparel will do more to hide the deformities of the body than of the mind. But the shape of your clothes is fittest for this (so far it is fit to be attempted:) for the bravery of them will do little, but draw men's observation the more upon your infirmity. If you say that you have no such extraordinary necessity, then I must say that you do yourselves wrong to entice people to suspect it.

2. And also you make an open ostentation of pride, or lust, or both, to all that look upon you. In other cases you are careful to hide your sin, and take it for an heinous injury if you be but openly told of it and reproved: how comes it then to pass that you are here so forward yourselves to make it known, that you must carry the signs of it open in the world! Is it not a dishonour to rogues and thieves, that have been burnt in the hand or forehead, or must ride about with a paper pinned to their backs, declaring their crimes to all that see them; so that every one may say, yonder is a thief, and yonder is a perjured man: and is it not much like it for you to carry the badge of pride or lust abroad with you in the open streets or meetings? Why do you desire to be so fine, or neat, or excessively comely? Is it not to draw the eyes and observations of men upon you? And to what end? Is it not to be thought either rich, or beautiful, or of a handsome person? And to what end desire you these thoughts of men? Do you not know that this desire is pride itself? You must needs be somebody, and fain you would be observed and valued; and fain you would be noted to

be of the best or highest rank that you can expect to be reckoned of: and what is this but pride? And I hope you know that pride is the devil's sin, the firstborn of all iniquity; and that which the God of heaven abhors! so that it were more credit for you in the eyes of men of wisdom to proclaim youselves beggars, sots, or idiots, than to proclaim your pride. And too oft it shews a pang of lust as well as pride; especially in young persons; and few are so forward to this sin as they. This bravery and finery is but the fruit of a procacious mind; it is plainly a wooing, alluring act. It is not for nothing that they would fain be eyed, and be thought comely or fair in others' eyes! Somewhat they want; you may conjecture what! And even married people, if they love their credit, should take heed by such means of drawing suspicion upon themselves. Sirs, if you are guilty of folly, pride and lust, your best way is to seek of God an effectual cure, and to use such means as tends to cure it; and not such as tend to cherish it, and increase it; as certainly fineness in clothing doth. But if you will not cure it, for shame conceal it, and do not tell every one that sees you what is in your heart: what would you think of one that should go up and down the street, telling all that meet him, 'I am a thief,' or 'I am a fornicator,' would you not think that he were a compound of foolery and knavery? And how little do you come short of this that write upon your own backs, 'Folly, pride and lust,' or tell them by your apparel, 'Take notice of me: I am foolish, proud, and lustful?'

3. And if you be so silly as to think that bravery is a means of honour, you should withal consider that it is but a shameful begging of honour from those that look upon you, when you shew them not any thing to purchase or deserve it. Honour must be forced by desert and worth, and not come by begging; for that is no honour that is given to

the undeserving. It is but the shadow of desert, and will constantly follow it among the wise and good, but never go without it. Your bravery doth so openly shew your desire of esteem and honour, that it plainly tells all wise men that you are the less worthy of it. For the more a man desireth esteem, the less he deserves it. And you tell the world by your attire that you desire it; even as plainly and foolishly as if you should say to the folks in the streets, 'I pray think well of me, and take me for a handsome, comely person, and for one that is above the common sort.' Would you not laugh at one that should make such a request to you? Why, what do you less, when by your attire you beg estimation from them? And for what, I pray you, should we esteem you? Is it for your clothes? Why I can put a silver lace upon a mawkin, or a silken coat on a post, or an ass. Is it for your comely bodies? Why a wicked Absalom was beautiful, and the basest harlots have had as much of this as you: a comely body, or beautiful face doth oft betray the soul, but never saveth it from hell. And your bodies are never the comlier for you dress, whatever they may seem. Is it for your virtues that you would be esteemed? Why pride is the greatest enemy to virtue, and as great a deformity to the soul as the small-pox is to the body; and he that will think you ever the honester for a new suit, or a silver lace, doth as little know what honesty is as yourselves. For shame, therefore, give over begging for esteem, at least by such a means as inviteth all wise men to deny your suit; but either let honour come without begging for, or be without it.

4. Consider also that excess of apparel doth quite contradict the end that proud persons do intend it for. I confess it doth sometimes ensnare a fool, and so accomplish the desires of the lustful; but it seldom attaineth the ends of the proud: for their desire is to be more highly esteemed, and almost all men do think the more meanly of

them. Wise men have more wit, than to think the tailor can make a wise man or woman, or an honest man or woman, or a handsome man or woman: good men pity them, and lament their folly and vice, and wish them wisdom and humility. In the eyes of a wise and gracious man, a poor self-denying, humble, patient, heavenly Christian, is worth a thousand of these painted posts and peacocks. And it so falls out that the ungodly themselves frustrate the proud person's expectations. For as covetous men do not like covetousness in another, because they would get most themselves; so proud persons like not pride in others, because they would not have any to vie with them, or overtop them, and be looked upon and preferred before them. None look with such scorn and envy at your bravery, as those that are as silly and sinful as yourselves, who cannot endure that you should excel them in vanity; so that good and bad do ordinarily despise or pity you for that which you think should procure your esteem.

5. Consider also, that apparel is the fruit or consequent of sin, that laid man naked and open unto shame; and is it fit that you should be proud of that which is ordained to hide your shame; and which should humble you, by minding you of the sin that caused the necessity of it?

6. And you should bethink you better than most gallants do, what account you mean to make to God for the money that you lay out in excess of bravery. Will it, think you, be a good and comfortable account, to say, 'Lord, I laid out so much to feed and manifest my pride and lust,' when such abundance of pious and charitable uses did call for all that you could spare? Many a lord, and knight, and gallant bestoweth more in one suit of clothes, or in one set of

hangings, or in the superfluous dress of a daughter, than would keep a family of poor people for a twelvemonth, or that would maintain a poor scholar for higher service than ever they themselves will do; and many a poor boy or girl goeth without a bible, or any good books, that they may lay out all they have on their backs.

7. Lastly, I beseech you not to forget what it is that you are so carefully doing; and what those bodies are that you so adorn, and are so proud of, and set out to the sight of the world in such bravery. Do you not know yourselves? Is it not a lump of warm and thick clay, that you would have men observe and honour? When the soul that you neglect is once gone from them, they will be set out then in another garb. That little space of earth that must receive them, must be defiled with their filthiness and corruption; and the dearest of your friends will have no more of your company, nor one smell or sight of you more, if they can choose. There is not a carrion in the ditch that is more loathsome than that gallant painted corpse will be a little after death. And what are you in the mean time? Even bags of filth, and living graves, in which the carcases of your fellow-creatures are daily buried and corrupt. There is scarce a day with most of you, but some part of a dead carcase is buried in your bodies, in which, as in a filthy grave, they lie and corrupt, and part of them turneth into your substance, and the rest is cast out into filthy excrements. And thus you walk like painted sepulchres; your fine clothes are the adorned covers of filth, and phlegm, and dung. If you did but see what is within the proudest gallant, you would say the inside did much differ from the outside. It may be a hundred worms are crawling in the bowels of that beautiful damsel, or adorned fool, that set out themselves to be admired for their bravery. If a little of the

fifth within do but turn to the scab or the small-pox, you shall see what a piece it was that was wont to have all that curious trimming.

Away then with these vanities, and be not children all your days; nay, be not proud of that which your children themselves can spare! Be ashamed that ever you have been guilty of so much dotage, as to think that people should honour you for a borrowed bravery, which you put off at night, and on in the morning! O poor deluded dust and worms'—meat! lay by your dotage, and know yourselves: look after that which may procure you deserved and perpetual esteem, and see that you make sure of the honour that is of God. Away with deceitful ornaments and gauds, and look after the inward real worth. Grace is not set out and honoured by fine clothes, but clouded, wronged and dishonoured by excess. It is the inward glory that is the real glory. The image of God must needs be the chiefest beauty of man: let that shine forth in the holiness of your lives, and you will be honourable indeed. Peter telleth you of such a conversation of women as may win their unbelieving husbands without the word. And what is it? "While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear; whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning, of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in old time, the holy women that trusted in God adorned themselves, being in subjection to their husbands;" 1 Pet. 3:1–5.

CHAPTER XXVII

Ease, Quietness and worldly Peace to be Denied

10. ANOTHER part of carnal self-interest to be denied, is, ease, quietness, and worldly peace, which the slothful and self-seekers prefer before the pleasing of God. Both the ease of the mind and of the body are here comprehended; and slothfulness in God's nearest service, and also in the works of our callings to be reprehended.

The same fleshly power that draweth one man to whoredom, and drunkenness, and covetousness, doth draw another to sloth, and idleness. It is but several ways of pleasing the same flesh, and obeying the same sensuality. And because that idleness and sloth is so great and common a sin, and yet made so light of by the most, I shall briefly tell you the mischiefs of it, and the reasons that should make you hate it.

1. Slothfulness doth contradict the very end of our creation and preservation, and the frame of our nature; and so provoketh God to cut us off, and cast us as useless into the fire. Who dare so wrong the wisdom of God, as to say or think that he made us to do nothing? If a man make a house, it is to dwell in; if he make a watch, it is to tell him the hour of the day, and every thing is for its proper use. And is man made to be idle? What man, that is the noblest inferior creature, and an active creature, fitted for work, and the highest work! shall he be idle? Justly may God then hew him down as a dead and withered tree, and suffer him no more to cumber his ground.

2. Slothfulness is a sin that loseth the precious gifts of God. Our faculties and our members are his gifts and talents, which he hath committed to us to use for his service; so are our goods and all that we have: and shall we hide them in a napkin, or idly neglect to use them? O, what abundance of excellent mercies lie useless and idle,

because you are idle that should use them! Every hour that you lose in idleness, what noble faculties, and large provisions are all laid by! As much as in you lieth, you make the whole creation to be, and work in vain. Why should the sun shine an hour or minute for you in vain? Why should the earth bear you an hour in vain? Why should the springs and rivers run for you an hour in vain? Why should the air refresh you an hour in vain? Why should your pulse beat one stroke in vain; or your lungs once breathe a breath in vain? Shall all be at work for you to further your work, and will you think that idleness is no sin?

3. Moreover, laziness and sloth is a sin that loseth you much precious time. All the time is lost that you are idle in. Yea, when you are at work, if you do it slothfully, you are losing much of your time. A diligent person will go further, and do more in an hour, than the lazy flesh-pleaser will do in two. When the slothful is praying, or reading, and working in his calling, he is but losing half his time, which diligence would redeem. And is our time so short and precious, and yet is idleness an excusable sin? what, loiter so near night! so near eternity, when we have but a little time to work! O, work while it is day, for the night is coming when none can work. Were it but for this, that sloth doth steal so much of our time, I must think it no better than an heinous thievery.

4. And by this means we rob ourselves. We might be getting some good all the time that we are idle; or doubly advantage ourselves, if sloth did not keep us company in our work. "The slothful is brother to him that is a great waster;" Prov. 18:9. Slothfulness is self-murdering; men die while they lie still and wish. It is a sin that famisheth soul and body; "The desire of the slothful killeth him,

because his hands refuse to labour;" Prov. 21:25. It is the common cause of beggary and want; and what comfort can you have under such afflictions which you bring upon yourselves? If you want food or raiment, if your wives and children are in want, how can you think that God should take care of you and afford you relief, when you bring this on yourselves by pleasing your flesh which is his enemy? If a soldier get hurt by trucking with the enemy, he may rather look that his general should hang him than relieve him. And how should good men be moved to compassionate you? If God doth impoverish you, and you come to want by innocency or a righteous cause, they must needs be ready to relieve you: but if sloth, or pride, or gluttony, or drunkenness bring you to it, till you repent, I see not how they should relieve you, at least any further than to keep you alive. For if you are set to please your flesh by idleness, must I join with you to please it by such supplies as shall cherish you in your sin? No, one flesh-pleaser is enough for one man! If you will please it either by idleness, or by luxury, yourselves, expect not that others should please it by your relief, and make provision for your sin. If I may not make provision for my own flesh to satisfy its lusts, neither must I do it for another.

But that is not the worst, slothfulness is the common cause of men's damnation; when they see a temptation and danger before them, slothfulness hindereth them from resisting it: when heaven is offered them, slothfulness makes them sit still and lose it. They must run, and strive, and fight, and conquer, and these are not works for a slothful person; especially when they must be continued to the death. So that it is manifest, that most men in the world are undone soul and body, by the sin of sloth.

5. And by this you rob others as well as yourselves; you owe the world the fruit of your labour; you rob the souls of men, to whom you should do good. You rob the church, that should be bettered by you. You rob the commonwealth, of which you are a member, and should have benefit by you. You owe your labours to church and commonwealth, and the souls of men, and will you not pay so great a debt? You deserve no room in the church or commonwealth, but to be cut off as an unprofitable member, if you bring no advantage to them. They say the bees will not suffer a drone in the hive. Nay, if you be hired servants, you plainly rob your masters if you are slothful, as much as if you stole their money or goods. If you buy a hundred sheep of a man, and he let you have but fourscore, doth he not rob or cheat you? And if a man buy a year's or a day's labour of you, and you let him have but half a year's labour, or half a day's labour, because of your sloth, do you not defraud or rob him of the other half? So that the idle are thieves to themselves, to the church, and the souls of men, to the commonwealth, and those that they are related to; even to their wives and children, for whom they should provide due maintenance by their labour.

6. And you are injurious to the honest poor, in that you disable yourselves from relieving them: when God commandeth you to work with your hands, not only for yourselves, but that you may have to give to them that need; Eph. 4:28. What if all men should do as you do, how would the poor be maintained, and the church and commonwealth served?

7. Yea, worst of all, you are guilty of robbing God himself. It is him that you owe your labours to, and the improvement of all the talents that he lendeth to you; and idleness is unfaithfulness to the God of

heaven that setteth you on work: even in working for men, you must do it ultimately for God. "Not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God: and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord: but he that doth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done;" Col. 3:22, 23. If it be an offence to wrong man, what is it to wrong God? And if you may not be slothful in the works of a man, what a crime is it to be slothful in the work of the God of heaven? The greater your master is, the more heinous it is to be lazy in his service. Remember the curse on them that do the work of the Lord deceitfully, Jer. 48:10. All work that you have to do is the work of the Lord.

8. And consider, that the idle forfeit the protection and provision of God; even their daily bread. For must he support and feed you to do nothing? His own rule is, "that if any man will not work, neither should he eat," 2 Thess. 3:10. And if he may not eat, we may not relieve him.

9. And if idleness had not been a heinous sin, the apostle would never have commanded us to avoid the company of such, as if they were unfit to converse with Christians, 2 Thess. 3.

10. Consider what abundance of work we have to do, and of how great importance! O, what a deal have we to do for our poor souls, and for many about us, besides all our bodily employment in the world! Methinks, every man that knows why he is a man, and what it is, in an inch of time to work for everlasting, should never find an hour for idleness in his life, but still cry out, 'How short and swift is

time, and how great and long is the work!' A man that had all the town on fire about his ears, or a man that were fighting for his life, or a man that were in a leaking vessel ready to sink under him, might better be lazy, than a man that is at work for an endless life.

11. Moreover, idleness is a base kind of vice: it is the imitation of a block or a stone that lieth still, when that which hath life will be in action.

12. And it is usually a continual sin, or at least makes up a great part of the lives of many that are addicted to it: a drunkard will not always be drunk; and a liar will not always be lying; but a slothful person will be most commonly slothful.

And, to conclude, lay all this together, and think what a reckoning a slothful person is like to have, that by his sin is always running behindhand, and will have the neglected time, and means, and mercies of almost all his life to answer for.

And now you see the greatness of this sin, abhor it, and awake from it. You have much to do, and souls to save; and the case of your flesh and fleshly minds is one thing that must be denied, before it can be accomplished. The slothful is still craving, yet a little slumber, and yet a little ease; and he is still upon delays, even when he is convinced of his danger and his duty: when he knows that he must turn or die, yet he is delaying and putting off till another time. And so the vineyard and garden of the sluggard, are grown over with nettles and weeds; and he hath scarce a duty to do, but there is a thorny hedge, or a lion in the way. Deny this ease, and be up and doing.

And there are three sorts of persons that have especial need of this advice. The first is those that by the phlegmatic distemper of their bodies, are more prone to heavness and slothfulness than others. The more such are disposed to it, the more should they watch against it, and resist it.

The second sort are beggars, and other idle, wandering persons, that make a trade of idleness, and worse: such also as ballad-singers, stage-players, jugglers, cheaters, and most ale-sellers that spend their time in tippling and talking with their guests; and other idle persons, that will spend whole hours together in twatling and talking idly, and of other men's matters. All these live in a course of flesh-pleasing, and of heinous sin; and must better learn to deny the flesh before they can be the true disciples of Christ. This is not the life that God called you into his vineyard for; no, nor that he sent you into the world for, to waste your short and precious days in potting, and piping, and prating, and other ways of idleness: nor should such be suffered in a commonwealth.

The third sort are, too many lords, knights, and gentlemen, that think because they have enough to maintain them, that it is lawful to live an idle life; or if they do any thing that is profitable to the commonwealth, it is rather as a recreation than as a calling: now and then an hour, in the midst of their pleasures and idleness, is the most. It is a miserable life that this sort of persons live; even in the sins of Sodom (which cry for the vengeance of Sodom), pride, fulness of bread, and idleness. As if these persons that have most wages should do God the least work, and they that have most of his stock in their hands, should make the least use of it; or those that are obliged to God by the greatest mercies, should do least in manifesting their

thankfulness or fidelity! What incongruities are these! Who should be so busy and laborious as those that have the greatest account to make, and those that are to be exemplary to the rest? Truly, gentlemen, I must deal plainly with you, that idleness, and the expression of it among the most of you, in hunting, and hawking, and bowling, and complimenting, and visitations, and vain discoursings, and excess of drinking, and tedious meals, is become the common shame of your order, and must be corrected before your honour or consciences can be recovered; and I am so far from any partiality in this censure of you, that I must tell you, if I knew one of my own profession that was guilty but of the tenth part of some of your idleness, I would do my best to rid the church of him, and have him cast out among the sensual. And you may do well sometimes to ask yourselves, whence it comes to pass, that negligent idle ministers must be sequestered and turned out of all, and idle magistrates let alone? One reason is, because gentlemen can better cheap compel a minister to painfulness than themselves, and punish ministers for negligence, than themselves. And another reason is, because all faithful ministers themselves, in love to the church, are the seekers of this severity; but magistrates are few of them so self-denying, and forward to seek for such severity against the idle and negligent of their own order. But doth not your calling require diligence, as well as ours? It is a brutish, ungrateful conceit, of any man, to think that he may live idly, because he is rich. The richest men in the world are bound to as diligent labour as the poorest, though not in the same kind. And yet I can perceive that most of the poor are even of the same mind; and when they labour hardest, they are idle in God's account, because they would live idly if they could. It is no thanks to them that they labour; for it is necessity that doth constrain them. I

can hear them say, that they would not work, at least but little, if they had but money enough. God will judge these as idle persons, because he takes the will for the deed. You must labour in obedience to God, and work as his servants, and that with cheerfulness and delight, and deny that self and flesh that would have ease, if ever you would have the heavenly reward.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Delight of Thriving and Prosperity, &c.

11. ANOTHER selfish interest to be denied, is, a delight in prosperity, and seeing ourselves thrive, and our designs succeed for worldly things. The possession of these things doth not so much delight, as the hopes and successes of our endeavours to attain them. The very thoughts of prospering in our undertakings, and of being in a thriving course, and likely to reach some higher things which are in our eye and hope, is the greatest part of the content of worldlings. Men think that the world can do more for them than it can, and is sweeter than it is, and therefore they are very eager in seeking it, and please themselves much with the thoughts of their supposed felicity; but when they have reached the matter of their desires, they find it is not the thing they took it for. But in the meantime they feed themselves with fancies and expectations, and think that though this doth not content them, which they have attained, yet such or such a thing more would do it; and when they have that, yet something more would do; and still, though they come short of the felicity they expect, yet it pleaseth them that they think they are in the way to it, and see their endeavours seem to prosper. The poor man that hath a desire but to reach to a competency, doth please himself much when

he perceiveth that he is fair for it. Much more do the rich in the prospering of their designs, for the increase of their riches; and thus the "turning away of the simple doth slay them, and the prosperity of fools doth destroy them;" Prov. 1:32. If their prosperity be such an eyesore even to the godly in temptation, when they judge according to the flesh, no wonder if it be a great matter in their own eyes; Psal. 73:3. If the best are in danger of puffing up with carnal delight and confidence in their attainments, and saying in their prosperity, "we shall never be moved," Psal. 30:6., no wonder if it be much more so with others. Prosperity is as strong a trial to many as suffering for Christ; O, how eager is the flesh upon this bait, and how close doth it cleave to what it doth attain!

See then that in this you deny yourselves: not in refusing prosperity when God bestows it on you, but in refusing the sensual delights which it affordeth the flesh to satisfy its lust. Not in pulling down your houses, or casting away your estates, or hindering your increase; but, 1. See that you do not promise yourselves too much in the creature; feed not your carnal fancies with vain hopes. Think not too highly of a prosperous state. Judge not of it as it accommodateth the flesh, but as it either helps or hinders you for God and heaven; and then you will perceive that it is a heavy charge and burden to the best, if not a dangerous temptation. O, if you knew but how dear the most do pay for their prosperity, you would pity them, and have lower thoughts of prosperity.

2. Seek not after prosperity too eagerly. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then if other things be cast in, or added to you, take them thankfully, but with self-suspicion and holy fear; but run not after them. "Labour not for the meat that perisheth,

but for that which endureth to everlasting life;" (John 6:27.) and then take your daily bread as from your father's provision. Labour about the world, in obedience to God; but not for the world as your ultimate end.

3. When prosperity is given you by God, then above all take heed how you use it. Let carnal self and corrupt desires fare never the better for it, if you had all the country, or were princes in the earth; but as you have it from God, remember you have it for God, and use it for him. When the flesh would be pleased and lifted up, whether with delicious meats and drinks, or carnal pomp, applause or ostentation, or by sports, or idleness, or any other sensual delight. deny it these desires, as much as if you had no riches, and use nothing but for health and the service of God; and tell the flesh, 'It was not for thee, to the pleasing of thy desires, that God hath prospered me, but it was for his own more blessed ends; and therefore I will not serve or please thee by my prosperity, but him that gave it me.' Do not think you have ever the more liberty to gratify your appetites in eating and drinking, because you are rich, or to gratify your flesh in inordinate sleep, or ease, or sports, or idleness; but let the flesh have as little as if you had the meanest estate, in which necessity did not deny you that which might fit you for the work of God.

Quest. But may not a gentleman fare better than a poor man? And may he not spend more time in ease or recreations? Or may he not wear more sumptuous apparel?

Answ. 1. A rich man that hath a greater family, must have a greater quantity of provision than a poor man that hath but few; and so must the poorest too that hath the like number. And for the quality: many

poor are deprived of that which is most healthful through their necessity; and therefore here it is lawful for the rich to go beyond them, and to use so much of the creature as is most healthful and useful to their duties. But for all this, the richest man in England hath no more allowance to eat or drink one bit or cup for the mere pleasing of his carnal appetite, without any higher end, than the poorest man that is: it is a sin to both. It was a rich man that was tormented in hell fot taking up his good things in this life, in being clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring deliciously or sumptuously every day. Luke 16:22. And the same answer I must give to the rest of the question, if a poor man want that ease, or sleep, or recreation, that would fit him for God's service; a rich may take it, but not a jot more. He may not lie one hour in bed, nor spend one hour in talk, or sports, or long dinners, beyond what is useful to his Christian ends, let him be never so rich. Rich men have as much work to do as the poor, and as much need to watch, pray and fast, and study to prepare for death and judgment, which will not spare them because they are rich. If it be far hardest for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, by Christ's own testimony, then it is clear that rich men have far greatest need to be painful to overcome their dangers, and make sure work for their immortal state. 3. And as for apparel, I grant, that rich men that are magistrates, or in any office or calling that requires it, may lawfully go in richer apparel than the poor; but this should not be one jot to please their carnal, proud fancies, or gratify inordinate fleshly desires, but merely for health, and for such ornament as tendeth to the honour of their office: so that God, and not self, must be the end of all. Take warning therefore by the ruins of so many thousands as prosperity hath undone, and by so many dreadful passages of Scripture which shew the danger of it;

and see that if you prosper in any worldly thing, you offer it all to God, and deny yourselves, and prosper not to the flesh.

CHAPTER XXIX

Children and Relations how to be Denied

12. ANOTHER selfish interest is in friends and children, and other near and dear relations, and this is also to be denied.

Not that you should imitate those unnatural heretics that tell us that fathers and mothers, and brethren, and sisters, and husbands, and princes, and wives, and subjects, are all carnal relations that must be disowned, any further than justice binds us to a retribution to parents, or others that have been at pains or cost upon us. No, this is worse than heathenish impiety, and not only against the fifth commandment, but abundance of the plainest passages through the Scripture. To be without natural affection, and disobedient to parents, is part of the character of those impious professors of whom Paul prophesied, 2 Tim. 3:2, 3. "If Christian servants have heathens to their masters, they must not therefore cast off the yoke, but count them worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed: and if they have believing masters, they must not despise them because they are brethren, but the rather do them service because they are faithful." This is the doctrine of the Gospel, which establisheth, and not dissolveth, our relations: and "if any teach otherwise, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doating about questions and strifes of words;" 1 Tim. 6:1–4. Believing wives must stay even with unbelieving husbands, and win them to Christ by an eminent subjection, chastity, modesty, and piety; 1 Pet. 3:1–6. 1 Cor.

7:13, 14. And the like may be said of other relations. God calls us not, as Popish votaries conceive, to renounce and separate from our natural and other near relations, on pretence of being devoted to him. The words of Paul, 2 Cor. 5:16, are abused by them. It is true, we must know no man after the flesh, no not Christ himself; that is, as esteeming them principally for carnal excellencies, as personages, greatness, birth, &c. or to carnal advantages and ends, or preferring the body and common relations before the inward spiritual worth and spiritual relations; and thus we must not know either parents, or children, or husbands, or wives, after the flesh; nor should a Christian know or do any thing after the flesh as a carnal man: but yet, as we still continue our relation to Christ as his disciples, and servants, and members, and redeemed ones, for all that we know him not after the flesh, so must we continue our relations to others, and be faithful in the duties of those relations, and this after the Spirit, and for God.

So that by this you may see, that it is our relations, carnally considered, that are the fleshly interest which we must not know; that is, as they are looked upon as any part of that self, or of the interest of that self which would be its own end and God, and which is opposite to God, or not subordinate to him. To look upon your children more as yours than as God's is a carnal selfish thought: to love them inordinately, and more because they are your own than because they are God's, and to love your own interest in your children more than God's interest in them, is a selfish regarding them after the flesh. Grace doth not destroy nature, nor natural relations or affections; but it sanctifieth them all to God, and carrieth us above it and destroyeth it, as glorious intuition destroyeth gracious knowing in part, that is, by perfecting it. Before

sanctification, we know, esteem, regard, and love our parents, children, husbands, wives, merely as thus related to us, and in these carnal respects, and rise no higher; and if we had conversed with Christ himself, and eat and drank in his presence, and loved him accordingly, it would have been but a selfish, carnal knowledge, esteem, and love. But now we are sanctified, as God is exalted, and self-denied and annihilated, as opposed or separated from God, so are all things that belong to self; and therefore, if we had loved parents, or Christ himself, with such a carnal, selfish love before, yet now we love them with higher love, that carrieth self and all to God. And thus even self is so destroyed (as opposite to God and separate from him), as thereby to be exalted as united and subservient to him. And so is the love of friends, relations, or Christ himself (if we had loved him as a natural kinsman or brother, as some did that yet believed not in him); it is destroyed, but by an exalting, perfecting destruction. Just so far as self is dead, so far carnal knowledge and self-interest in friends is dead, and their dearness to us for that interest, and self and they are all advanced and dedicated unto God. And thus it is that the apostle would be understood, and thus it is that self must be denied in your relations; but because much duty consisteth herein, I shall moreover tell you the several parts of it in a few directions which shall mostly extend to other relations, but principally to parents, because they are aptest to exceed.

1. See that it be God more than yourselves that you love in your children and other relations; and to that end, see what of God is in them, as they are his creatures, as devoted to him, as any way gifted by him for his service, as sanctified if they are such. He that loveth any creature for itself, and doth not principally love God in them, loveth them but carnally.

2. See therefore that you value and love those most, that have most of God in them, and the best of his endowments. Love a crooked, deformed child, that is godly, better than the most comely, or beautiful, or witty, that is ungodly. When parents have a humorous, unreasonable love, to one child above the rest, without desert, or to a worse before a better, this is but a carnal, selfish love.

3. Love none excessively, but with a moderate love, such as shall allow God and holiness the preeminence: so that when you have the most love for your relations, you may have more for God, at least in the estimation, resolution, adhesion of your souls to him, if not in the passionate part of love.

4. See that you subject them to the government of Christ; labour to win all other relations to him, and devote your children to him betimes, that they may be his as soon as yours. While they have no wills of their own to use, they are to choose with your wills; that is, you are to make choice for them: and therefore if you unfeignedly dedicate them to God, you have small reason to doubt of his acceptance. This all parents do virtually that are godly; for he that is himself devoted to God by sanctification, doth with himself devote all that he hath, and virtually all that ever he shall have: and if he understand himself, he will do it actually. And hence it is that the seed of believers (yea, of one believer,) are said to be holy; not only or chiefly because they are yours, born of your bodies, nor merely from a promise of God, that hath no pre-supposed reason from the subject; but because they are the children of one that hath devoted himself, and all that he hath, to God: and if he understand himself, doth actually offer, dovote, and dedicate his child to God in the

solemn baptism, ordinance, and covenant. And God will sure accept all, that upon his own invitation are consecrated and offered to him.

5. See that you submit them heartily to the dispose of God: so that whatever he doth with them, for sickness or health, for poverty or riches, for honour or dishonour, for life or death, you can patiently bear it, and say as Eli, "It is the Lord, let him do as seemeth him good;" 1 Sam. 3:18. Murmur not if God afflict and take them away, even at once, as he did the sons of Job; or if he should afflict you in them, as he did David in Amnon and Absalom. Remember that as the resignation of life itself, is the point by which Christ, under the Gospel, doth try men's faith, so it was the resignation of an only son, which was next to life, by which he would try Abraham, the father of the faithful, before the incarnation of Christ. If therefore you will be children of Abraham, you must walk in the steps of faithful Abraham, and remember that your children are not your own; and be content that God do with his own as he pleases.

6. Make God their portion as much as in you lieth, and seek more for a spiritual than a temporal felicity for them, and acquaint them with their Creator in the days of their youth: as believing, that those of them that are the holiest are the happiest.

7. Devote your children to such callings and employments in which they are likeliest to be most serviceable to God. Consider their dispositions and parts, and then never ask what kind of life is the most honourable or gainful for them, but in what way and course of life they may most serve God, and be most useful to his church; and to that let them be devoted.

8. Favour them not in sin; and suffer them not to dishonour God that they are devoted to: remember Eli's example. Gentle reproofs, instead of necessary severe correction, is called by God, "a despising him, and preferring his sons before him" (1 Sam. 2:29, 30), even because his "sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not;" 1 Sam. 3:13. Take heed, as you love yourselves or them, of taking their parts against God, or against correction, and excusing the sin by which they do dishonour him.

9. Give them not, for their carnal advancement in the world, that part of your estate which is due to God. You owe it all to him; and in the disposing of it, he hath limited you to begin at home, and provide so for your children that they may have their daily bread, and so much more as they are in likelihood the fittest stewards to improve for God. But if you see the public state of the church or commonweal to stand in need of your assistance, and you shall then give almost all to your children, to make them rich and great in the world, and put off the works of greater moment with some poor, inconsiderable alms or legacy, this is to prefer self before the Lord; even as it is imagined to survive in your progeny, even when natural self can no longer enjoy it. It is a wonder, how so many men, seeming holy and devoted to God, can quiet their consciences in such a palpable sin as this. If one of them have two hundred, or three hundred pounds a year, it is a wonder if he leave a hundred a year of it to any pious or charitable use; but if he leave forty or fifty pounds to the poor, or build some small almshouse, he thinks he hath done well: all the rest must go to leave his son in equal dignity and riches in the world as himself. But of this I spoke before.

10. Lastly, be sure that you be very suspicious of self, when the case of your children or any dear relation is before you: for self is near you, and will stick close, and will not easily be thrust out of your councils, nor shaken off. And therefore in your own case, and your children's case, or the case of your near friends, you will have much ado to overcome the cunning and strong temptations to partiality, if you were the holiest saint on earth (though overcome them you will in the main, if you have true grace): but if you are dead professors, it is twenty to one but they will overcome you, and you will show the world that you are selfish hypocrites, and more for your children and friends than God.

Let me here give a few instances in this warning.

1. How often have we seen it here and elsewhere, that people that make some show of religion, and are forward to have vice punished, and discipline exercised, yet when it falls on any children, or near relations of their own, they are as much against it as they are for it in others; yea, rise up with passion and bitter reproaches of officers, ministers, or others that are the causes of it. As one hypocrite is tried when he denieth to suffer for Christ himself, so others show themselves hypocrites sooner by preferring their children; yea, their sinful children; yea, the present ease, or profit, or credit of their children, before their duty and the honour of God. And they will rather have God provoked, sin unpunished, and their children's own salvation hazarded, than they will have them justly and regularly chastised; yea, some of them rise up as malignant enemies against them that do it.

2. Again, when God hath convinced you of duty, if a carnal friend, a husband, or a parent, do but contradict it, and persuade you from a known duty or a holy life, how commonly do men obey, because forsooth they are their friends that do persuade them?

3. Moreover, when the case falls out that a man cannot follow God and his duty, and be true to his soul, but he is like to lose his friends; how commonly is God denied, that friends may not be denied, and conscience wounded, and duty balked, that the favour of friends may not be lost. O, saith one, they are the friends that I live by, my livelihood is in their hands, I am undone if they cast me off! Well, take them, and make thy best of them, and keep them as long as thou canst; if thou canst live better without God than them, or canst spare God's favour better than theirs, and they are better friends to thee than Christ is, and would be, take thy course, and judge at last whether the friend that thou didst choose, or that thou didst neglect and abuse, was the better, and would have stood thee in more stead in thy deepest extremities. Christ hath resolved you once for all, that he that loveth father or mother more than him, is not worthy of him, and cannot be his disciple: nay, if he hate not father, and mother, and all; that is, if he will not cast them all away, and forsake them as men do hated things, rather than forsake Christ and the glory which he hath promised; Luke 14:26. 33. And therefore, seeing Christ hath thought meet to instance, in the forsaking of carnal friends for his sake, as a duty of all that will be his disciples, you may see that this is a very considerable part of your self-denial; and, doubtless, it is a point that Christians are usually put to the trial in, or else Christ would not have instanced in it. Few turn to Christ, but their carnal friends will turn from them. No greater enemies to a man in the matters of his salvation (except carnal self), than carnal friends; and

therefore either God or they must be denied. For when God is for holiness, and they against it: when they are for sinful pleasures and gain, and God against it, both cannot be pleased; and therefore one of them must be denied, God or they.

CHAPTER XXX

Revengeful Passions to be Denied

13. ANOTHER part of self-denial consisteth in the denying of revengeful passions, that provoke us against those that have done us wrong, or that we judge to be our enemies. It is the common saying of such persons as are disposed to this sin, that 'revenge is sweet:' it easeth the minds of malicious persons to have their will upon their adversaries, and to see them at their feet. Nothing of all his honours and prosperity could satisfy Haman till he was revenged of Mordecai. As a burning, festering, boil, or imposthume, is eased by opening and vent, so is a boiling passionate mind, when by railing speeches, or revengeful actions, it venteth itself against them that they hate. But in this also self must be denied by all that will be Christ's disciples, for he forgiveth none but those that can heartily forgive another: and that we may know that this is a part of self-denial of great necessity, he hath put it into our prayers, and will not have us so much as ask for forgiveness ourselves, if we cannot forgive: that we may know, that seeing it is not to be asked for on lower terms, it is not to be hoped for. The forgiving grace of God in Christ, doth so melt and overcome the hearts of all true Christians, that it disposeth them in their measure to imitate him in forgiving: and they cannot find in their heart to take another by the throat for a hundred pence, when their Lord hath forgiven them ten thousand talents: Matt. 18:24. 28.

The grace that is most gloriously manifested in the Gospel, must needs make the deepest impression on the soul, and consequently conform the soul into its image: and doubtless this is love, and compassion, and forgiving mercy; and therefore he that cannot love his enemy, bless them that curse him, and pray for them that hate and persecute him, and return good for evil, can be no child of God; Matt. 5:44–46. It is an inhuman oblivion of our own condition, for a man to seek revenge of another for a trifle (for it can be no greater, as it is against such simple worms as we), when so many and heinous sins have been forgiven us. Doth God remit to us the everlasting torments, and shall we inflict on another the venom of our private spleen? I know the furious Bedlams, and malicious wretches, do take all this but for unsatisfactory talk, and it is not words that will serve their turns to repair their honour, and ease their devilish rancorous minds. Flesh and blood, say they, cannot endure it. Answ. And therefore, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor corruption inherit incorruption; 1 Cor. 15:50. Grace can do more than flesh and blood; and if you cannot forgive, you cannot be forgiven. If it be so hard for you to forbear, yea, to love an enemy, it shall be as hard to you to be saved, and escape the portion of the enemies of God; and if the word of God's command be but wind with you; the word of his promise shall be as ineffectual to your salvation, as the word of his precept and persuasion was ineffectual to your conversion and obedience. As "God is love," so his sanctified ones are turned into love: love is their new nature, and love is not of a revengeful disposition. Love is the divine nature in us, and malice provoking to revenge is the devilish nature; and a believer is more afraid of the anger of God, than to take his sword of revenge out of his hand. He hath learned, "Avenge not yourselves, but give place to

wrath: vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good;" 1 Pet. 2:21. 23. 1 Thess. 4:6. Rom. 12:19.

CHAPTER XXXI

New, Vain Histories, and other Men's Matters, &c.

14. ANOTHER piece of carnal pleasure to be denied, is the delight men have in reading unprofitable histories, and hearing news that do not concern us, and meddling with other men's matters where we have no call.

With some fancies this is a notable part of carnal delight: many school-boys, and young effeminate wits, are as much poisoned and carried away with reading romances, feigned histories, and tale-books, and play-books, as by almost any piece of sensuality. O, the precious hours that have been lost upon this trash and trumpery! but of this I spoke before: that which now I speak is, even true history and reports, as matter of mere news, to please a busy, ranging mind. History is a very profitable study, if it be used for right ends, and be rightly chosen. It is a very great help to understand the Scriptures, and to know the former and present state of the church; and see the wonderful works of providence, that otherwise would be as lost to us. It is not fit that the wondrous works of God should die with those that have seen them, and not be transmitted to posterity. God should have the honour of his glorious works from generation to generation, and how shall that be if all be forgotten? He that knoweth nothing of any age but that which he lives in, is as foolish as he that knows nothing of any country or town but that which he lives in. Some

history is essential to our faith, and much more is integral to it; and yet much more is very serviceable to it. He that hath not some competent acquaintance with Church history, will be at great disadvantages in the holding and defending his faith itself against an infidel, or the purity of religion against a papist. And he that knoweth not the present state of the world, and of the church through the world, doth scarce know how to order his affections, or compose his prayers even in those greatest petitions, about the honour, and kingdom, and will of God. They cannot grieve with the church in grief, nor mourn with it when it mourns; so that it is a great duty of a Christian to labour to understand by history the former and present state of the church: and it is a great mark of a gracious soul that longs to hear of the prosperity of the saints and free progress of the Gospel; and a mark of a graceless person that careth not for these things.

But when history is not used to acquaint us with the matters of God, or to furnish us with useful knowledge, but to please a ranging, carnal mind, then it is but sinful sensuality or vanity. Many persons have no such delight to read the useful history of church affairs, as they have to read the curiously penned, though less useful history of other matters. Though I know that the history of the whole world is very serviceable to the knowledge of divine things, yet they that use it to holy ends will make choice accordingly, and be no more in it than may suit with those ends. It is the most human, with the most light, ridiculous passages, that are most pleasing to vain unsanctified wits; but the godly delight in it so far as it shows them something of God, and leadeth them to him. In the very reading of Scripture, a carnal reader may be much pleased with the history, that hath no savour in the doctrine, but is weary to read it: and yet I must add this caution

by the way; if we find a carnal kind of delight in Scripture history, or any other that is profitable, we must not therefore cast off the history, but seek after the cure of our disease, that we may spiritually take pleasure in all for God, and he may be the beginning, and end, and the life, and the all of our studies and delights: and though our carnal delight in news and history be a sin in us, yet God doth sometimes make it an occasion of good by leading us to that holy truth, which after may be the means of our sanctification, though at first we received but as a novelty.

And so the carnal pleasure that many have in hearing news, and sitting with folks that will talk of other men's matters, or things that concern them not, is nothing but a sinful pleasing of the fancy, and loss of time, and neglect of greater matters which call for all our time and care. It was the vice of the Athenians, "for all the Athenians and strangers that were there, spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing" (Acts 17:21); yea, novelty of doctrine and religion, and teachers, is a snare and bait to carnal fancies, which many are taken by that are forsaken of God, having first forsaken him, and proved false to the truth received.

CHAPTER XXXII

Unnecessary Knowledge, and Delight therein

15. ANOTHER part of carnal pleasure which self must be denied in, is, a desire after unnecessary knowledge, and delight therein. This is the common sin of man, but not of all alike. Even they that can live without the knowledge of the saving principles of religion, do yet itch to know unprofitable things; and many a foolish question they will be

asking about matters unrevealed, or that concern them not, when they overlook that which their salvation lieth on: but the more learned sort, and especially more prying wits, and those that are bred up among disputes, are the pronest to this sin: and though it be an odious vice, yet it so befooleth many, that they reckon it confidently among their virtues.

God cannot be known too much, nor can any man be too much in love with the true knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. Without this knowledge the mind is not good, nor can the heart be sanctified, or the man be saved; nor can any man know too much of the will and word of God; nor yet of his works in which he revealeth himself to the world. But the carnal knowledge which is to be denied, is of another nature than the sanctified knowledge of believers. I shall show you the difference in certain particular respects.

1. This desire to know, which is in the unsanctified, is partly from mere nature and partly from a distempered fancy, which is like a corrupt, enraged appetite, that chooseth that which is unwholesome, and yet is over greedy after it. But the desire after knowledge in the sanctified, is kindled by the love of God, and the love of those holy and heavenly things which they are inquiring after. It is not the love of God that sets ungodly men upon their studies, but a common and carnal desire to know: and this appears in the end, which is next.

2. This carnal knowledge is but to feed, and furnish, and please a carnal fancy; because it is some adding to our understandings, and because it is naturally pleasant to know, and because it brings in some novelty and variety, and because it makes us seem wiser than other men, and furnisheth us with matter of discourse and

ostentation, and rids the mind of some troublesome doubts; therefore, even the worst have a mind to know. But this is the knowledge that must be denied: that which must be valued and sought after, is, to know God, that we may love, and reverence, and trust, and admire, and honour him, and enjoy him. To know Christ, that we may have more communion with him: to know the word and works of God, that in them we may know his nature and his will, and knowing his will, may serve him and please him: these must be the ends of Christian knowledge. There is nothing in the world that God hath revealed, but in its place we may be willing to know, so that we stick not in the creature, or sense of the words, or common verities, but use every thing as a book or looking-glass: we love not a book so much for the letters, as for the matter which they contain; and we love not a glass for itself, so much as for its use to show us the face which we would see in it: so if we go to the creatures but as a book, in which we may read the mind of God, and see his nature, and as a glass in which his glory doth shine forth, our study and knowledge will be sanctified and divine. And thus, as Paul would know nothing but Christ crucified, so every Christian should be able to say that he would know nothing but God in Christ: for though we know a thousand matters, and that of the lowest nature in themselves, yet as long as we study them not for themselves, but for God, it is not them that we know so much as God in them; and so all is but the knowing of God: even as in our duty, though the works may be many and mean that we are employed in, yet all is but the serving of God, as long as we do them all for him. This is the main difference between an unsanctified scholar, and a servant of God in all their studies: one of them is but recreating his curious fancy or inquisitive mind, and seeking matter of honour and applause, or some way or other

studying for himself: but the other is searching after the nature and will of his Creator, and learning how to do his work in that manner as may please and honour him most. So that when they are reading the same books, and studying the same subjects, they are upon quite different works, as having contrary ends in all their studies: the one is content with bare speculation and airy knowledge, which puffeth up; and the other studieth and knoweth practically to feed the holy fire of love in his heart, and to guide, and quicken, and strengthen him for obedience.

3. Moreover, there is a difference commonly in the subject which they most desire to know: for though there is no truth but a wicked man may know, which a true Christian knoweth, and also but few truths but what he may for selfish ends be desirous to know; yet ordinarily a carnal heart is much more forward to study common sciences than divinity, and in divinity to study least the practical part, and to be most in points that exercise the brain, and lie further from the heart; but the sanctified man delighteth most in knowing the mystery of redemption, the riches of grace, the glory which he hopeth for, the nature and will of God, the way of duty, the temptations that are before him, and his danger by them and the way to escape, with such other useful truths which he must live upon. One feeds upon the air and chaff of words and notions, or common truths; and the other is taken up with the most spiritual, heavenly, and necessary matters: yea, it is not so much the truth, as the matter or thing revealed by it, which the Christian looks after: it is not only to understand the meaning of the Scripture, but to find, and love, and enjoy that God, that Christ, that Spirit, that life, which is revealed in those words of Scripture; but the hypocrite sticks most in a grammatical, superficial kind of knowledge.

4. Moreover, carnal love of knowledge doth draw the soul from God to the creature: it is self and the creature that is sought after in it, and therefore the more such knowledge, the further from God. This was Adam's temptation and sin, to desire to know good and evil for himself, so that he might have less need to live in an implicit belief of God, and dependance on him, but might be acquainted what was good and evil for himself, that he might trust himself, and live to himself; but spiritual knowledge carrieth us from self.

5. Carnal knowledge would break God's bounds, and would needs know that which God hath not revealed, and pry into the secrets of heaven: with a presumptuous immodesty they would reach to that which is above man, while they are wilfully or negligently ignorant of that which should heal them of their brutishness. They are so shallow that they comprehend not any one of the smallest creatures of God, and yet they have arrogant, proud conceits, that must be satisfied about the highest mysteries: and though, through their own unpreparedness and ignorance, they know not that which else they might know, and cannot see the strength of a reason which the wise can see, yet will they sooner quarrel with the light than with their eyes, and suspect the reasons and words of God rather than their purblind minds. But spiritual knowledge is modest, and humble, and obedient, and presumeth not to climb any higher than the ladder, lest he lose more by such a step too high, than he got by all his labour hitherto; and find himself all in pieces at the bottom, while he would needs climb above the top. He finds work enough in what God hath commanded him to study in his word, and therefore hath no leisure to look after things that God hath hid from him: it is for the use of knowledge that he would know, and therefore he hath no great mind of that which is useless; and he knows that God is the best judge of

that, and therefore he takes that to be best for him which is prescribed him.

6. Carnal students are apt to learn in the ways which their interests and fancies lead them to, but holy students learn of God in his prescribed way; that is, 1. In his church, which is his school. 2. And in and by his holy Scripture, which is the book he sets us to learn. And 3. By his ministers, whom he commandeth to teach us. 4. And in obedience to his Spirit, that must make all effectual. And 5. In fervent prayer to God for that Spirit and a blessing. This is God's way in which he will bring men to saving knowledge.

7. Also, carnal students observe not (commonly) God's order in their learning; but they begin at that which suiteth best with their carnal interest or disposition, as being least against it; and they catch here and there a little, and make what they list of it, and force it to their carnal sense, and to speak for that which their minds are most affected to. But the sanctified student begins at the bottom, and first seeks to know the essentials of religion, and points that life lieth most upon; and so he proceeds in order, and takes the lesson which God and his teachers set him, and takes up truths as they lie in order of necessity and use.

8. And in the manner also the difference is great. The carnal student searcheth presumptuously, self-conceitedly, and unreverently, and speaks of holy things accordingly, and censureth them when he should censure himself and actions by them, and bendeth the words of God to his own carnal interest and will. But the spiritual student searcheth meekly with fear and reverence, with self-suspicion and consciousness of his exceeding darkness, and with a willingness and

resolution to submit to the light for conviction and for the guidance of his conversation.

And now you see what carnal studies are, remember that to avoid them is part of your self-denial. Restrain your ranging fantasies and understanding, as you would do a ranging appetite. If you have a mind that would fain reach higher than God hath given you light in Scripture, or a mind that must needs be satisfied of the reasons of all God's ways, and murmureth if any of its doubts be unresolved, remember that this is self that must be denied; and if any be wise in his own eyes, he must become a fool, that he may be wise (1 Cor. 3:18.), and as little children must you come to the school of Christ, if you will indeed be his disciples. And remember that this intellectual voluptuousness, licentiousness, and presumption of carnal minds, is a higher, and in some respects greater and more dangerous vice, than brutish sensuality. And you may cheat and undo your souls in a civil course of carnal, selfish studies, as well as in a course of more gross and sensual voluptuousness.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Factious Desire of the Success of our own Opinions and Parties, as such, &c.

16. ANOTHER selfish interest to be denied, is, the factious desire of the success of any odd opinions which we have espoused, and of the increase and prosperity of any dividing party in the church which we have addicted ourselves unto.

It exceedingly delighteth a carnal mind, that his judgment should be admired, and he should be taken as the light of the country round about him; and therefore when he hath hatched any opinion of his own, or espoused any whereby his singularity may be manifested, or by which his selfish interest may be promoted, he is as careful to promote these opinions, and the party that holdeth with him, as a covetous man is to promote his gain. There is indeed as much of self in many men's heresies and church-divisons, as any sensualist hath in his way. And hence it is that a zeal for selfish opinions is easily got and easily maintained; when zeal for the saving truths of God is hardly kindled, and hardly kept alive. Yea, multitudes in the world do make the very truth to be the matter of their carnal interest in it; while they some way get a seeming peculiar interest, and promote it but as an opinion of their own, or of their party, and use it for selfish, carnal ends. And hence it is that many that are called orthodox, can easily get and keep a burning zeal for their orthodox opinions, when practical Christians do find it a very hard matter to be zealous for the same truths in a practical way. Many ungodly men will be hot in disputing for the truth, and crying down all that are against it, and perhaps so far exceed their bounds, that the godly dare not follow them! And the reason is clear. Whether it be truth or error that a man holds, if he hold it but as a conceit of his own, or as the opinion of his party, or to be noted in the world, as one that hath found out more truth than others, or any way make it but the matter of his selfish interest, nature and corruption will furnish him with a zeal for it; it is easy to go where sin and satan drives, and to be zealous where zeal hath so small resistance; and to swim down the stream of corrupted nature. But it is not so easy to be zealous in the practical saving entertainment of the truth, and exercising that faith and love

to God and holy obedience which truth is sent to work in us. A schismatical or opinionative use of truth itself, is but an using it for self against the God of truth; and it is no more wonder to see men zealous in this, than to see men forward and hot in any evil; we cannot tell how to quench or restrain this selfish, carnal kind of zeal. But when men should use the truth for God and their salvation against satan, and sin, and self, then it is hard to make them zealous; they are like green wood, or wet fuel on the fire, that will not burn without much blowing, and soon goeth out when it seemeth to be kindled, if once you leave it to itself. Paul spoke not nonsense when he said, "For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?" 1 Cor. 3:3–5. How secretly soever it may lurk, there is doubtless much of self and flesh in heresies and unjust divisions. I know that most of them little perceive it. James and John in their zeal, which would have called for fire from heaven, did not know what spirit they were of. But God would not have spoke it, if it were not true, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions, and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them: for they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple;" Rom. 16:17. Though they little believe that there is any such wickedness in them as this, yet the Spirit of God, that is the searcher of hearts, is acquainted with it; and assureth us, that both at the bottom and the end, church-dividing courses have a carnal, selfish nature: it is some secret interest of self, (though scarce discerned) that kindleth the zeal, and carrieth on the work; it is not God that is served by the divisions of his church. Many

sects now among us, do put a face of truth and zeal upon their cause; but self is the more dangerously powerful with them, by how much the less suspected or observed. The Papists, under the pretence of the church's union, are great dividers of the Christian world, unchurching the far greatest part of the church, and separating from all that be not subjects of the Pope of Rome: and do you think it is not self and flesh that is the principle and life, and the end of this their schism? Were it not for the upholding of their usurped power and worldly immunities, and greatness of the clergy, it is morally impossible that so many men of reason and learning could concur in such a schism, and in so many gross conceits as go along with it. It is not the pope that they are principally united in; for the greatest part of them, it is too evident that it is selfish and fleshly interest that is their centre, to which the pope is but a means. Hence it is that many of their Jesuits and Friars are carried abroad in the world, with such a fire of zeal, to promote their cause, that they will compass sea and land for it, and day and night are busy at the work, to plot, and contrive, and insinuate, and deceive, and think no cost or pains too great. For a selfish, sinful zeal and diligence hath so many friends, and so little hindrance, that it is easily maintained; but so is not the healing, peaceable, practical, and holy zeal of true believers.

Well! consider what I say to you from the word of the Lord: there is a selfish, dividing zeal in religion, which must be denied as well as whoredom or drunkenness. If you ask me how it is known; briefly now I shall only tell you this much of it: 1. That it is usually for either an error or a particular truth, against the interest or advantage of the body of unquestionable Christian verities. They can let religion suffer by it, so their opinion do but thrive. 2. It is usually for an opinion by reason of some special endearment or interest of their own in it. 3.

They cry up that opinion with a zeal and diligence much exceeding that which they bestow upon other opinions of equal weight; and lay a greater stress upon it, than any show of reason will allow them. 4. They usually are zealous for a party and division, against the unity of the Catholic church. 5. Their zeal is most commonly turned against the faithful pastors of the church; for it is hard to keep in with schism, and with faithful pastors too: and if the ministers will not own their sin and error, they will disown the ministers. The Anabaptists, and other sects of late, would never have been so much against Christ's ministers, if the ministers had not been against their way. 6. Their course doth in the conclusion, bring down religion, and hinder the thriving of the Gospel and of godliness. Mark, what is the issue of most of those ways, that these men are so hot for! Doth it go better or worse with the church and cause of Christ in general, where they are, than it did before? Is religion in more strength and beauty, and life, and honour? Or doth real holiness more abound? If so, be not too hasty to censure their zeal. But usually all these dividing ways, are the diseases of the church; which cause its languishing, decay, and dissolution. 7. Lastly, this selfish zeal is commonly censorious, and uncharitable, and diminisheth Christian love, and sets those reproaching and despising each other, that should have lived in the union and communion of saints. Where you find these properties of your zeal and desire, for the promoting of your opinions or parties in religion, you have great reason to make it presently your business to find out that insinuating self, which maketh your religion carnal, and to deny and mortify it.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Carnal Liberty to be Denied: what

17. ANOTHER selfish interest to be denied, is, carnal liberty. A thing that selfishness hath strangely brought of late into so much credit, that abundance among us think they are doing some special service to God, their country, the church, and their own souls, when they are but deeply engaged for the devil, by a self-seeking spirit, in a carnal course. For the discovery of this dangerous, common disease, I must first tell you, that there is a threefold liberty which must carefully be differenced. 1. There is a holy, blessed liberty which no man must deny. 2. There is a wicked liberty, which no man should desire. 3. And between these two there is a common, natural, and civil liberty, which is good in its place, as other worldly matters are, but must be denied, when it stands in competition with higher and better things; and, as all other worldly matters, is holy when it is holily esteemed and used; that is, for God; but sinful when it is sinfully esteemed and used, and that is for carnal self.

I. The first of these is not to be denied, but all other liberty to be denied for it. This holy liberty consisteth in these following particulars. 1. To be freed from the power of sin, which is the disability, the deformity, the death of the soul. 2. From the guilt of sin, and the wrath of God, and the curse of the law. 3. To be restored to God by Christ, in union, reconciliation, and sanctification; and our enthralled spirits set free, to know, and love, and serve him, and delight in him. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; 2 Cor. 3:17. God is the soul's freedom, who is its lord, and life, and end, and

all. 4. To be delivered from satan as a deceiver, and enemy, and executioner of the wrath of God. 5. To be freed from that law or covenant of works, which requireth that which to us is become impossible. 6. To be freed from that burdensome task of useless ceremonies, imposed on the church in times of infancy and darkness. 7. To be freed from the accusations of a guilty conscience, and those self-tormentings which in the wicked are the foretastes of hell. 8. To be freed from such temporal judgments here as might hinder our salvation, or our service of God. 9. To be free from the condemning sentence at the last day, and the everlasting torments which the wicked must endure. 10. And to be delivered into the blessed sight of God, and the perfect fruition and pleasing of him, in perfect love, and joy, and praise to all eternity. This is the liberty which you must not deny, which I therefore name, that by the way you may see, that it is not for nothing that the other sorts of liberty are to be denied.

II. The second sort of liberty is, that which is wicked and directly evil, which all men should deny; and this is a freedom from righteousness, as the apostle calls it, Rom. 6:20. To be free from a voluntary subjection to God, and free from those sighs and groans for sin, and that godly sorrow which the sanctified undergo; and to be free from all those spiritual motions and changing works upon their hearts, which the Spirit doth work on all the saints; to be free from holy speeches, and holy prayer, and other duties, and from that strict and holy manner of living which God commandeth; to be at liberty to sin against God, and to please the flesh, and follow their own imaginations and wills, let God say what he will to the contrary: to be free to eat and drink what we love and have a mind of, and to be merry, and wanton, and lustful, and worldly, and take our course without being curbed by so precise a law, as God hath given us; to be

free from a heavenly conversation, and those preparations for death, and that communion with God which the saints partake of: this is the wicked liberty of the world, which the worst of carnal men desire; and the next beyond this, is a liberty to lie in the fire of hell, and a freedom from salvation, and from the everlasting joy and praises of the saints. If freedom from grace and holiness deserve the name of freedom, then you may next call damnation a freedom.

And it is part also of this sinful, miserable liberty to be free from the government, and officers, and good laws which rule the church and commonwealth. And such wretches there are in the world, that seriously judge it a desirable liberty to be free from these. They think that their country is free, when every man may do what he list, and they have no king or other governors, or none that will look after them, and punish their miscarriages; and they think the church is free, when they have no pastors, or when pastors have least power over them, and they may do what they list. And indeed if they were rid of magistrates and ministers, they were free! As a school is free that hath shut out the master, or have rejected him, and teach and rule one another! And as a ship is free when the master and pilot are thrown overboard; and as an army is free when they have cast off or lost their commanders! Or to speak more fitly, as a hospital is free when they are delivered of their physician; and as the madmen in bedlam are free when they have killed, or escaped from their keepers! As infidels keep their freedom, by refusing Christ in himself; so carnal dividers and heretics keep their freedom, by refusing his officers, and Christ in those officers; "For he that heareth them, heareth him; and he that despiseth them, despiseth him; and he that despiseth, despiseth not man but God;" Luke 10:16. 1 Thess. 4:8.

And another part of this ungodly liberty is, to be free from the exercise, at least, of this power of magistrates and ministers, so far as not to be restrained from sin, though they be not free from the state of subjects. To swear, and be drunk, and live as most ale-sellers, on the damning sins of others, and make a trade of selling men their damnation, and to have no magistrate punish them, no officer trouble them, and no neighbour accuse them; this is their liberty. To game, and roar, and revel, and have nobody say to them, why do you so, is part of their liberty. To have leave without restraint to make all others as bad as themselves, and if they are infidels or heretics, to persuade other men to it: if they hold any opinion against the God that made them, against Christ, against the Spirit of God, against the word and laws of God, against his ministers, his church, his ordinances, against any necessary point of faith, or if they have any false conceit that leads straight to hell, that they may have full power, licence, and authority, to bring as many as they can to be of the same mind, that they may not be unprofitable servants to the devil, nor go to hell alone, this is a great part of their impious liberty. And because the name of conscience is become honourable, they call this by the name of liberty of conscience; when indeed it is liberty of practice that they mean, and not liberty of conscience; for their conscience cannot be altered by force, nor touched by the sword. It is they that deprive men of the liberty of their consciences, whilst by false teaching they put out the eye of conscience, and enslave it to sinful, false conceits. And conscience is science; and error is not science but ignorance; and therefore as error is not conscience, but the destruction of conscience; so liberty to error, is no liberty of conscience, but a liberty to destroy conscience: much less is it liberty of conscience to sin against God, and draw others from conscience

into error, and poison men's souls, and hinder the Gospel, and promote the work and kingdom of the devil.

And many of our miserable, sottish people take it for a part of their desired liberty to be free from ministers' spiritual oversight and government, and not be catechised or called to an account, or examined about the state of their souls, nor questioned about their lives, but that they may do what they will, and have sacraments, and all ordinances on what terms and in what manner they will, and to have ministers bow their judgment to theirs, and lay their consciences at the feet of every carnal, ignorant wretch, and be but their servants to do what they would have them; this is the liberty that satan's servants do desire.

And withal, that they may be free from necessary payments for the safety of the commonwealth, and from the necessary retribution to God, for the church and poor, yea from giving but the ministers their own; all this they take for part of their liberty. But they are all such liberties as Christ never purchased, and the Gospel never bestowed, and never made the owners happy: it is a liberty to starve their own souls, and go quietly to everlasting torment, and not be molested by preachers and puritans, but to sin against God, and damn themselves, and be let alone, and have nobody tell them of it, or ask them, why will you do so? In a word, it is that liberty that Christ died to save his people from, and which the Gospel would take down, and the Spirit, ministry, and ordinances would overthrow, and which no wise and good man hath reason to desire; and it is that liberty which God will save all those from, whom he will save from the flames of hell.

III. The third sort of liberty is that which is in itself indifferent, or to be reckoned among the common, transitory benefits of this life, which with God's blessing is a mercy; and well used may do good, but otherwise is hurtful, or little worth. This liberty is not the natural liberty of the will, which in regard of its own illicit acts is nothing but the power of self-determination; and in regard of internal imperate acts, is nothing but a power or freedom to do what we will. For these are so our own, if not ourselves, that no man can take them from us; at least the first. Nor is it the ethical liberty of the soul from sin by gracious habits; for this is ever good, as was said before. Nor is it a political liberty from those tyrannous laws or practices of men that would root out the Gospel and pull down the kingdom of Christ, and set up iniquity. This liberty must be desired, and not denied, even when we submit ourselves to prosecution; but it is, 1. The civil liberty of being from under the government of others and of having a hand in government ourselves. 2. The liberty of being from under the government of strangers, conquerors, or enemies. 3. The liberty of choosing our own governors, and having them not by other men's election set over us. 4. A liberty from burdensome payments and taxes, which are of no necessity to our good. 5. A liberty from arbitrary government, and from being liable to the mere will and passions of men. 6. A protection from the abuses and injuries of others. 7. And a liberty for our bodies from the restraint of imprisonment. All these are things that in themselves are naturally good; and especially the two last are very great mercies. But yet as the five first are smaller matters, so all of them are but temporal, transitory things, and not to be regarded in comparison of Christ and the heavenly liberties. The dearest of them must be denied when they stand in the way of duty, and cannot be had on terms of innocency.

To sin for liberty, is to leap out of the frying-pan into the fire, as the proverb is; to become the prisoners of the devil, that we may not be the prisoners of men; to enslave the soul for the liberty of the body. Believe it, sin makes deeper galls than bolts or scourges do: it is an easy durance to lie in gaol, in comparison of lying in sin, or under the wrath of God. At the farthest, death will free you from imprisonment, but death alone will not free you from sin. It is but men's foolish conceits that makes imprisonment so grievous to the most. It is the same earth that they tread on, and the same air that they breathe in as before. The great trouble is that they have not their wills; for when their own wills do as much confine them, it is then no trouble. I can confine myself to one room, to one chair, the far greatest part of the year for my studies; and why should I not bear as well to be so confined by another, if my own will could but comply with it? Never grudge at restraint or imprisonment then, but find out some employment in it, whereby you may be serviceable to God, or at least serve him by your sufferings, and then rejoice in it, and bring your minds to your condition, and so you may set yourself at liberty in spite of the greatest tyrant in the world. Imprisonment is but a penal restraint; and if it be not involuntary, it is scarcely penal: it is therefore in your power whether you will be prisoner or not, because it is in your power whether it shall be involuntary or not. Be but willing of your confinement, and you are at liberty; and though you are not out of the place, you are out of the prison. The same room that is a prison to the rest, is none to the keeper that guards them, because apprehending it to be for his commodity, he is willing of it, and their prison is his home. And if you do but apprehend how you are called from temptations, and have an opportunity of honouring God, or at least of being more humbled and mortified, and so bring

your mind to consent to your habitation, it is become your home and place of freedom: however he is unworthy of the liberty of the saints, that cannot deny the liberty of his habitation or bodily abode for the attaining of it.

And for the things that men make such a stir about in the world, under the name of their civil liberties, some of them are no liberties, but fancies or miseries, and the rest of them are no further to be valued than they are subservient to the kingdom of Christ, and the good of souls. Conceited people call it their liberty to be governed rather by four hundred than by one, or by popularity than by other forms of government, and a great stir they make about this, as if their felicity did consist in it; when as the true liberty of a commonwealth consisteth in the fullest conformity of their laws and their execution to the will of God; in being free from all laws or passions of men that encourage iniquity, and are against the Gospel or the common good, and peace and welfare of the body: in a word, to have government best fitted to the ends of government, which is such a temporal safety and prosperity as most conduceth to the service and honour of God; but the species of government is none of this liberty in itself considered. A people may be at much more liberty under a pious monarch than an impious or unskilful democracy. The free choice of the most when they are bad (as where is it better?) may enslave the best; and the awe and interest of the rich is commonly such upon the people, that a free choice is somewhat strange. And that sort of government may be fittest for one people, that is unfit for another; and their happiness lieth not in the species of government, let them stretch their wits to invent new forms as long as they will, but in the predominancy of God and his interest in the hearts of the governors, and in their laws, their officers, and execution. This is it, and nothing

but this in government, that will give the commonwealth that desirable liberty, in which their welfare doth consist.

And therefore those persons are enemies to the liberty of their country, that under that name would advance such kind of popular interest as is plainly against the interest of Christ; and must have magistrates and ministers restrained from doing the work of the omnipotent Sovereign, the one from punishing sin (if it be against the first table, or come but under the name of conscience), and the other from exercising church discipline, and all under pretence of the people's liberties. All these are carnal liberties to be denied.

CHAPTER XXXV

Our Native Country and Habitations Denied

18. ANOTHER part of carnal self-interest to be denied, is, our native country, or place of habitation, with all the comforts and accommodations they afford us. It is lawful to have some special love to our own country; but not such as shall prevail against the love of Christ, or seem sufficient to entangle us in sin. We must shew our love to it principally by desiring and endeavouring, that God's name may be hallowed, and his kingdom maintained, and his will fulfilled among and by our countrymen; but if they should turn enemies to the Gospel or to godliness, we must love the servants of God abroad, much better than his enemies at home; and wish the success of his servants, though of other countries, against his enemies, though they were of our own. And if we cannot serve God, or enjoy the freedom of a good conscience at home, another nation, though it were in the utmost parts of the earth, where we may better serve God, must seem

a better place to us. And if we be banished or necessitated to forsake our country, we must not stick at it, for the cause of Christ. It is none of the greatest trials to be put to remove from one country to another, as long as we have necessaries, wherever we come. We have the same God to be with us, and take care of us, beyond the sea, as at home; the same earth, and air, and sun to shine upon us; the same Spirit, and grace, and promises to accompany us; the same saints of God, and ordinances of worship, may be had in other countries as our own. It is a kind of childishness to make such a matter of being driven out of one kingdom into another, when we have the same or greater mercies in the other. All is but our Father's house; and we do but remove from room to room. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." As I said before of imprisonment, so I say of banishment: it is in our own wills by consenting to it, to make it no banishment. If you will make an affliction and a great matter of it, you may. A merchant or factor can live for his commodity, far from home, even among Turks and infidels, and take it for no banishment; much more should you do for the sake of Christ. Every place is our own country where our master's work lieth. We are but pilgrims; and as long as we are not out of our way, we need not complain much of being out of our country. Indeed we are here but strangers, and this is not our country, and therefore let us not over-love it upon a mistake. The apostles of Christ did purposely leave their countries, and travel about the countries of the world, to bring them the doctrine of salvation by Christ. And is it not better be walking lights to illuminate the world, than candles shut up within the walls of our own habitation? "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the

land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles—for he looked for a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God;" Heb. 11:8, 9:19. "They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth; for they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country: and truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned: but now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city;" ver. 13–16. It was the sorest kind of banishment that the saints endured, that is mentioned, "they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth;" Heb. 11:37, 38. We judge ourselves unworthy of Christ and the new Jerusalem, and our heavenly country, if we cannot deny an earthly, sinful country for them.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Bodily Health and Ease from Torments

19. BUT a far greater interest of self to be denied, doth consist in our bodily health and ease, and from those pains and torments which persecutors use to inflict upon the godly. An averseness to suffering is natural to man, and in itself no sin; but an excessive averseness doth signify too much tenderness of the flesh, and too little power of reason, which should quiet the mind when it cannot abate the pain of the body, and must use to submit to a lesser evil to avoid a greater; or to obtain a greater good than it depriveth us of: Paul and Silas could sing with their bodies sore and their feet in the stocks. To be joyful in

tribulation should be no strange matter to a saint, much more with a patient submission to undergo it. We may not thrust ourselves into the fire, nor choose suffering without a call; but we must suffer rather than sin, and choose the wounds and hurts of the body before the wounds and losses of the soul. But because flesh and blood will draw back, and make too great a matter of sufferings, I shall briefly give you ten considerations, that may persuade you herein to deny yourselves; and in two cases I desire you to make use of them. First, in case you have no way to escape suffering but by sinning, then deny yourselves and choose to suffer. Secondly, in case of God's afflictions, which unavoidably lie upon you, then deny yourselves by a quiet and patient submission; and for both consider,—

1. That is the best condition for us in which we may be most serviceable to God. And if we suffer for righteousness, we may serve God as well in such suffering as in a prosperous state; or if God himself afflict us, we may serve him in our affliction: our patience then is the service that we are called to. The sufferings of the saints have done very much to the promoting of the Gospel and building of the church: men will see that there is somewhat worth the suffering for in the Christian religion, and see that heaven is taken by believers for a certain thing, when they can let go earth for it: they will be moved to inquire, what it is that moves you to such constancy and patience; and why should we not be willing of that condition in which we do our master the best service, whatever the doing of it shall cost us? The commodity of our end is the chiefest commodity.

2. That is the best condition for us in which we may have most of God. But certainly we may have as much, and usually more, of God in suffering, especially for his cause, than we can have in prosperity:

especially when we sin to escape these sufferings. Is it bodily ease, or God, that you set most by? It will be seen by your choice. If you prefer your ease before him, you must expect to have no better than you choose: if you prefer him before your ease and prosperity, you must be gladder of God with adversity and pain, than of prosperity and ease without him. A beast hath health and ease as well as you, and yet you will not think him as happy. If you are tormented, or lose your health for Christ, you lose nothing but what a Turk or infidel hath; yea, but what a beast hath as well as you! But you may have that of God, by the advantage of your suffering, that none but saints have; and God's presence can make a suffering state as sweet as a prosperous. And he hath given you ground in his promises to expect it, "When thou passeth through the fire, I will be with thee;" Isa. 43:1–3. "There hath no temptation taken you, but what is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able: but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it;" 1 Cor. 10:13. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified;" 1 Pet. 4:14. "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf;" ver. 16. What is the Scripture fuller of than comforting promises to the sufferers for Christ? To fly from such sufferings then, is but to fly from the presence of God and our own consolations.

3. At least these sufferings further our sanctification, and make us better. And is not that our best condition that makes us best? Common experience, as well as Scripture, may satisfy us that a suffering state doth very much further humiliation and mortification, and bring men to a deeper sense of sin, and help all the truths of God

to work, and make them more sensible and serious than in prosperity. Then we do not only hear, but feel that sin is evil, and that the world is vain, and that the threatenings of God are true. Why, Christian, if thou didst but know that thou shouldst have more of the Spirit and its graces, and less of sin, in a suffering estate than in ease and plenty, wouldst thou not even choose it and be glad of it? Is not sin worse than suffering to thee, and holiness better than ease and peace? Alas, what senseless, careless persons should we be, if it were not for the help of suffering! Grace useth to work by means, and this is the common means.

4. Consider, that pain and suffering we shall have, whether for Christ or not. The worst men undergo almost as much by ordinary sicknesses, and losses, and crosses, as the martyrs do that suffer for Christ: sin will bring suffering, and it is better have that which is sanctified by the interest of Christ, than that which is not.

5. And a Christian that hath so much ado to curb and rule the flesh in prosperity, methinks should the more patiently bear adversity, because God sets in by it, and helps him to subdue the flesh, and tame the body, and bring it in subjection. And as it is but this burdensome flesh that suffereth, which hath been the cause of so much suffering to our minds, so our warfare against this flesh, which we manage through the course of our lives, goes on more prosperously in the time of its sufferings than in prosperity. A weakened enemy is more easily conquered. Do not therefore too much take part with the suffering flesh, but self denyingly justify the proceedings of the Lord.

6. And consider that the pains and suffering will be but short. It is but a little while, and you shall feel no more than if you had felt nothing; and that which shortly will not be, is next to that which is not. As it makes all the pleasures and glory of the world to be a dream, and next to nothing, because it is but a while, and they are gone, and never return again: so it makes our sufferings next to nothing, that they are passing away, and almost over. And then all tears will be wiped from your eyes; and pain will be forgotten, or remembered only to increase your joy. When you are past the brunt, and safe with Christ, you will never repent of your sufferings on earth, nor will it trouble you then to think of the shame or sickness, or pain or torment, that here you were put to undergo. Yet a little while and all will be over.

7. In the meantime, consider also that they are all deserved sufferings: you deserve them from God, though not from man; nay, they are a thousandfold less than your deservings. If free grace have pardoned you the main, and rescued you from the torments of hell, methinks the remembrance of this wonderful mercy should make you patiently bear the fatherly chastisements that tend to the perfecting your deliverance.

8. And so much the rather, because they are sufferings more gainful to you than the greatest prosperity is to the world. When you have suffered for Christ as much as your natures are able to bear, you need not fear being losers by him: as he is engaged by promise to make you amends, and to give you the reward of inheritance of glory, so he is easily able to accomplish it. All the saints of God are in the way to glory, but his suffering saints are in the nearest way. All his servants are unspeakably gainers by him, but his sufferers are in the most

thriving way; they shall have an eminency of reward, or a reward above the common reward. "These are they that come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them;" Rev. 7:14. The churches therefore glory in their martyrs, and for the patience and faith of Christians in all the persecutions and tribulations which they endure, "a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that they may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which they suffer; seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble them; and to them that are troubled, rest with the saints;" 2 Thess. 1:4–6. "Peter said, behold we have forsaken all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye shall also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel: and every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or wife, or children, or lands, for my names sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life;" Matt. 19:27–29. And is it not better suffer under these terms of inconceivable advantage, than to suffer in a natural way for nothing?

9. And consider, that if suffering seem so great a matter to you, that you are resolved, though by the way of sin, to avoid it, you will escape it at so dear a rate, that you will wish a thousand times you had endured it. There is no escaping of Christian suffering when you are called to it, but by running into eternal suffering. There is no escaping the prison, and torment, and fire of martyrdom, when you are called to it, but by running into the fire of hell. God can deliver

you indeed on easier terms, by forbearing to call you to it, or rescuing by his power; but you cannot rescue yourselves by refusing to suffer and yielding to sin, without paying dearer for your freedom than it is worth. And therefore deny yourselves, and bear what God shall call you to, lest Christ deny you, and make you suffer a thousandfold more to all eternity.

10. Lastly, consider also, that this part of self-denial is it that Christ hath fully and purposely taught us by his own example. Are you better than the Lord of life? And did they not use him worse than you are used? Do they slander you? And did they not so by him, calling him a gluttonous person and a wine-bibber, and a friend of publicans and sinners, a sabbath-breaker, an enemy to Cæsar, a deceiver; yea, one that had a devil, and cast out devils by Beelzebub? Do they put a fool's coat on you, and a reed in your hand, and make a laughingstock of you? Remember what they did by Christ. They mixed scorn and cruelty together when they crowned him with a crown of thorns, and struck him when they had covered his eyes, and bid him read who smote him. And do they worse than this by you? They spit in his face, and saved a murderer, that he might be sure to die. And do they worse than this by you? "Run therefore with patience the race that is set before you, looking to 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: for consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your mind;" Heb. 12:1–3. "If, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God, for even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps, who did no sin, neither was guile

found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously; 1 Pet. 2:20–23.

Upon all these considerations, you may see that in the greatest afflictions or torments of the flesh, we have reason enough for the practice of self-denial: and therefore as Christ used Peter, when he persuaded him to have favoured himself, and to have avoided suffering, when it was necessary for us, bidding him, "Get behind me Satan, thou art an offence to me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men;" Matt. 16:23. So do you deal by carnal self, when it would persuade you to favour yourselves, and put by suffering by yielding to sin. Take this self to be but a satan to you, that savoureth not heavenly things but earthly, and command it to be silent, and to get behind you; and do not so much as make your flesh of your counsel, nor hearken to any of its advice, in case of suffering for Christ.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Natural Life to be Denied

20. BUT the greatest point of self-denial is yet behind: nothing is so near to self as life: nothing that nature doth so highly value, and dearly love, and tenderly look to, and unwillingly let go. And yet this also must be denied for Christ. All other parts of selfish interest are as it were summed up and contracted in this; and many a one can yield in other points that, when he comes to this, is utterly stalled, and will go away sorrowful, rather than follow Christ to the death. Nothing in this world is so dear to natural man as his life; and,

therefore, death is a thing that he knows not how to choose, nor to submit to, if he could avoid it.

In three cases only, I remember that heathens themselves have chosen death. First, in case of some extreme torment or other misery, which they had no other hope to prevent or end. But this was but a choosing a speedier or easier death before a more grievous death, though remote; or before a death that had so great a misery for its forerunner; or at least before such a life as is a continual death. And so the conquered heathens would frequently kill themselves, to prevent a more dishonourable, cruel death, from the hand of the conqueror: and so many a one in incurable misery wisheth rather to die than endure it, partly because that the suffering is so great as to overcome all the comforts of life (for I yield that some degrees of misery with life are more terrible to nature than death); and partly, because that they know they must die at last however. Secondly, in a desire of fame, that they may leave behind them an honourable name when they are dead. But this is not to desire death but life. Fain they would live for ever; and because they know that it cannot be obtained (on earth), they had rather die some honourable death a little sooner, that their names may live when they are dead, than to die ignominiously shortly after. Thirdly: and some have chosen to die for the public good of their country; but as it is very uncertain whether the desire of a living name were not their greater motive, so it was but a choosing a present death for their country, before a later unavoidable death without any such advantage. In all these cases a natural man may venture on death that knows he cannot escape it long, but must shortly die whether he will or no; but if they could avoid it, there are very few would submit to death but believers, and none but in one of these cases:—1. To end

or avoid some extreme, intolerable, incurable misery. 2. To deliver their country or friends. 3. And whether any would do it upon their ungrounded hopes of better things in the life to come, I leave to consideration. But if it be taken for granted that a natural man may love—1, the comforts of life above itself; 2, and the good of his country, or the world; or his children, above his life; 3, or some carnal felicity falsely conceited to be had in another life: yet it is certain; that none but a sanctified believer can love God better than his life, or can prefer those spiritual, heavenly joys, which consist in the holy love and fruition of God, before his life; and therefore he that for these can deny his life, is indeed a Christian, and none but he. Though it be an ungrateful word to the ears of some, I must say it again, and none but he; for this is the very point in which Christ, for instance, doth put our self-denial to the trial, "he that will save his life, shall lose it." Whether you love an immortal, holy life with God, or this earthly, fleshly life better, is the great question on which it will be resolved whether you are Christians or infidels at the heart, and whether you are heirs of heaven or hell. Some love to God may be in the unsanctified, but not a love to him above their lives; and in some cases they may submit to death, but not for the love of God. But both these set together, that is, a submitting to death for the love of God, or a loving of God above this life, is the most infallible proof of your sincerity.

I confess flesh and blood must needs think this is a very hard saying; and though they might consent to acknowledge it a duty, and a reasonable thing to die for Christ and a note of excellency, and a commendable qualification of some few extraordinary saints, yet it goeth very hardly down with them that it should be the lowest measure of saving grace, and that the weakest Christian must have it

that will be saved: for, say they; what can the strongest do more than die for Christ? But to this I answer, 1. There is no room for objections against so plain a word of God. It is the wisdom of God, and not our reason, that disposeth of the crown of life; and therefore it is his wisdom, and not our reason, must determine by what we shall attain it. And if God say plainly, that "if any man come to Christ, and hate not his own life (that is, love it not so much less than Christ, that for his sake he can use it as a hated thing is used), he cannot be his disciple" (Luke 14:26), it is too late for the vote of man, or all the clamour of foolish reason, to recall this resolution. The word of God will stand when they have talked against it never so long: we may destroy ourselves by dashing against it, but we cannot destroy or frustrate it. 2. And whereas men ask, what can the strongest do more than die for Christ? I answer, abundance more: they can die for him with far greater love, and zeal, and readiness, and joy, than the weak can do, and so bring much more honour to him by their death. Though there be no higher way of outward expressing our love to Christ, than by dying for him; yet the inward work of love may be in very different degrees, in persons that use the same expression of it. Some may come to the stake with a little love, comparatively, and some with fervent, hot affections: some have much ado to yield to die, and some die so cheerfully, that they rejoice in the opportunity of honouring God, and passing to him. Yea, and in the expressions there is much difference in the manner: some give up themselves with so much readiness, as works more on the standers by, than their mere patience, or the death itself. And some are drawn so hardly to it, as drowneth much of the honour and fruit of their martyrdom. Of this, read Mr. Pink's sermon on Luke 14:26.

Object. 'But nature is of God, and nature teacheth us to love and save our lives: and is it like that the God of nature will command and teach us to cast them away, and so contradict his own law of nature?'

Answ. 1. As nature teacheth you to love your lives, so God doth not forbid you. But, 2. Is it natural to man to be reasonable, as well as to be sensitive and animate? To have a reasonable soul, as to have a temporal life? 3. And doth not reason tell us by the light of nature, that God should be loved better than our lives? If it did not, yet by the help of supernatural light, even reason clearly tells us this; and it is no contradiction for God to tell you, 'love your lives, but love him better.' And he that bids you seek the preservation of your lives, doth plainly except, that you resign them to his dispose, and that you seek not to save them from him when he commandeth you to lay them down. So that it is not simply against nature, to consent to die; but when it is for him that is the Lord and end of life, it is agreeable to nature; that is, though it be against our natural inclination, as we are animate and sensitive, yet it is agreeable to our true nature as reasonable. And therefore lay all together, and it is to be said to be agreeable to nature simply in in such a case, because it is agreeable to the principal part in nature which should be predominant: it is agreeable to nature also, that reason should dispose of the inferior powers of the soul.

Object. 'But when you have said all that you can, as long as you plead against my nature, I cannot consent to what you say; words are but wind. To persuade me to consent to die, is as much as to persuade me not to feel when I am hurt, or to be hungry, thirsty, or sleepy, which are not in my power, because these things are natural.'

Answ. 1. Though hunger and thirst, and other natural and sensitive appetites and passions, be not in your power, yet a consent of the will to deny these is in your power. As natural as it is to hunger and thirst, your superior faculty of reason can prevail with you to suffer hunger and thirst in a siege or sickness, when the suffering of it will save your life. You will be ruled by your physician to forbear not only many a dish, but many a meal which your appetite desireth; and your reason can persuade you to suffer the opening of a vein, and the drawing out of your own blood, yea, or the cutting off a member, when it is to save your life; for all that feeling and self-love is natural to you. And you are not acquainted with the nature of friendship, if you would not suffer much for a friend; nor with humane affections, if you would not suffer much for parents, or children, or your country; so that your will is free though your sense be not free, nor your natural appetite. Though you cannot choose but feel when you are hurt, you might consent to that feeling for a greater good. 2. And according to the tenour of this objection, you may as wisely and honestly plead for most of the wickedness of the world, and say, 'it is natural to me to lust, and therefore I may play the adulterer and fulfil it. It is natural to me to desire meat and drink, and therefore I may eat and drink as long as I desire it. It is natural to me to seek to hurt those that I am angry with, or hate; and therefore I may beat or kill them.' If you must deny the passions and sensitive appetite, and the inferior faculties of nature in one thing, why not in another? These lower powers are made to be ruled by reason, as beasts are made to be ruled by men, and more; and therefore, seeing this argument from nature is but from the brutish part of nature, it is but a brutish argument. And if yet you say, that for all these words, death is so great an enemy to you, that you cannot choose it: I answer, that is

because your reason is not illuminated and elevated by faith, to see the necessity of choosing it, and to see those higher and better things which by this means you may obtain. Had you that heavenly life of faith and love which the Spirit worketh in the saints, it would carry you above this present life, and take you up with higher matters, and shew you that (and so shew it you) as should procure your own consent to die.

But because this is the great point that Christ doth purposely here try our self-denial by, and a point of such great necessity to be looked after, I shall stay a little longer on it, while I give you, 1. Some reasons to move you; and 2. Some directions to assist you, to get a self-denying submission to death when Christ requireth it.

The many lamentable defects in grace which the inordinate fear of death doth intimate, I have already opened in the fourth part of the 'Saints' Rest;' and therefore may not now repeat them, but shall add some few considerations more.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Twenty Reasons for denying Life

1. CONSIDER that our lives are not our own, but God, that doth require them, is the absolute Lord of them: more truly than you are owner of any thing that you have in the world, is he the owner of your lives and you. And therefore both in reason and justice we should be content that he dispose of his own. If he may not freely dispose of you and your lives, you may as well deny him the dispose of any thing, and so deny him to be God; for he hath the same right

to you as to any thing else, and the same power over you. And therefore if you consent that he shall be God (for which he needs not your consent), you must consent that he be the owner and disposer of all, and of you as well as all things else: otherwise he is not God.

2. You can be content that the lives of others, yea, that all the world, should be at God's dispose: in reason you cannot wish it should be otherwise. You are content that the lives of emperors and kings, that are greater than you, should be at his dispose. And is there not the same reason that he dispose of your life as of theirs? Are you better than they, or more your own; or hath the world more need of you than them? Or rather, is it not unreasonable selfishness that makes so unreasonable a difference with you? If reason might serve, the case is plain.

3. You are contented that far greater matters than your lives should be at God's dispose. The sun in its course, the frame of nature, heaven and earth, and all therein, are at his dispose, and would you wish it otherwise? Days and nights, and summer and winter, and times and seasons, are at his dispose; and you dare not murmur that all the year is not summer or daylight, and that there is any night or winter. The angels of heaven are at his dispose to do his will, and are content to be used on earth for your service, and they desire not to be from under his dispose. And should you desire it? or rather desire that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven? If you would not have the crowns and kingdoms of the world at his dispose, and heaven and earth are at his dispose, you would not have him to be God; but if you would have these greatest things at his dispose, what are you then, that your lives should be excepted?

4. Whom would you have to be the disposer of men's lives but God? Is any other fit for the undertaking? No other can give life but he; and no other can preserve and continue it but he! If your life had been in any creature's hand, you had been dead long ago; for no creature is able to uphold itself, much less another also. Is any creature wise enough to order the world and the affairs thereof? Is any creature powerful enough to dispose of the world and all things in it? Is any creature good enough to do it without the communication of its imperfection, which would disorder and destroy all? I know you make no doubt of any of these things. No creature is fit to be God; and therefore none is fit to undertake the work of God: and therefore it must be God or none that must have the disposal of your lives and you.

But I know what it is that self would have! You would have the disposal of your own lives, or else have God to dispose of them as you would have him, which comes all to one. But how unreasonable is this? Would you alone have the disposal of your own lives? Or would you have all men else in the world also to have the disposal of theirs? If all should have this privilege, what a miserable privilege would it prove! No man then would die; and then either you must forbear marriage, or what would you do with your posterity, when there were no room on earth? And then you could not punish a malefactor with death! And what a world would it be, if all men were disposers of themselves, when there would be as many different ends and minds as men? Every man would be for himself, and an enemy to others; and the world would run every man on his own head, and a madder confusion than can be imagined would seize on all. If you would have every man have the dispose of his own life, you would have as many Gods as men, and so have no God; and you would have as many

kings or rulers as men, and so have no ruler: and you would have the world to be no world, when God were to them as no God. And if you would not have it thus with all, what reason have you to desire it for yourself? What are you more than all the world, that you should be exempted from the common state of mortals, and be at your own disposal more than they, and be instead of God unto yourselves?

5. You think it neither cruelty nor injustice, that the lives of brutes should be much at your disposal! Your poor fellow-creatures must die when you require it. Birds, and beasts, and fishes, even multitudes of them, must die to feed you; yea, even for your delight, to make you a feast, when you have no necessity. The most harmless sheep you will not spare: the most laborious ox, the most beautiful bird, must give up their lives to satisfy your pleasure. And is not God ten thousand thousand times, even infinitely more above you, than you are above your fellow-creatures? Is one creature fitter to kill another, and afterwards devour it, and become its grave, than God to dispose of the lives of all?

6. Where could you wish your lives to be better, than in the hand of the most wise and gracious God? If you may rest content, or have confidence in any, it is in him. You need not doubt of his goodness, for he is goodness and love itself. And therefore though you see not the world to come that you are passing to, yet as long as you know that you are in the hands of love itself, what cause have you of disquiet or distrust? And that you know that he is wise as well as good, and almighty as well as wise; and therefore as he meaneth you no harm (if you are his children), so he will not mistake, nor fail in the performance. You need not fear lest your happiness should miscarry for want of skill in him that is omniscient, or for want of

will in him that is your father, or for want of power in him that is omnipotent. You may far better trust God with your lives than yourselves, for you have not wisdom enough to know what is best for you, nor skill to accomplish it, nor power to go through with it; nay, you love not yourselves so well as God doth love you. Did you but believe this, you would better trust him. You can trust yourselves in a narrow ship upon the wide and raging seas, when you never saw the country that you are going to; and all because you believe that the voyage is for your commodity, and that you have a skilful pilot. And cannot you commend your souls into the hand of God, to convey you through death to the invisible glory, as confidently as you dare commit your lives to the conduct of a man, and to a tottering ship in a hazardous ocean? You can trust your lives on the skill of a physician; and cannot you trust them on the will of God? If you had your choice, whether your lives should be at your own dispose, or God's, you should far rather choose that God might dispose of them than yourselves; as it is better for an infant to be guided and disposed of by the parents than by itself. A good king will not kill his own subjects needlessly, and a natural father or mother will not needlessly kill their own children; yea, a very brute will tenderly cherish their young. And do you think that God, who is infinitely good, will causelessly or injuriously take your lives? Or that he doth not mean you good even in your death?

Object. 'But how can I think it for my good to die; and to have my nature dissolved?

Answ. Paul "did desire to depart, or be dissolved, and to be with Christ as best of all;" Phil. 1:23. And did not he know what was for his good as well as you? He was "willing rather to be absent from the

body and present with the Lord, than at home in the body and absent from the Lord; and therefore groaned earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven, that mortality might be swallowed up of life;" 2 Cor. 5:1, 2:4. 6:8. When the hen hath sat to hatch her young ones, they must leave the shell as good for nothing, and must come into a world which they never saw before. And what of that? Should they murmur at the breaking of their former habitation? Or fear the passage into so light, so wide, so strange a place, in comparison of that in which they were in before? No more should we murmur at the breaking of these bodies, and casting the shell of flesh, and passing under the conduct of angels, into the presence of the Lord. God is but hatching us here by his Spirit, that he may bring us out into the light of glory. And should we grudge at this?

7. And what if God call you to sacrifice your lives to him, as he called Abraham to sacrifice his son? What if he call you to come to him by a persecutor's hand? Or at least to be willing of your natural death? He calls you but to give up a life which you cannot keep; and to do that willingly, which else you must do whether you will or not: willing or unwilling, die you must! How loath soever you are, you are sure to die! You may turn you every way, and look about you on the right hand and the left, to all the friends and means in the world, and you will never find a medicine that will here procure immortality, nor ever escape the hand of death. "It is appointed to all men once to die, and after that the judgment;" Heb. 9:27. And no man can change the decrees of Heaven. And seeing all your turnings and unwillingness cannot avoid it, is it not better to submit to it willingly than unwillingly? God doth impose it on you as a necessity. Your willingness may make a virtue of necessity, and out of necessity

extract a reward; but your unwillingness may turn your suffering into your sin, and a necessary death unto an unnecessary misery now (and hereafter if you be not true believers), as Paul saith of his ministerial labours, "If I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation is commited to me: for necessity is laid upon me"—1 Cor. 9:16, 17. So I may say in the present case: if you give up your lives willingly in the love of God, you have a reward; but if you do not, necessity is upon you, and die you must, whether you will or no. You may escape the reward by your unwillingness, but death you cannot escape. And methinks you should see that it is little thanks to you, to give up that life which you cannot keep; and yet this is all that God requireth. Perhaps you think, that though you cannot keep it still, yet somewhat longer you may keep it. But you be not sure of that. The next hour may God deprive you of it. And O, what a dreadful thing it were, if as soon as you have denied God your lives, he should snatch them from you in his fury, and cast you into hell! And if he should distrain for his own, as soon as you have denied it him! And you should die as enemies, that would not die as martyrs, and as his friends! And in this sense hath my text been many a time fulfilled, "He that will save his life shall lose it."

8. Consider also, that it is upon terms of the highest advantage imaginable to yourselves, that God calls you to resign and lay down your lives. It is not indeed to lose them, but to save them, as my text doth promise you, "He that loseth his life shall save it." No more than you lose your clothes which you put off at night, and put on again in the morning; or rather, no more than you lose your dirty, rotten rags, when you put them off at night, and are to have in the morning a suit of princely attire in their stead. Will any man say, these rags are lost? At least they will not say that the man is a loser by the change. That is

not lost that is committed to God, upon the ground of a promise. Nor that which is laid out in his service, at his command. Reason will tell us, that no man can be a loser by a course of submissive obedience to God. You cannot be at so much cost for him, or offer him so dear a service, which he is not able and willing to satisfy you for a thousandfold. God will not be beholden to any man. You cannot bring him in your debt, beyond what he doth by his bountiful promise; but if you could, he would not continue in your debt. You will make nothing of your death, if you do not either undergo it for Christ, or bear it submissively by the power of heavenly love constraining you. Merely to die whether you will or no, as a fruit of sin, is common to the most ungodly men; but if the love of God can make you voluntarily submit to death (whether natural, or violent from persecutors), what a glorious advantage may you make of it! You will 1. Put your salvation more out of doubt than any other course in this world could do. For whosoever perisheth, it is most certain that such as these shall be saved. 2. And therefore you may die with the greatest confidence and joy, as having seen the matter of your doubts removed, and dying in the very exercise of those graces that have the promise of salvation; and in such a state as hath the fullest and most frequent promises in the Gospel. 3. And then the crown of martyrdom is the most glorious crown. You will not have an ordinary place in heaven. These are that part of the heavenly host that stand nearest to the throne of God, and that praise him with the highest joys, who hath brought them through tribulations, and redeemed them by his blood. If a man should make a motion to you to exchange your cottage for a palace and a kingdom, you would not stick at it as if it were against you, because you must leave your ancient home: and how much less should you be against it, when you

are but moved to step out of your ruinous cottage into glory, when it would shortly fall upon your heads, and you must leave it whether you will or no, for nothing.

9. What reason have you to be so tender of the flesh? Is it the greatness of its sufferings that you stick at? Why, you put poor beasts and birds to as much, and so do the butchers daily for your use; and they must suffer it. And why should the body be so dear to you? For the matter of it, what is it but earth? And wherein is it more excellent than the beasts that perish? I think God hath purposely clothed your souls with so poor a dress, that you should be the less unwilling to be unclothed, and might learn to set more by your souls than by your bodies, and to make more carefully provision for them. It seems he hath purposely lodged you in so poor a cottage, that you should not be at too much care for it, nor be too loath to leave it. You have its daily necessities, and infirmities, and pains, and somewhat of its filth and loathsomeness, to tell you of its meanness; and why should you be so loath that so poor a cottage, so frail a body, should be turned to dust? Dust it is, and to dust it is sentenced. When the soul hath left it but a week, men can scarce endure to see it or smell it! And should the breaking of such an earthen vessel be so unpleasing a thing to you? And for its usefulness, though so far as it is obedient, it was serviceable to your souls and God, yet was it so refractory, ill-disposed, and disobedient, that it proved no better than your enemy. Many a temptation it hath entertained and cherished; and many a sin hath it drawn you to commit; those senses have let in a world of vanity; those wandering eyes have called in covetousness, and pride, and lust. Those greedy appetites have been so eager on the bait, that they have too oft borne your faith and reason, and drawn you to excess in meats and drinks, for matter or manner, for quality or

quantity, or both. Many a groan those sins have cost you, and many a smarting day they have caused you, and a sad, uncomfortable life you have had by reason of them, in comparison of what you might have had. And this flesh hath been the mother, or nurse of all. You were engaged by your baptismal covenant to fight against it, when you entered into the church; and if you are Christians, this combat hath been your daily work, and much of the business of your lives. And yet are you loath to have the victory, and see your enemy under feet? Do you fight against it as for the life of your souls, and yet are you afraid lest death should hurt it or break it down? Have you fought yourselves friends with it, that you are so tender of it? When you are the greatest friends to it, it will be the most dangerous enemy to you. And do not think that it is only sin, and not the body, that is the flesh, that is called your enemy in Scripture. For though it be not the body as such, or as obedient to the soul, yet is it the body as inclining to creatures, from which the sinful soul cannot restrain it; and it is the body as having an inordinate sensitive appetite and imagination, and so distempered, as that it rebels against the Spirit, and casteth off the rule of reason, and would not be curbed of its desires, but have the rule of all itself. Was it not the very flesh itself that Paul saith he fought against, and kept under, and brought into subjection, lest he should be cast away? 1 Cor. 9:26, 27. Why should sin be called 'flesh and body' but that it is the body of flesh that is the principal seat of those sins that are so called? "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;" Rom. 8:13. "If ye sow to the flesh, of the flesh ye shall reap corruption;" Gal. 6:8. That which is first in being, is first in sin; but it is the flesh or embryo endued with sense, that is first in being. Be not therefore too tender of that which corruption hath made your prison

and your enemy: many a time you have been put to resist it, and watch and strive against it, and when you have been at the best, it hath been hindering you to be better; and when the spirit was willing the flesh was weak, and quickly hath it caused your cooling and declension. Many a blessed hour's communion between God and your souls, that flesh hath deprived you of: and therefore, though still you must love it, yet you should the less grieve or be troubled at its sufferings, seeing they are but the fruits of its sin, and a holy contentedness should possess your minds, that God should thus castigatorily revenge his own quarrel and yours upon it.

10. But yet consider, that were you never so tender of the body itself, yet faith and reason should persuade you to be content, for God is but preparing even for its felicity; his undoing it is but to make it up again. As in the new birth he broke your hearts and false hopes, that he might heal your hearts, and give you sounder hopes instead of them; so at death he breaketh your flesh and worldly hopes, not to undo you, and leave it in corruption, but to raise it again another manner of body than now it is, and give it a part in the blessedness which you hoped for. If in good sadness you believe the resurrection, what cause is there for so much fear of death? You can be content that your roses die, and your sweetest flowers fall and perish, and the green and beauteous complexion of the earth be turned into a bleak and withered hue, because you expect a kind of resurrection in the spring. You can boldly lie down at night to sleep, though sleep be a kind of death to the body, and more to the soul, and all because you shall rise again in the morning; and if every night's sleep (or one at least) were a gentle death, if you were sure to rise again the next morning, you would make no great matter of it. Were it as common to men to die every night, and rise again in the morning, as it is to

sleep every night and rise in the morning, death would not seem such a dreadful thing. Those poor men that have the falling-sickness, do once in a day, or in a few days, lie as dead men, and have as much pain as many that die; and yet because they use to be up and well again in a little time, they can go merrily about their business the rest of the day, and little fear their approaching fall. How much more should the belief of a resurrection unto life confirm us against the fears of death! And why should we not as quietly commit our bodies to the dust, when we have the promise of the God of heaven, that the earth "shall deliver up her dead," and that this body "that is sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption? It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." So great and wonderful the change will be, as now is inconceivable! We have now a drossy lump of flesh, an aggregation of the elements to a seed of life, which out of them forms itself a body, by the Divine influx. Like the silkworm, which in the winter is but a seed, which in the summer doth move and attract that matter from which it gets a larger body, by a kind of resurrection: but it is another manner of body (I will not say of flesh), which at the resurrection we shall have. Not flesh and blood, nor a natural body, but of a nature so spiritual, sublime, and pure, that it shall be indeed a spiritual body. And think not that this is a contradiction, and that spirituality and corporeity are inconsistent; for "there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body:" the root of the fleshly, natural body, was the "first man Adam, who was made a living soul," to be the root of living souls. The root of the spiritual body is Christ, who being a "quickening Spirit," doth quicken all his members by his Spirit, which Spirit of grace is the seed of glory; and as from a holy and gracious Saviour we receive a

holy and gracious nature, so from a glorified Saviour we shall receive a glorious nature: we are now "changed from glory to glory" in the beginning, as "by the Spirit of the Lord;" but it is another kind of glory that this doth tend to. "Howbeit, that is not first which is spiritual, but the natural, and afterwards the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." And from each of them we partake of an answerable nature. "As is the earthy, such are they that are earthy," even all of us in our fleshly state, having earthy bodies from an earthy Adam, and natural bodies from the natural Adam. "And as is the heavenly, such are they that are heavenly;" for Christ makes men like himself, even first gracious, and then glorious, as Adam begets us like himself, that is, natural (and sinful). And therefore all those that have "followed Christ in the regeneration," shall follow him into glory, and having conquered by him, shall reign by him and with him; and having received the holy nature here which is the seed of glory, they shall receive the glorious nature there, which is the perfection of that grace: and so as Christ hath a heavenly spiritual body, and not an earthy, natural body, so shall his members have, that they may be like him. "And as we have here borne the image of the earthy," in having first a natural, fleshly body, "we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Adam," in having a spiritual body, that is not flesh. Now, lest any doubt of it (saith the Spirit of God), "this, I say, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption;" 1 Cor. 15:42–51.

Object. 'If there were but as much likelihood of a resurrection, as there is of the reviving of the plants in the spring, I could believe it, for there is a life remaining in the root or seed; but the body of man

hath neither root nor seed of life, and therefore it is contrary to nature that it should revive.'

Answ. 1. If it be above nature, that is all, it is not contrary to it; or not so contrary as to be above the power of the Lord of nature. Will you allow no greater works for God than such as you can see a reason of, and can assign a natural cause of? What did nature in the creation of nature? It was not certainly any cause of itself! If Christ rose without a natural cause, even so shall we. 2. But why may I not say that the dead body of man hath a living root, as truly as the plants in winter? The soul is the root of the body, and the soul is still alive; and Christ is the root of the soul, and he is still alive. For though we are dead, "yet our life is hid with Christ in God: and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear (at the spring of resurrection), then we shall also appear with him in glory;" Col. 3:3, 4. And though there be no physical contact between this living soul and the body, yet there is a relative union, and a deep rooted love of the soul to its body, and inclination to it; so that it is mindful of it, and waiteth with longing for that hour when the command of God shall send it to revive that body. It is not incredible that a silly snail should, by its natural life and power, make for itself a beautiful habitation; or that the life of a rose-tree, that was buried in the root, should fabricate a sweet and beauteous rose, by which it may make an ostentation of its invisible self to the world. In how small a room doth the life of a silkworm lie (of which I spoke before) in the winter! That little grain of seed is such as yields no sign of life to the beholder: yet doth it form itself a larger body, and that body spin its silken web out of its own substance; and in that, house itself in a husk, and take to itself another shape, and thence become a winged fly, and so generate more. But nearer us, in the generation of man, the vital principle in

the seed doth quickly, with concurrent causes, form itself a body. The warmth of the hen, or other bird, can turn the egg into a chicken. Why then may not the living soul, that is the root and life of the body in the dust, be the instrument of God to reform its own body? As certainly it will be the principle that shall reinform it. But you say, the body being dead hath no natural root, nor way of recess to life again, because the privation is total. To which I answer; first, the relative union between the soul and it, and the soul's disposition to the return into its body, is as potent a cause of its reviving as the natural union of the root and the branches; if, withal, you consider that Christ is the root of the soul. Rational agents, if perfect, will work as certainly as natural; for natural causes do nothing but by a power communicated to them from an intellectual cause, even God himself. Why should nature do any of these things, but because God, that makes and ruleth all, will have it to be so? Now Jesus Christ is the political head of the church. The body in the grave hath its own relation to him. Christ is still living, and resolved, and engaged by promise, and inclined by love, to revive that body. And as Christ is the life of the soul, so the soul is the life of the body; and this soul, as I said, is waiting to be sent again into it. And when the hour comes, what can hinder? The love of the soul to its body, and its desire to be reunited, is a kind of natural cause of the resurrection. A candle not lighted is as far from light, and as much without it, as a dead body is without life: and yet one touch of a lighted candle will light that which never was lighted before. And so may one touch of the living soul that is now with Christ, put life into the body that lieth in the dust. And as the lighted candle makes the other like it, and communicateth of its own nature to it; so doth the glorified soul communicate a new kind of excellency to the body, which it never

had before; even to be a spiritual, glorious, incorruptible, and immortal body. In the first creating of man, the new formed body, as to the matter of it, was no better than the body of a beast or any common piece of earth. But the soul made the difference; when a rational soul was breathed into that body, it advanced the very body to a dignity beyond the body of brutes, even such as the natural body of man had before sin. When Christ was about to repair fallen man, it was the Spirit of Christ informing the soul, that caused the renewed soul to communicate again a dignity to the bodies of sanctified men above other bodies. And so when the body was dead because of sin (having the root of sin and death within it, and being mortal therefore), yet the spirit was life because of righteousness (being the root of holy and righteous dispositions, and the new life in man himself); Rom. 8:10. For Christ, the principal root of life, and the spirit and holiness, are first in order of nature in the soul, and but by communication, and secondarily in the body. But contrarily, sin made its entrance by the body, and hath its root and seat, first in order of nature in the body; and it is so communicated to the soul: thus sin comes in at the backdoor, even at the wrong end, and by the baser part: but grace comes in the right way, by the nobler part; sin hath its root in the viler part; but Christ hath his seat first in the better part. And yet I must add, 1. That sin is not ripe till it reach the will, though it enter by the flesh and senses: it is not formed, nor to be called sin, till it reach the will, and as there it is situated: but yet the thing itself is first in and by the flesh. 2. And the will is truly the seat of originial sin itself, as well as the sensitive part; but not the first root of the corruption. Though sin be worst in the rational part, because the corruption of the best is the worst, yet it is not first there. But holiness is first also in the soul, and so communicated to the

body, And so also glory itself will be. And therefore take notice of the wise and gracious providence of God, that taketh the soul to heaven beforehand that it may be first glorified, and so may be fit to communicate glory to the body: and so as the natural soul dignified the natural body; and the sanctified soul did sanctify the body, so the glorified soul by re-union with the body, shall communicate its nature to the body at the resurrection, and so it will be made spiritual, immortal, and incorruptible by the soul; and the soul and body are made such by Christ.

So that by this time you may see that there is more reason for the resurrection, for all the body is turned to earth, than there is reason that a candle that is gone out should be lighted again by another; or than there is reason that I should put on my clothes in the morning which I put off at night. It is true, those clothes have no power to put on themselves; nor is there any natural necessitating cause of it; but yet there is a free cause in me, that will infallibly (if I live and be able) produce it; for nature disposeth me to abhor nakedness, and desire my clothes, and therefore in the morning I will put them on. And so nature teacheth the separated soul to desire a re-union with its body; and therefore when the resurrection morning comes, it will gladly take the word from Christ, and give that vital touch to the body that shall revive it, and so put on its ancient garment; but wonderfully changed from fleshly to spiritual, from dishonourable into glorious.

And now I hope you see, that you may put off these clothes with patience and submission, and that it is no wrong to the flesh itself to be put off, but tendeth to its highest advancement at the last; though the first cause of sin, and the nest of sin shall be so broken first, that

it shall first be seen what sin hath done, before it be seen what grace will do; and the fruit of our own ways must first be tasted, before we shall fully feed and live upon the blessed fruit of the grace of Christ.

11. Moreover, as there is a resurrection for the body itself, and that to a more perfect estate than it can here attain, so the whole nature shall be perfected beyond our present comprehension. This life was not intended to be the place of our perfection, but the preparation for it. As the fruit is far from ripeness in the first appearance, or the flower while it is but in the husk or bud; or the oak when it is but an acorn; or any plant when it is but in the seed; no more is the very nature of man on earth. As the infant is not perfect in the womb, nor the chicken in the shell, no more are our natures perfect in this world. Methinks for the sake of the body itself, much more of the soul, if we are believers, we should submit contentedly to death. While you are here you know that creatures will fail you, enemies will hate you, friends will grieve you, neighbours will wrong you, satan will tempt you and molest you; the world is changeable, and will deceive you; all your comforts are mixed with discomforts; the body carrieth about with it calamities enough of its own to weary it. What daily pains must it be at for the sustentation of itself in its present state; and yet what grief and sorrow must it undergo! Every member hath either its disease, or a disposition thereto. What abundance of passages can pain and sickness find to enter at; and how many rooms that are ready to receive them! As every member hath its use, so every one is capable of sorrow; and the sorrow of one is at least as much communicated to the whole, as the usefulness is; the pain of the simplest member, even of a tooth, can make the whole body weary of itself. What is the daily condition of our flesh, but weakness and suffering, with care and labour to prevent much worse, which yet

we know cannot long be avoided: the sorrow of many a man's life hath made him wish he had never been born: and why then should he not wish as much to die, which doth ten thousandfold more for him, if he be a Christian, than to be unborn would have done. Not a relation so comfortable, but hath its discomforts; not a friend so suitable, but hath some discordancy; nor any so amiable and sweet, but hath somewhat loathsome, troublesome, and bitter. Not a place so pleasant and commodious, but hath its unfitness and discommodities; not a society so good and regular, but hath its corruptions and irregularities. And should we be so loath to leave (whether naturally or violently) such a life as this? When the fruit is ripe, should it not be gathered? When the corn is ripe, would you have it grow there and not be cut? When the Spirit hath hatched us for heaven, should we be so loath to leave the shell or nest? When we are begotten again to the hopes of immortality, should we be so desirous to stay in the womb? O, sirs, it is another kind of life that we shall have with God! They are purer comforts, that stay for us above. But if you will not have the grapes to be gathered and pressed, how can you expect to have the wine? Methinks our flesh might have enough ere this time, of sickness, and pain, and want, and crosses, and should be content to lie down in hope of the day when these shall be no more.

Little would an unbeliever think what a body God will make of this, that now is corruptible flesh and blood! It shall then be loathsome and troublesome no more. It shall be hungry, or thirsty, or weary, or cold, or pained no more. As the stars of heaven do differ from a clod of earth, or from a carrion in a ditch, so will our glorified, immortal bodies differ from this mortal, corruptible flesh. If a skilful workman can turn a little earth and ashes into such curious transparent

glasses, as we daily see; and if a little seed that bears no show of such a thing, can produce the more beautiful flowers of the earth; and if a little acorn can bring forth the greatest oak; why should we once doubt whether the seed of everlasting life and glory which is now in the blessed souls with Christ, can by him communicate a perfection to the flesh that is dissolved into its elements? There is no true beauty but that which is there received from the face of God: and if a glimpse made Moses' face to shine, what glory will God's glory communicate to us, when we have the fullest endless intuition of it! There only is the strength, and there is the riches, and there is the honour, and there is the pleasure; and here are but the shadows, and dreams, and names, and images of these precious things.

And the perfection of the soul that is now imperfect, will be such as cannot now be known. The very nature and manner of intellection, memory, volition, and affections, will be inconceivably altered and elevated, even as the soul itself will be, and much more, because of the change on the corruptible body, which in these acts it now makes use of. But of these things I have spoken so much in the 'Saints' Rest,' that I shall say no more of them now, but this: that in a believer that expects this blessed change, and knows that he shall never till then be perfect, there is much unreasonableness in the inordinate unwillingness and fears of death.

12. You know that fears and unwillingness can do no good, but much increase your suffering, and make your death a double death. If it be bitter naturally, make it not more bitter wilfully. I speak this as a violent death for Christ, as well as of a natural death; for as the one cannot be avoided if we would, so the other cannot be avoided when Christ calleth us to it, without the loss of our salvation; and therefore

it may be called necessary as well as the other. Necessary suffering and death is enough without the addition of unnecessary fears.

13. Nay, were it but to put an end to the inordinate fears of death, even death itself should be the less fearful to us. These very fears are troublesome to many an upright soul; and should we not desire to be past them! As a woman with child is in fear of the pain and danger of her travail, but joyful when it is over; so is the true believer himself too oft afraid of the departing hour: but death puts an end to all those fears. Is it the pain that you fear? Why, how soon will it be over! Is it the strangeness of your souls to God, and the place that you are passing to? This also will be quickly over; and one moment will give you such full acquaintance with the blessed God, and the celestial inhabitants, and the world in which you are to live, that you will find yourself no stranger there; but be more joyfully familiar and content than ever you were in the bosom of your dearest friend.

The infant in the womb is a stranger to this lighter, open world, and all the inhabitants of it; and yet it is not best to stay there. You can sail for commodity to a country that you never saw; and why cannot you pass with peace and joy to a God, a Christ, a heaven that you never saw? But yet you are not wholly a stranger there; is it not that God that you have loved, and that hath first loved you? Have you not been brought into the world by him, and lived by him, and been preserved and provided for by him? And do you not know him? Is it not your Father, and he that hath given you his Son and his Spirit? Have you not found an inclination towards him, desires after him, and some taste of his love, and communion with him, and yet are you wholly unacquainted with him? Know ye not him whom you have loved above all? In whom you have trusted? And whom you have

daily served in the world? Who have you lived to but him? For whom else have you laid out your time and labour? And yet do you not know him? And know you not that Christ that hath purposely come down into flesh that you might know him? And that hath shewed himself to you in a holy life, and bitter death, and in abundant precious Gospel mercies, and in sacramental representations, that so he might entertain a familiarity with you, and infinite distance might not leave you too strange to God? Know you not that Spirit that hath made so many a motion to your soul? That hath sanctified you, and formed the image of God upon you, and hath dwelt in you so long? And made your hearts his very workhouse, where he hath been daily doing somewhat for God? It is not possible that you should be utterly strange to him that you live to, and live from, and live in; and not know him, by whom you know yourselves and all things, nor see that light by which you see whatever you see.

O but, you say, you never saw him, and have no distinct apprehension of his essence. Answ. What! would you make a creature of him, that can be limited, comprehended or seen with fleshly, mortal eyes? Take heed of such imaginations. It is the understanding that must see him; you know that he is most wise, and good, and great; and that he is the creator, and sustainer, and ruler of the world, and that he is your reconciled Father in Christ; and is this no knowledge of him? And then, the heaven that you are to go to, is it that you are an heir of, where you have laid up your treasure, and where your hearts and conversation hath so long been; and yet do you not know it? You have had many a thought of it, and bestowed many a day's labour for it, and yet do you not know it? O, but you never saw it for all this! Answ. It is a spiritual blessedness that flesh and blood can neither enjoy nor see; but by the eye of the mind you

have often seen, at least some glimpse of it: you know that it is the present intuition and full fruition of God himself and your glorified Redeemer with his blessed angels and saints in perfect love, and joy, and praise. And if you know this, you are not altogether strangers to heaven. And for the saints and heavenly inhabitants, you are not wholly strangers to them. Some of them you have known in the flesh, and others of them you have known in the spirit; you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and therefore cannot be utterly unacquainted with them.

But methinks the stranger you are to God and to heaven, and to the saints, the more you should desire to be there where there is no strangeness: this is not the time or place of most intimate acquaintance. If you would be acquainted, you should draw nearer and not draw back. It is death that must open you the door into that presence where strangeness will be no more.

And if it be the doubts of your interest in Christ and life that makes you shrink and loath to die; consider, that to refuse to die for Christ, is the way above all to increase those doubts; but to give up your lives for him, or cheerfully to surrender your souls to him at his call, is the readiest, surest way in the world to prove you at present in a state of grace; besides that you will be hastened into a state of glory, where you shall be quickly and fully passed all doubts of your state of former grace. In a word, as all the fears and sorrows of this life will then be at an end, so with the rest will our fears of death: and therefore death should be the more welcome; because it is the end, as of all other troubles, so of these disturbing fears.

14. Consider also what a multitude have trod this bloody way before you. Almost all that ever were born have died, and are now in the world that you are passing to. You are not the first that entered at this narrow gate. The dearest saints of God have died. If Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Peter, and Paul could not escape the stroke of death, what are you that you should murmur to follow such and so many that have gone before you? You need not fear being solitary in heaven. There are millions and millions more of saints, than there are on earth: many that you knew, and millions more that will then be as dear to you as if you had known them. Is it not better be among innocent souls than a defiled, guilty world? Is it not better be where no sin entereth, and never a lust or passion comes, than to live as among wild beasts, with furious, unreasonable sinners? Is it not better be where light is perfect, and all your doubts are fully resolved, than in darkness, and perplexity, and among an ignorant, blind generation, that are enemies to the light that you desire? Is it not better be where is nothing but the perfect love of the infinite God, in perfect saints and blessed angels, than to live among perverse, ungodly men that make you almost weary of your lives? If it be a delight to us to read the writings of the illuminated saints of God, and we think them such jewels and ornaments in our libraries, what a pleasure it would be to converse with them that wrote these books, and that in their celestial perfection, where they have attained a thousand times more light than before they had; and where all the doubts are resolved which their books could not resolve. O, blessed society, in comparison of that we now converse with!

15. Nay more, lest the bloody way of death should seem too strange and terrible to us, the Lord Jesus our head hath trod that path; and that on purpose to conquer death, by taking away the sting and

principal cause of terrors, and making that a passage to felicity that was a passage to everlasting misery; so that ever since Christ hath gone this way, there is no such danger in it to his followers. Where the Captain of our salvation goeth, his soldiers may boldly follow him. "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part with them, that he might destroy by death him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and might deliver them that through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage;" Heb. 2:14, 15. He hath cleared our way, and taken out of it the sorest thorns, and hath prepared us a habitation with himself. And shall we fear to go the way that Christ hath gone, and purposely gone to clear it for us?

16. Moreover consider, that the celestial inhabitants have purposely made themselves familiar with us in this lower world, that they might acquaint us with themselves, and lead us up to their blessed habitation, and fit us for it. No man of common reason can doubt but that those more capacious, glorious parts of the universe, are stored with inhabitants answerable to their glory; when we see every corner of the lower world to be replenished with inhabitants. And Scripture and some experience tells us, that those angels of God are conversant here about us men: they bear us up in their hands, that we dash not our foot against a stone; they pitch their tents and encamp about us, as an appointed guard for our security; it is their very office: "for what are they but ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation?" Heb. 1:14. They converse with us, though we see them not, and are about us night and day; they are among us in our holy assemblies, observing our behaviour before the Lord; 1 Cor. 11:10 and they are witnesses of our good and evil; Eccles. 5:6. From them, as the servants of God, was the law received; Acts

7:53. Gal. 3:19. Heb. 2:2. They read our books, and study with us the mysteries of the Gospel; 1 Pet. 1:12. And as near as they are to God, they are glad to make the church their book in which to read his manifold wisdom, and know it by beholding it in us as in a glass; Ephes. 3:10. The nations have their angels, the churches have their angels, and the particular saints also have their angels; Dan. 10:13. 20, 21. Rev. 1:20. Acts 12:15. Matt. 18:10. They are not strangers with us, but have charge of us to keep us in all our ways; Psal. 91:10–12. They rejoice in our conversion; Luke 15:10. They are part of the heavenly society that we are already listed in; Heb. 12:22. They ascend and descend as ordinary passengers between heaven and earth; Gen. 28:12. They are round about us, and we live as in their camp; Psal. 34:7. Before them we must be confessed or denied; Luke 12:8, 9. They convoy our departed souls to Christ; Luke 16:22. They shall attend Christ at his second coming, as they proclaimed his first, and attended him on earth; Matt. 25:31. Mark 8:38. They shall be his heralds to call up the dead to judgment; Matt. 13:39. 49 and 24:31. And at last we shall be their companions and equal to them; Luke 20:36. So that you see we have the same society invisible, which we shall have in heaven; yea, and sometime when God is pleased, they manifest their presence by visible or audible apparitions. And shall we fear to remove into the presence of these blessed spirits that now attend us and are still about us, and the instruments of so much of our good?

Yea, the Lord Jesus Christ came down to be familiar with us, and to bring us into a state of friendship, and holy boldness with God himself: and yet shall we draw back?

17. I would put this question to you for your serious answer: Can you be contented, yea, do you desire, to have no more of God than here you have? Is this much of the knowledge of him, and his will and works, sufficient for you? Would you be no nearer him, and enjoy no more of him? Whatever your flesh say, sure the love of God in your hearts will not suffer you considerately to say so. Consult with your new nature, with the holy principle that is in you: methinks you should not be content to remain for ever at such a distance from God as you are. If you can, I blame you not to be afraid of death: if not, why then are you loath to go to him?

18. And I would ask you also, whether you are content with the measure of sanctification which you have, or which is to be attained in this life? Are you content to live for ever with no more knowledge or love of God? No more faith or love to Christ? No more sense of the worth of grace? No more righteousness, or peace, or joy in the Holy Ghost? No more meekness, humility, or heavenly-mindedness? Are you contented rather to live for ever under all the pride, and ignorance, and passion, and selfishness, and lust, and worldliness, and all other sins that here beset you, rather than to remove to the place of perfection, and yield that death shall break the vessel and nest of your corruptions? If you care so little for the grace of God, and see so little beauty in his image, and see so little odiousness in sin, that you had rather keep it for ever than go to God by the passage of death, I blame you not to be afraid to die; but if otherwise, why do you desire perfection and deliverance, and yet be so loath to come and receive it, when you know that it is not to be had on earth?

19. Moreover, you are contented to remain for ever as unserviceable to God as here you are? Alas! how little do you for him! How much

do you to displease him! Lay together all the service of your lives, and how small and poor a matter is it! And would you still live at these rates? Will this content you? Methinks it should not if you have grace in your hearts. Why then do you not desire to depart, and to be with Christ? There you shall be perfectly fitted for his service, and therefore perfectly perform it. What other service God will have for us, we cannot yet tell: but love and praise we are sure will be the chief, and the rest will be good, and holy, and honourable, whatever it be. If you are Christians, methinks the sense of your unprofitableness, and of your unpleasing frame of heart and life, should be your daily grief; and therefore you should desire the state where you may be more servicable, and not be so unwilling of it.

20. Lastly, I would ask you, are you contented to attain no other end of all your life, and labours, and sufferings, than here you do attain? What is it that you pray for, and seek and strive for? Is it for no more than is to be had on earth? If you have no higher design, intentions, or desires, I cannot much blame you to be loath to die; but if you have, methinks no man should be unwilling to attain his end. What! have you done and suffered so much for heaven, and now would you not go to it? Had you rather all your labour were lost? Do you desire to be happy, or do you not? If you do (as certainly you do), would you not go where happiness is to be had, when you are sure that it is not to be had on earth? What say you! is there not plain reason in all this that I propound to you? It is a sad case when men seek not God and heaven as their felicity, but only as a lesser evil than hell, which they would endure, rather than enjoy, when they can keep no longer this earthly life, which they account their felicity. Where this is the case, it is a sad case; and were not this a common case, there would not be so much unwillingness to depart.

And now Christian reader, I beseech thee weigh these foregoing considerations, and judge whether it be not a contradiction to thy profession, and unseemly for a believer to be unwilling to die when God shall call him; much more to cast away everlasting life, for the saving of his temporal life but a little longer! O, learn the needful lesson of self-denial, especially in this point of denying your lives! He that can do this can do all, and may be sure that he is mortified indeed; and he that can do all the rest, and sticks but at this, and could part with any thing for Christ save his life, doth indeed do nothing, nor is it esteemed self-denying. It is a lesson therefore that is exceeding necessary to be learnt, and worthy all your time and diligence, even to deny your lives for the love of Christ.

Perhaps you will say, we live in days of peace and liberty, and therefore are not like to be called to martyrdom: what need then have we to learn this lesson? I answer, 1. You are uncertain what changes you may see; but if you never suffer, yet you must be sure that you have a heart that would suffer if God did call you to it; for though you may be saved without suffering, where you are not called to it, yet you cannot be saved without a heart that would suffer if you were put upon it. 2. And if you cannot deny your lives for Christ, you will not sincerely deny your pleasures, or profits, or honours for him. If you would not suffer death for him if he called you to it, you will not sincerely suffer losses, and wrongs, and reproaches for him, which almost every Christian must expect: so that to try your own sincerity, you should look after it. 3. And it is certain that death will shortly come; and then if you have not learnt this lesson, to deny yourselves even in case of life, you will die unwillingly and uncomfortably.

At least, methinks I might reason thus with any man of you, good or bad: either death is indeed terrrible, or not. If it be not, why do you so fear it when it comes? If it be, why do you not as well fear it before it comes, even in your youth and health; for you are sure then that you must die, as if it were upon you. A wonderful thing it is that man's heart should be so unreasonably insensible, and that there should be so great a difference in the affections of most in regard of death. It is no matter of doubt or controversy whether they shall die. He is a block, and not a man, that knoweth it not as certainly now as he shall do in his sickness; and yet, in health, these wretches will not be awakened so much to fear it as may restrain them from sin, and help them to prepare for it. It is troublesome, precise talk with them, to talk of making ready to die: either they slight it, or love not to hear or think of it. And yet the same men, when death is coming, and they see they must away, are even amazed with fear and horror; and I cannot blame them, unless they were in a better case. But this I must blame them for, as most unreasonable: that they can make such a lamentable complaint when death and hell are near at hand, and yet make so light of it all their lifetime.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Answer to their Doubts that fear Death

BUT because this is the hardest part of self-denial, and yet most necessary, and the particular subject of my text, I shall stay upon it yet so much longer as to resolve a question of some doubting Christians, and to give you some directions for the furtherance of self-denial herein.

Object. 'If it be a necessary part of self-denial to deny our own lives, I am much afraid that I am no disciple of Christ, as having no true self-denial, for I find that for all these reasons I cannot be willing to die; but when you have said all that can be said, death is the most terrible thing in the world to me.' Answ. I pray you lay together these following particulars for answer to this great and common doubt. 1. Death, as death, is naturally dreadful to all; and the best men, as men, are naturally averse to it, and abhor it. No man can desire death, as death, nor ought to do it. If it had not been an evil to nature, it had not been fit to be the matter of God's punishment, and to be threatened to the world. Threatenings would not do their work, if that which is threatened were not naturally evil, or hurtful and dreadful to the subject. To threaten men with a benefit is a contradiction, as much as to promise him a mischief, and more. 2. It is not therefore a simple displacency, or averseness to die, that God requireth you to lay by. Self-denial consisteth not in reconciling us to death, as death; for then he might as well persuade us to become angels as to deny ourselves, and preachers had as hard a work to do, as to persuade men to cease to be men. Death will be an enemy as long as it is death. Even the separated soul hath so natural an inclination to union with its body, that the separation is part of the penalty to it; and though heaven be their joy, and Christ their life and fulness, yet the separation from the body which they have even with Christ, is a penalty, and they have not that perfect measure of joy and glory, as they shall have when they are joined to the body again: so that separation, as such, is penal to the soul in blessedness. And even the separated soul of Jesus Christ, that was more blessed than ours, was, as separated, in a state of penalty, when his body was in the grave (of which, see my Appendix to the Reformed Pastor, about the

descent into hell). 3. That which you have to look after, therefore, in your souls, is not a love to death, or willingness of death as death, which no man hath or should have; but it is, 1. A submission to it, as a less evil than sin and hell, and the displeasure of God, and a choosing rather to die than wilfully to sin and forsake the Lord. 2. And a love to that glory in the fruition of God which death is the passage to. Seeing we cannot obtain the end of our faith and patience by any easier passage than death, you must rather be content to go this straight and grievous way than miss of the state of eternal blessedness. Let death be never so odious and dreadful to you, if you had but rather die than forsake Christ by sin, or miss of everlasting life with God, you have that true self-denial, even of life itself, which is required in my text. 4. And yet even a gracious soul may be so much unprepared, as to desire to stay yet longer on earth, though he be absent from the Lord while he is present in the body, that so a better preparation may be made. And also the love of God may make a man desire to stay yet longer for the service of the church, or to be, with Paul, in a strait between two; Phil. 1:21–23. 5. Have you not such pleasant apprehensions of the New Jerusalem, and the coming of Christ in glory, and the blessed state of the saints in heaven, as that you could most gladly enter into that blessed state by any other way than death; and had you not rather die than miss of that felicity? At least, when you know that die you must, had you not rather die sooner, even a violent death by persecution, than miss of your eternal life by saving your lives a little longer? 6. And for your unwillingness to die, as death is the last enemy to be conquered by Christ at the resurrection, so the fears of death, and the power of it, is the last evil that we shall be troubled with: and you must not expect to be fully freed from these fears in this life, for death will be death,

and man will be man. But yet let me tell you, that before you die God may very much abate your fears, and very ordinarily doth so with his servants: 1. By giving them that grace that is suited to a dying state; and 2. By the help of sickness and pain itself: and that is one great reason why sickness shall usually go before death, that pain and misery may make the flesh even weary of itself, and make the soul weary of its companion, and both weary of this miserable life.

And now I shall briefly name some few directions, which, if you will practise, you will more easily submit to death.

CHAPTER XL

Directions to be willing to Die

Direct. 1. BY all means endeavour the strengthening of your belief of the reality of eternal life, and the truth of the promise of Christ concerning it; for if you believe it not, you cannot die for it, nor cheerfully submit to a natural death through the hopes of it. This is the sum or principal work of the Christian faith, to believe the everlasting life, as procured for us by the love of the Father, the obedience, death, resurrection, and intercession of the Son, and the sanctification of the Holy Ghost. It is the unsoundness, or the weakness of this belief, that is the principal cause of our unwillingness to die.

Direct. 2. By all means endeavour to get and maintain the assurance of your title to this promise and felicity. Get sound evidence, and keep it clear: expunge all blots without delay. Take heed of such sin as woundeth conscience, and wasteth comfort, and grieveth the

Spirit of adoption by which you are sealed to the day of redemption, and by which you have your peace and comforts. If by such sin your souls are clouded and estranged from God, be diligent in seeking for healing and reconciliation, and rest not till your peace be made with God; for while you think of him as displeased, you will be afraid of coming to him, and this will double the fears of death.

Direct. 3. Deny yourselves first in the carnal and worldly comforts of this life, or else you are unlikely to deny yourselves in the matter of life itself. Disuse yourselves from unnecessary pleasures of the flesh, and learn to endure dishonour, contempt, and reproach from the world, and sickness and poverty, when it is inflicted on you by the hand of God. Till you can deny your ease, and profit, and appetite, and honour, and all the delight of this present world, you are never likely to deny your lives sincerely. To deny your lives, doth contain the denying of all these, and more; and therefore you must learn the lesser if you would do the greater. These are the parts of life, as it were, and it is easier thus to overcome it in its parts, than in the whole: when particular soldiers are destroyed, the army is the weaker.

And the use of suffering the afflictions of this life, will make you hardy, and make death seem a smaller matter; for when you thus die daily, you will the more easily die once.

Besides, death is half disarmed when the pleasures and interests of the flesh are first denied; for the leaving of fleshly contents and pleasures is much of the reason of men's unwillingness to die: and therefore when these are denied beforehand, the reasons of your unwillingness are taken away. If you pull down the nest, the birds

will be gone. Men that are loath to leave their country would willingly be gone if their houses were fired, or they were turned out of doors and their friends and goods were all sent away. This is it that makes men so unwilling to die, because they practise not mortification in their health, but contrarily study to live as pleasingly as may be to the flesh, and think it part of their Christian liberty, thus making Christ a carnal Saviour, as the Jews conceive of their expected Messiah; and taking up with a carnal, false salvation, not purchased by Christ, but given by satan in the name of Christ, and assumed by themselves. They make it their business to have buildings, and lands, and meats, and drinks, and honours, and all things as pleasing as may be to the flesh, and then they complain that they are unwilling to die, and I easily believe them: it is no wonder. They make it the work of their lives to feather their nests, and make provision for the flesh, and then complain that they are loath to leave those nests that they have been feathering so long, and loath to scatter all the heap and treasure which they have been gathering. And did you think that gathering it was the way to make you willing to leave it? Men load themselves with the lumber and baggage of the world, and then complain that they cannot travel on their journey, but had rather sit down. They fall a building them habitations in their way, when they should have none but inns or tents; and when they have bestowed all their time, and cost, and charges on them, they complain of their hearts for being loath to leave them. Such mad doings as these are not the way to be willing to die: to provide for self and flesh in your lifetime, is not the way to deny your lives. Sirs, the way is this, if you will learn it, and stick not at the cost and trouble: self must be here stript naked of all its carnal comforts, so that it shall have nothing left to fly to, or trust upon, nor nothing left that it can take delight in, and then

it will away. If you would drive out an ill tenant, you will cast out all their goods, and leave them nothing but the bare walls, and not so much as a bed to lie on, and uncover the house over their heads, and then they will be gone. So if you cast out all your sensual commodities and delights, that when the flesh looks about it shall see nothing but the bare walls, and cannot find a resting place, then death will be less grievous and less unwelcome; or rather, indeed, even the flesh and self must be mortified, and in the sense in which it must be denied, it must have no being or life (that is, as it is withdrawn from its subordination to God), and then there will be nothing to rise up against your submission to death. Though nature, as nature, will keep you from loving death as death, yet were but self-denial perfect, there would be nothing to keep you from submitting to it, and desiring to pass through it to immortality. O, that you would but try such a self-denying life, and you would certainly die an easy, comfortable death.

Direct. 4. Suffer not unworthy thoughts of God to abide in your soul. Think not of his infinite love and goodness with doubtfulness or diminution. You will never be willing to come to God while you think of him as cruel, or as a despiser of his creatures, or unwilling to do good; but when once you think of him as the surest, greatest good, and your fastest friend, and the most lovely object that can be conceived of, and these thoughts are deep and wrought into the very nature of your soul, then you will be ready more cheerfully to die. No man can love the presence of a tyrant, or an enemy, or of him that is so far above him that there is no communion with him to be had. If you entertain such blasphemous thoughts of God, you are unlikely ever to desire his presence. See you think as honourably and magnificently of the goodness and love of God, as you do of his

knowledge or his power; and as you would abhor any extenuating conceptions of the one, so do of the other, and then the loveliness and glory of his face will draw out your desires, and make you long to be with God.

Direct. 5. And by such means as this aforesaid, labour to bring up your souls to live in the love of God. It is love that is the divine and heavenly nature in us; and therefore must incline us heavenwards. The nature of love is to long after communion with him that we love. The more love, the more of God in the soul, and the more desire after God. This is the grace that must live for ever, and therefore bendeth towards the place of its perfection. It is want of love to God, that maketh most of us so contented to be from him. Strengthen and exercise all other graces, as far as in you lieth; but above all, live in the exercise of this enjoying, heavenly grace.

Direct. 6. Consider of all the burdens that are here upon you, which should make you long to be with God. One would think the feeling of them would force you to consideration and weariness of them, and make the thoughts of rest to be sweet to you. Have you yet not sin enough, and sorrow, and fear, and trouble enough? Or must God lay a greater load on you, to make you desire to be disburdened? Every hour you spend, and every creature you have to do with, afford you some occasions of renewing your desires to depart from these, and be with Christ.

Direct. 7. Observe and magnify that of God which is here revealed to you in his word and works. Study him and admire him in Scripture, study and admire him in the frame of nature; and when you look towards sun, or moon, or sea, or land, and perceive how little it is

that you know, and how desirable it is to know them perfectly, think then of that estate, where you shall know them all in God himself, who is more than all. Study and admire him in the course of providences; study and admire him in the person of Christ; in the frame of his holy life; in the work of redemption; in the holy frame of his laws and covenants; study and admire him in his saints, and the frame of his holy image on their souls. This life of studying and admiring God, and dwelling upon him with all our souls, will exceedingly dispose us to be willing to come to him, and to submit to death.

Direct. 8. Live also in the daily exercise of holy joy and praise to God; which is the heavenly employment. For if you use yourselves to this heavenly life, it will much incline you to desire to be there. Exercise fear, and godly sorrow, and care in their places; but especially after faith and love, be sure to live in holy joy and praise. Be much in the consideration of all that riches of grace in Christ, communicated and to be communicated to you. And be much in thanks to God for his mercies; and cheering and comforting your soul, in the Lord your God; and thus the joy of grace will much dispose you to the joys of glory; and the peace which the kingdom of God consisteth in, will incline you to the peace of the everlasting kingdom; and the cheerful praising of God on earth, in psalms or other ways of praise, will prepare and dispose you to the heavenly praises. And therefore Christians exceedingly wrong their souls, and hinder themselves from a willingness to be with God, in spending all their days in drooping, or doubting, or worldly dulness, and laying by so much the joy of the saints, and the praises of God.

Direct. 9. Dwell on the believing forethoughts of the everlasting glory which you must possess. Think what it is that others are enjoying while you are here; and what you must be, and possess, and do for ever. Daily think of the certainty, perfection, and perpetuity of your blessedness. What a life it will be, to see the blessed God in his glory, and taste of the fulness of his love, and to see the glorified Son of God, and with a perfected soul and body to be perfectly taken up in the love, and joy, and praises of the Lord, among all his holy saints and angels, in the heavenly Jerusalem. You must by the exercise of faith and love, in holy meditation and prayer, even dwell in the spirit, and converse in heaven, while your bodies are on earth, if you would entertain the news of death as beseems a Christian. But of this at large elsewhere.

Direct. 10. Lastly, if you would be willing to submit to death, resign up your own understandings and wills to the wisdom and the will of God; and know not good and evil for your carnal selves; but wholly trust your lives and souls to the wisdom and love of your dearest Lord. Must you be carking and caring for yourselves; when you have an infinite God engaged to care for you? O, saith self, I am not able to bear the terrors and pangs of death. O, saith faith, My Lord is easily able to support me, and it is his undertaken work to do it: my work is but to please him; and it is his work to take care of me in life and death; and therefore "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear no evil." O, saith self, I am utterly a stranger to another world! I know not what I shall see, nor what I shall be, nor whither I shall go the next minute after death: none come from the dead to satisfy us of these things! O, but saith faith, My blessed Father and Redeemer is not a stranger to the place that I must go to! He knows it, though I do not! He knows what I shall be and do, and

whither I shall go; and all is in his power; and seeing it belongs not to me, but to him to dispose of me, and give me the promised reward, it is meet that I rest in his understanding; and it is better for me, that his infinite wisdom dispose of my departing soul, than my shallow, insufficient knowledge. I may much more acquiesce in his knowledge than my own. O, but saith self, I fear it may prove a scene of darkness and confusion to my soul! what will become of me, I cannot tell. O, but saith faith, I am sure I am in the hands of Love! and such love as is omnipotent, and engaged for my good! And how can it then go ill with me? If I had my own will, I should not fear. And how much less should I fear when I am at the will of God, even of most Wise, Almighty Love?

There is no true centre for the soul to rest in but the will of God. It is our business to obey and please his will, as dutiful children; and to commit ourselves contentedly to his will for the absolute disposal of us. It is not possible that the will of a heavenly Father should be against his children, whose desire and sincere endeavour hath been to obey and please his will. And therefore learn this, as your great and necessary lesson, with joyful confidence to commit yourselves, and your departing souls to your Father's will, as knowing that your death is but the execution of that will, which is engaged to cause "all things to work together for your good;" Rom. 8:28. And say with Paul, I suffer, but am not ashamed "for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day;" 2 Tim. 1:12. "Therefore we labour and suffer—because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe;" 1 Tim. 4:10. Say therefore as Job, "Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him." Or rather as Christ, "Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit;" Luke

23:46. If the hands and will of the Father were the rock and comfort of Christ in his suffering and death, so also they must be to us. See therefore that in your health you kill your own wills, that when death comes, self may have no will to strive against the will of God; but as your heaven itself will be your rest in the will of God; so rest in it in death, that you may have a taste of heaven in death, and sure that will sweeten it, if any thing will.

II. I have hitherto shewed you wherein self-denial doth consist, first, as to the heart and root of it, which is the mortification of the selfish inclination or disposition; and then, as to the first of the three parts of its objective interest, which is sensitive pleasure; I should now proceed to the other two parts of its objective interest: and the second is, worldly gain or profit, which the apostle John calleth "the lust of the eyes," and puts next to the "lust of the flesh." But I have already written a treatise of this by itself, viz. "Of our Crucifixion of the World;" and therefore I may well forbear it here.

CHAPTER XLI

III. Honour and Pride, and 1. Climbing high, &c.

THE third part of the objective interest of self, is that which goes commonly under the name of honour; and is called by the apostle, "pride of life," and put by him in the third place. And of this, I intend, if God will give me time and strength, to write also a treatise by itself, and therefore should say nothing of it here; but only lest I should not have time to do that which I desire, I shall briefly name you ten of the particulars under this head of honour, which you must deny: that is, ten ways wherein men exercise their pride.

1. One work of Pride is to climb higher into places of superiority, and honour and command. Poor men that are out of hope, and in no capacity for rising, feel not much of this, though the disposition to it be in them as well as others, because it is not drawn forth by temptations. But where opportunity serveth, there is nothing wherein selfishness and pride doth more constantly and obstinately shew itself than in this. It is the nature of selfishness to aspire after the highest exaltation in the world that can be attained. We may easily observe in kingdoms and corporations, and all societies of men, what Christ observed at their feasts, that "they choose out the chief rooms and sit with the highest;" Luke 14:7, 8. What eager desires have they to be above other men! If any office or seat of honour be void, there are few that apprehend any possibility of attaining it, that want a will to it; yea, few that will not seek and strive for it, and envy those that carry it before them; and hate, or bear a grudge to those that were against their rising: yea, few but venture on the most unlawful means to accomplish their desires, and yet will scarce believe that they are unlawful, because they think them necessary to their ends. There are few, if they had the choice of a man to any vacant place of honour, that would choose any other but themselves; unless their unfitness were likely more to dishonour them, or some way to make their honours too burdensome to them. No man in their eyes is so fit as themselves, or so worthy as themselves: or, if it be their children or kinsmen that stand for it, or any that self hath special interest in, they seem the worthiest for the place, because they are related to them. Especially if it be any eminent dignity or command, that seems to them a prey that is worth the hunting after. O, the blinding, bewitching, befooling power of pride and selfishness! How commonly doth it rule! How few are

those holy, happy men, that have escaped and overcome it! How few societies be there in the world, whether corporations, colleges, or the like, but pride and selfishness make their governors! How few nations on the earth, where pride and selfishness maketh not their kings or sovereigns! And is it any wonder if they be all ill-governed then, where the devil doth so much to choose the governors? I know that God overruleth all, and restraineth the lusts of men, and crosseth their designs; but yet their lusts and the devil may rule to their destruction for all that.

Object. 'But is it not lawful to seek for dignity and superiority?'

Answ. No; not for self; but for God it is. You have warnings enough, and plain enough from Christ, if warnings would serve turn; he hath bid you "sit not down in the highest room;" he hath sharply rebuked them that strive for precedency, and who shall be the greatest. He hath told you, he that will be the greatest, must be the servant of all; and hath told you of stooping to the feet of the meanest, and condescending to men of low degree; and hath set little children before you to be your teachers, and assured you that there is no entrance into his kingdom in any other posture. He hath told you that God resisteth and abhorreth the proud, and that he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be brought low.

Object. 'But how shall I know whether I seek preferment for God or myself? I hope it is God that I seek it for.'

Answ. 1. How shall a man know his own mind? You have dark hearts indeed if you cannot know your own intentions, if you are but observant, and diligent, and willing to know them. 2. He that seeketh

not dignities for himself, but for God, will never seek to put by another that is as able and likely to do God service in the place as he; nor will he seek it at all, if he see that God may be served as well without his seeking it; but will stay until God call him to it, and then he may expect his help and blessing. Few do intend God in it, that are exalters of themselves. Indeed if you see that an enemy of the Gospel, or some unworthy, ungodly man is like to come into the place if you seek it not, by which the church or the commonwealth, is like to be much injured, then you may seek it by lawful means; so that you can truly say, I would not do it for myself; but it is to serve God for his people's good. 3. Nay, he that seeketh not the dignity for himself, will seek first and more to get in another, if he know another that is fitter than himself, and likely to do God more service; and this he will do heartily, and not dissemblingly. If you had not rather a worthier and more useful man were preferred before you, and seek not more for such than for yourselves, you are plain self-seekers, whatever you may pretend. If a man should come to almost any of the rulers of nations, churches, colleges, or corporations, that have screwed themselves into the place of government, and ask them, did you know no man fitter for this place than yourself, and have you sought first to get a fitter man? What can they for shame say to it? If they say, no; they proclaim themselves notorious self-seekers! For it is very seldom, that a humble man is allowed to judge himself the fittest. 4. And he that seeketh dignities for God and not for himself, will use them for God, and not for himself. For the intention will command the use. He will deny himself in his superiority, as well as if he were in the lowest place; and will contrive how he may most serve and honour God; and this will be easily seen in his endeavours, whether it be God or self that he serves and liveth to.

And now I advise all that love their souls, to take heed of this aspiring act of selfishness. If you will needs seek yourselves, and be your own exalters, you must trust to yourselves, and be your own defenders; and then you will find that the lowest condition in the hand of God, is more safe and comfortable than the highest in your own hand. If God should lift you up to the top of the highest mountains, you may expect either a calm, or his protection in the storm, and to be as safe as those below; but if you lift up yourselves, and satan carry you to the pinnacle of the temple, take heed lest you thence cast down yourselves by his temptations that did lift you up. Dignities and honours, are not indeed the things that they seem to be to carnal eyes that see not the inside, but judge by the outward, glittering show. There is most holy duty and work to be done, where is the greatest dignity. And certainly the life of greatest work and labour is not the life of greatest ease, or carnal pleasure; especially when it is the work of God that you must do; a work which all the world is against, and which satan and all his power will resist; and which must meet with enmity and abundance of enmity, whenever you set about it. Though you are commanders, yet you are soldiers; and you that are leaders have the hottest standing, and must expect the sharpest conflicts. Do you think of your dignities and offices as places of mere superiority and honour, and accommodation to your carnal selves? Then are you carnal men, and enter upon you know not what, and make yourselves traitors and enemies to God, whom he is engaged to bring down and be avenged on at last; you debase the sacred coin which bears the stamp and name of God. Magistracy is holy, and the image of God, and you basely turn it into the image of the flesh; and blot out God's name from it, and stamp upon it the name of self, and traitorously make it your own, which was

eminently his. Believe it, whoever you are, if you seek for places of rule and dignity with carnal, selfish expectations, you must either use them accordingly when you have them, which is the readiest way to damnation in the world, or else you must find your expectations crossed, and miss of all your carnal ends; and find that the greatest toil and burden, which you expected should have been your chief content. God hath annexed the honour and outward greatness, partly to encourage you to so hard a work, lest the burden should be too heavy, and partly to enable you to perform it, and give you some advantages against opposition. But though the clothing of authority and rule be splendid, the substance thus covered is extraordinary labour, and duty, and suffering. It is honourable, but it is an honourable burden, and an honourable, painful, difficult work. So that if men understood what office and authority is in church or commonwealth, and looked after the substance as well as the ornaments; the work as well as the honour and greatness; it would be an eminent piece of self-denial for a man to submit to the call of God, to be a prince, a judge, a justice, or but a constable; and men would as hardly be drawn to take the office, as they are now to do the work of the office in faithfulness, and with courage and zeal for God; and that is almost as hard as an offender is drawn to the stocks. Offices and high places are not intended to accommodate the flesh; nor are they things to be ambitiously desired and sought for, by such as understand the ends and use of them; but they are such laborious, hazardous ways of serving God, which a wise man knows, must cost him more than the honour will repay; and which a good man will not run away from, when God calleth him thereto; but will so far deny himself as to submit to them; but not thrust himself into them, as the proud and selfish do. It is a work of patience to a godly man to be

thus exalted; but it is a work of pride and self-seeking in others. Deny yourselves so far as to submit to government and dignity, and bear it patiently if it be cast upon you, as being an excellent opportunity of serving God; but wish not for it, because of the honour and advantages to the flesh; much less contend for it, or set your hearts on it. He that seeketh an office or honour for himself, must have another heart before he will use it for God. It is better with Saul to hide ourselves from honour, than with Absalom to contrive and seek it; but best of all with David to stay till God call us, and then obey.

CHAPTER XLII

The Love and good Word of others Denied

2. ANOTHER part of selfish interest to be denied, is the love, and good will, and word of others. This is a thing that may and must be desired to good ends; but not for carnal self. When Paul looked at God's honour and the good of souls, he "became all things to all men that he might by all means save some;" and this he did, not for self but for the Gospel's sake, and yet for himself in subordination to God, that he "might be partaker of it with them." He would "give no offence to Jew or Gentile, or the church of God; but pleased all men in all things (that tended to their good), not seeking his own profit, but the profit of many that they may be saved;" 1 Cor. 10:32, 33. And he hath left it as the duty of the strongest Christians, "not to please themselves, but every one to please his neighbour for his good to edification." But when Paul looked at himself, and his esteem among men, then he saith, "With me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment;" 1 Cor. 4:3. And "Do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of

Christ;" Gal. 1:10. Good natures are loath to provoke others to displeasure; and grace moveth us to please men for the saving of their souls. But it is pride and self-seeking to desire to set up ourselves in men's esteem; and to endear ourselves for ourselves into their affections. It is God's highest honour to be most highly esteemed, and most dearly beloved, as being the most perfect and transcendent good. And proud men in this would aspire to his prerogative; and much affect to be beloved of all; and fain they would sit near men's hearts, and be the darlings of the world. This is a fine, but dangerous sin; and I doubt many that are guilty of it, never well considered that it is a sin, and so great a sin as indeed it is. Deny yourselves in this. It is God that must be loved of all, and not you; you must be content to "be hated of all men for his sake," that he may be loved. Men's hearts were not made to be your throne, but God's. Your work is to love, and not ambitiously to seek for love. So far as your interest in men's affections doth conduce to God's honour and service, and their good, desire it, and spare not; but see that these be really your ends. But for yourselves, take heed of desiring or seeking for men's love. They are apt enough to have in ordinate affections to the creature without your temptations. To love God in you, and love you for God, is their duty which you may provoke them to in season; but seek not for any nearer interest in them, nor for such a love as terminateth in yourselves. Nature is exceeding ambitious of being beloved; but steal not God's due. You are to be suitors and solicitors for him, to win the hearts of as many to him as you can; and not to speak for yourselves in his stead. Thankfully accept of men's ordinate love to you, if you have it; but if they deny it to you, for the sake of Christ, and turn it into hatred, do you deny yourselves herein, and remember that it is no more than you were fore warned of; and no

more than your Lord, and his worthiest servants have endured. What a pattern is Paul, that tells his converts, he "seeks not theirs but them, as parents lay up for their children, and not children for the parents, and would gladly spend, and be spent for them, though the more he love, the less he were beloved;" 2 Cor. 12:14, 15. See that you love God and them, and that is your duty; do that and you need not take care for the love of men to you. Their love is none of your felicity, and therefore their hatred depriveth you not of your felicity; for that lieth only in the love of God. Here therefore self must be denied.

CHAPTER XLIII

The Reputation of Riches to be Denied

3. ANOTHER part of the honour which self must be denied in, is the reputation of your riches; for wealth is one thing that men are proud of. Some desire to be esteemed richer than they are, and therefore go in the best apparel they can get, that they may not be thought to be persons of the lowest, poorest sort. And some that are rich do glory in their riches, and think they are much more to be honoured than the poor; but alas, if they had well read and considered what Christ hath said of the danger of the rich, particularly in Luke 12:16, 18 and 8:14. Matt. 13:22. Mark 10:23. and what James saith to them, James 5:1, 2, &c. they would see that riches is not a thing to be proud of; "Not many great and noble are called. God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, to be heirs of the kingdom." The talents for which we must give an account at the bar of Christ, should be rather the matter of our fear and trembling than of our pride. That which makes our passage to heaven to be as the camel's through a needle's

eye, I think should not much lift us up. All the riches of the world do make you never the better thought of with God, or any wise man; nor will they cause you to live a month the longer, or quiet your consciences, or save you from death, or the wrath of God. The only worth of riches is, that you are better furnished than others to do God some kind of service, by relieving the poor, and helping the church, and furthering many such good works; and for the sake of these good ends, you must patiently bear a state of riches, yea, and thankfully receive them, if they are given you by God: though the care and labour in a faithful distribution of them, and the danger of abusing them, and the reckoning to be made for them, are so great, as may deter a wise man from a greedy seeking them, or glorying in them.

CHAPTER XLIV

Comeliness and Beauty to be Denied

4. ANOTHER part of the honour that self must be denied in, is the reputation of your personal comeliness or beauty; for such fools and children sin hath made folks, that many much set by the reputation of these: and hence is most commonly the abuse of apparel. Every proud person is desirous of that which will make them seem the most hand some or beautiful persons unto others, and make it their care to set forth themselves to the eyes of beholders. What they indeed are, we can see as well in the meanest attire; but what they would be thought to be, we may best see in this: but of this I spoke before. Yea, some that think they are not proud of their comeliness, yet cannot endure to be esteemed ill-favoured or uncomely, and so shew that pride which they would deny. I confess these are commonly but the

temptations of women, and procacious youth; but one would think it should be easy for a few sober thoughts to cut their combs, and let them see how little cause they have to be proud of beauty or comeliness of the flesh. Alas, what is that body that you are proud of? Filth and corruption, covered with a cleaner skin than some of your neighbours. Ah, but the skin is thin: and if that be all you have to glory in, it is as frail as contemptible. There is many a pretty flower in the common field that is trodden down by the feet of beasts, that have a gloss and hue incomparably beyond your beauty. I asked you before, what beauty you will have to glory of when you have dwelt but a few months in the grave; or if the small-pox, or leprosy, should clothe you with another coloured skin; or if a cancer should but seize upon your face, and turn it into such an ugly shape, as makes men tremble to behold it; or when wrinkled age hath made you as another person; or when death hath deprived you of that soul, which was your beauty, and laid you out as a prey and sacrifice to corruption. Ah, that ever such a skin full of dirt, such a bag of filth, should yet be proud, that is carried about by a living soul, and by it kept a little while from falling down as a senseless clod, and turning into a stinking corpse! They are shortsighted, and short witted, as well as graceless, that cannot look so far before them, or within them, as to see that which may take them down from being proud of any comeliness of the flesh. One would think this should be so easy a part of self-denial, as any graceless one might reach by a little use of the reason that is left them.

CHAPTER XLV

Strength and Valour to be Denied

5. ANOTHER piece of vainglory to be denied, is in the reputation of strength and valour. The witless part of men, especially in their procacious humours, do use to be carried away with this, as witless women with the former. Hence commonly are their matches of running and wrestling, and many exercises of activity and strength; yea, and hence commonly are their duels and murders. It seems such a dishonourable thing to them to be thought a coward, or unable to defend themselves, and to be crowed over by their enemy, that they will venture body and soul upon it rather than they will put up such indignities, or lie under the dishonour of being cowards. Yea, and (would one think it) some Jesuits are such carnal doctors, that they teach men that if they be challenged, and their honour do lie upon it, they may meet the challenger there in a defensive posture, and fight with him to defend their honour: yea, and in many other cases, they may kill another for their honour, seeing their honour is more to them than their lives. O, miserable teachers, and miserable souls that do obey them! Christ hath taught you another lesson, even "to despise the shame," Heb. 12:2, 3, and to humble yourselves, and intimateth that such cannot be believers which "receive honour of one another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only;" John 5:44. It is more honour to obey God in suffering, than to be so valiant as to murder another man. The day is near, when he will appear the honourable man that was most like to Jesus Christ, that when he "was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously;" 1 Pet. 2:23. Blind sinners! do you think it more honourable to do hurt than to suffer hurt? Yea, to be like the devil, who is a murderer, than to Christ, that was a sufferer, and came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them and lay down his own. Can

any thing be more honourable than to be the children of the heavenly Father? And if you be such, you must "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you;" Matt. 5:44. What a case are those men's understandings in, that think it their honour to revenge themselves when God hath so forbidden it? Rom. 12:19.

CHAPTER XLVI

Wisdom and Learning to be Denied

6. ANOTHER piece of vainglory to be denied, is in the reputation of wisdom and learning. The things themselves are very excellent, and to be desired and much sought after, but not for our own honour, but the service and honour of the Lord; and the greater is the worth of the thing, the greater is the temptation to vainglory in them that have it, and the harder it is to deny themselves herein. This part of self-denial consisteth not in a contempt of learning or wisdom, nor a neglect of it, for this were a sin; but in a neglect of self, that would make an advantage of it for its own carnal exaltation, and in a contempt of the honour and vainglory which may redound by it to ourselves, further than such honour is serviceable to God. O how sinful and miserable a life do abundance of learned men live in the world! Their whole life is but one continued vice, and that a sin of a most heinous nature, even the exercise of pride and self-seeking, when yet they take themselves for saints, because they are not such as are accounted scandalous sinners in the world. They sacrifice their precious time and studies to their pride and fancies, and not to God. Too many hours and years are spent to gain the reputation of being learned men; too many disputations are managed; yea (odious

sacrilege), too many sermons are preached, and too many learned books are written, to gain the reputation of being learned men. Ah, miserable, low, unworthy studies! Profane sermons! Ungodly labours, and poor reward! O, how it nettleth some proud spirits, if they hear that they are taken to be no scholars; and how many take their University degrees to be merely the wings of this part of their vainglory. Learning and degrees, and the reputation of it, are all good, if they be valued and used but for God: but they are so much the worse when they are sacrificed to self, and made the food and fuel of pride. Learn, therefore, this part of self-denial.

CHAPTER XLVII

Reputation of Gifts and Spiritual Abilities, &c.

7. ANOTHER piece of vainglory to be denied, is the reputation of our gifts and spiritual abilities: I mean such as praying, and preaching, and disputing, and good conference, to have readiness for words, and liveliness of expression, and exactness of method: to be esteemed in all these a very able man by others, is a high part of self-interest to be denied. The duties themselves must be denied by none, for they are the service of God, commanded us by his word; but it is the honour that self presumeth to hunt after in these holy things. And it is a double sin here to seek ourselves, when we are specially commanded to seek God, and where the work is instituted for that end; and when we pretend to seek God and to deny ourselves. The greater are our abilities to do God service, the more resolutely and thankfully we should improve them in his service; but we must remember, that they are given us to save others by our improvement, and not to destroy ourselves by our pride. Get as great abilities as you can, and

when you have them, thank God for them, and use them for him to the uttermost of your power; but take heed lest pride should sacrifice them to yourselves, and pervert them from your master's service.

The persons that have most need of this advice are especially these following: 1. Young, inexperienced professors, that are but lately turned to a profession of a godly life; that have so much illumination as sheweth them much that before they knew not, and raiseth them above the vulgar measure, but yet hath made them but smatterers and half-knowing men. These are they that the apostle requireth should not be made bishops or pastors of the church, because of their proneness to this very sin that now we are speaking of, "not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil," (1 Tim. 3:6.): the Spirit of God here intimateth to us, that novices are the most likely to be lifted up with pride, and that this pride is the way to the condemnation of the devil.

2. And men of great abilities, natural or acquired, that have withal unsanctified hearts, are ordinarily transported with this odious vice. A strong wit and a voluble tongue, and learning to furnish it with matter, are notable servants to pride of heart, where that spiritual illumination and holiness is wanting, that should abase the proud, and turn men's parts a better way. To all that are apt to be tainted with this odious vice, I would recommend these following considerations:

1. Consider what a dangerous sign it is of a graceless, hypocritical heart, where pride of gifts doth much prevail. It is as inseparable from a child of God to be humble and little in his own esteem, as for

a new-born child to be really lesser than men at age. No more sincerity than humility in any.

2. Consider what cause of deep humiliation you carry about you in every duty! Besides all the wants and loathsome corruptions of your souls, which follow you wherever you go, the very sins of your duties, one would think, should humble you. O, to have such low conceptions, such dull apprehensions, such heartless, unreverent, poor expressions of such a God, such a Christ, such a glory, and such holy truth, should make us ashamed to open our lips before the Lord, and wonder that he doth not tread us into hell, instead of regarding us or our services, and that fire doth not come forth from his jealousy and consume us! It should make us so far from glorying in our performances, that it should drive us to Christ in every duty, to take him with us to shelter us from the flames of holy jealousy, so that we should not dare to go any further than he goes before us, and stands between us and the wrath of God, nor to speak a word but in his name, nor to expect any welcome but on his account. Shall a wretch be proud of that performance whose failings deserve everlasting torments? Must you be beholden to Christ to save you from the hell that the sins of your performances deserve, and yet dare you be proud of them? Let a Papist run that desperate path, that rails at us for saying that our best duties are mixed with sin, and that this sin deserves the wrath of God; let them refuse a physician that think not themselves sick; and let them tell Christ they will not be beholden to him for a pardon for the sins of their prayers and other duties; but for shame let not us be guilty of this, who profess to be better acquainted with our infirmities.

3. Consider also that you have to do with so holy and glorious a God, that to be proud before him, and that in and of our very service of him, is a sin whose greatness surpasseth our apprehensions. Had you to do with a man like yourselves, you might better lift up yourselves against him. There is nothing comparatively in the presence of the greatest prince, to humble and abase you; but to be proud before the God of heaven, and that in and of our lamentably weak addresses to him; O, what a horridly impious, unreasonable thing is this! O man! if thy eyes were opened to see a little, a very little of the glory of that blessed God thou speakest to, how flat wouldst thou fall down! How wouldst thou fear and tremble! and cry out as the prophet, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts;" Isaiah 6:5. Or, "Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth;" Job 40:4. And "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes;" Job 42:5, 6. One glimpse of God's majesty would take down thy self-exalting thoughts, and humble thee with a witness.

4. Consider the examples of the holiest of God's servants. The example of Job and Isaiah I have now mentioned. Moses himself did think himself unmeet to speak in God's message, "He said unto the Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken to thy servant: but I am of a slow speech and of a slow tongue;" Exod. 4:10. And "He said, O, my Lord, send I pray thee by the hand of him whom thou wilt send;" ver. 13. When God sent Jeremiah he said, "Ah, Lord God, behold I cannot speak; for I am a child;" Jer. 1:6. And Paul cries out, "Who is sufficient for these things!" 2 Cor. 2:16. So that it hath been the course of the most

seraphical prophets, and holy apostles to have low thoughts of their own abilities for duty; and yet have you enough to be proud of?

5. And consider that the nature of the holy employment that you are upon, one would think, should be enough to humble you. It is a confessing of sin, unworthiness and guilt, and will you be proud of this? It is a confessing that you deserve everlasting torment; and will you be proud of such a confession as this? The Lord be merciful to us, and save us from this unreasonable vice; who would think that it should be thus with a man in his wits? To confess that he deserveth hell-fire; and to be proud of that confession! your petitions are all humbling, if they be according to the word; you are beggars for your lives, for pardon of many and heinous sins, and should come as with a rope about your necks; you beg for deliverance from eternal misery: and should you be proud of such requests? Should beggars be proud, yea, such needy, miserable beggars, and be proud of their very begging? Nay, your very thanksgiving itself is humbling. For what do you give thanks for, but for salvation from these odious sins, and the damnation which you have deserved? And shall a thief be proud that he is pardoned and taken from the gallows? Pride is contrary to the very nature and meaning of all those holy duties that you are proud of.

6. Yea, the gifts themselves that you are proud of, should humble you. For, 1. They are from God, and not yourselves. "For who maketh thee to differ? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou didst not receive it?" 1 Cor. 4:7. 2. You received them not for yourselves, but for God; and therefore have no reason yourselves to be lifted up by them. 3. All gifts are for labour and duty, and must be once accounted for;

and therefore should keep you in humility and fear. To be proud of God's gifts, is to be proud of that which is given you to destroy pride in yourselves and others; for this is the end of them.

7. And it is a sign that you want exceeding much of that which you are proud of. You are proud of knowledge; whereas, if it were not for want of knowledge of that which should humble you, you would not be so proud. You are proud of your worth; and it is for want of real worth that you are proud. More light, and grace, and parts, would shew you that which would make you blush at the things that you were proud of.

8. And consider that you take the course to provoke God to bereave you of his gifts. He gave them to you for another use. If you will turn them against his face by pride, when he gave them to keep you humble; when you will exalt your carnal selves by it, which he gave you to exalt his Majesty, what can you expect but he should take them from you? And it is an easy matter with him to do it; yea to take away your very understanding, and leave you to the heavy plague of madness, seeing you were proud of your understandings, when alas, poor worms, you had so little cause.

9. If once you grow proud of your parts and gifts, you are in the high way to be given over to some fearful fall; at best to particular scandals, if not to some damnable heresy or apostacy. God may prevent it by your humiliation, but you are in the common road that leads to it. It is much to be feared that God will so far leave you to yourselves, as to let you fall into the dirt of some notorious sin, that your shame may fly abroad the world, instead of the vain-glorious fame which you desired; and that you may have somewhat to humble

you, that shall be written in your foreheads, and cannot he denied or hid. Or if you be hypocrites, and for damnation, it is most likely that you are in the ready way to some desperate heresy, or flat apostacy. For we see that these are too frequently the consequents of spiritual pride.

10. Lastly, consider that the gifts you are proud of, are in danger of being unsuccessful to the church; God may, I confess, do good to others by them, though they do but choke yourselves; but ordinarily he denieth success to the proud, and blesseth weaker endeavours of the humble. Yea, often such men and all their parts become a plague and trouble to the church. For they use them to foment the heresies and divisions which they are given over to; and do more hurt than the ignorant, or the common sort of the profane. Learn therefore to deny yourselves of the reputation of your performances. If you feel any tickling delight when you are applauded, cast water on it suddenly, as on a fire kindled in your souls from hell. If you perceive the least stirring of discontent or envy, when the preaching or prayers of another are preferred, and yours less set by, take heed, and quench it; for you are entertaining a dangerous temptation. But if you should be so far lifted up, as to set up your judgments above their worth, and rise against your, teachers and the church of Christ, and desire to step beyond your callings, that your parts may be taken notice of, and you may be somebody in the church, and verify the prophecy of Paul, "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them;" Acts 20:30. I say, when once you come to this, it is time to fear lest you be utterly forsaken, and become the shame and scorn of men, as you became the scourge and troublers of the church, and lest your self-exalting lay you as low as hell.

CHAPTER XLVIII

Reputation of being Orthodox, how far—

8. ANOTHER piece of vainglory to be denied, is the reputation of being orthodox, or of the right religion. The thing itself is in the essentials of absolute necessity to salvation; but the reputation of it, is a thing that we must deny ourselves in. For it commonly falls out in most of the world, that the thing itself, and the reputation of it, are inconsistent; and no man can be orthodox, and of the right religion, but he must be taken to be heterodox, and of the wrong religion; for the wrong is in most places taken for the right. But through the great mercy of God, it is not commonly so in England, nor in the reformed churches abroad, in any great and necessary points. Among us truth hath the advantage of reputation! and so may it continue while the sun endureth! But yet there is use for this part of self-denial, even with us. We converse among many sects and parties of various opinions; and all of them are confident that they are in the right, and that we are erroneous, and against the truth: so say the Papists, and so say the Libertines, and many others. And there is no way to gain the reputation of being sound and orthodox with any of these men, but by turning to them, and forsaking the truth, and ceasing to be orthodox indeed. In Spain, or Italy, or with English Papists, you must be accounted heretics, or yield to heresy; you must either cease to be true Catholics, or be content to be esteemed no Catholics: you have your choice whether you really will be schismatics, or be esteemed and called schismatics. And so you will be used among most sects, who judge of truth and error according to their own deluded apprehensions. Yea, and among the orthodox indeed, because they also have their errors, and are not orthodox in all things, you must

look for the same measure in those particulars wherein they are mistaken. For thinking themselves in the right, they will too often take it for their duty to let fly at others, as erroneous or dangerous persons, that are not of their mind; and in this mistake, they think they do God service to defame Dissenters, and raise jealousies and suspicions of them, and bid men take heed of them, as of them that hold some dangerous opinions; when it is themselves that are deceived, and should turn those jealousies and cautions homewards. In such cases as these it is a hard strait that a servant of Christ is put to; when he must either err or be supposed to err. But the principal temptation lieth in those countries, where error hath got the major vote, and is patronized both by book and sword, and custom hath fixed the name of truth, upon the foulest heresies; and the name of heresy upon saving truths: here a poor Christian is sorely tempted and put to a lamentable strait. O, saith he, 'If I were reputed but to be base, or beggarly, or contemptible, I could bear it; but heresy and schism are such odious things that no man should be patient under the imputation of them.' Answ. Are they such odious things? Take heed of them then, lest out of your own mouths you be judged. If you think the matter so small that you will rather be a heretic or schismatic, than be called or accounted one, it seems you take it for no odious thing. Is the name or the thing more odious to you? Had you rather be erroneous, or be thought to be so? If the thing be most odious to you, the name will be the more tolerable. But if the name be most odious to you, it is dishonour, and not error or schism that you are against. Had you rather part with truth and religion, or with the name and reputation of them? If you set so much by self, and so little by truth, as to let go truth for fear of being thought to let it go;

for shame, do not take on you to be lovers of truth, but of yourselves; nor haters of error, but of dishonour.

And consider further that you may lose the reputation of being orthodox, and catholic, and of the right religion, without losing any of the favour of God; nay, it may be a suffering for his sake that may advance you in his favour, and assure you in the reward of martyrs. For saith Christ, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you;" Matt. 5:11, 12. So that you see the thing that you so abhor, is matter of exceeding joy; even to be falsely counted a heretic or erroneous for the sake of Christ and truth; we are blessed when we are falsely reviled as erroneous, and have all these evil sayings against us. But to be such indeed, is to be accursed; though the name of heresy will stand with the special love of God, yet heresy itself he utterly abhors. And whether do you think it is better to part with truth, and the favour of God with it; or with the name and reputation of truth, while we keep both truth and the favour of God? Deny yourselves then, even as to the reputation of faith and orthodoxness; for you will certainly deny the faith, if you cannot deny the name of it, to preserve it.

CHAPTER XLIX

Reputation of Godliness and Honesty, how far—

9. ANOTHER piece of honour that self must be denied in, is, the reputation of godliness and honesty. Concerning both the former and

this, I must say, by way of caution, that the reputation both of faith and godliness is a great mercy, and not to be despised, nor prodigally cast away by our own negligence or miscarriages; nor unthankfully to be received: but yet, 1. It is not to be desired for itself, but for God, that it may help and advantage us to serve him, or as it is a mercy that brings the report of his love. 2. And the greater the mercy is, the greater is our temptation, when it would deprive us of a far greater mercy than itself: I have oft thought it was a very high passage for a heathen to say as Seneca did, that 'No man doth shew a higher esteem of goodness, than he that can let go the name or reputation of being a good man, rather than let go his goodness itself.' The world is so much unacquainted with goodness, that they know it not when they see it; but call it by those odious names that least agree with it. Their judgments follow their natures, dispositions and interests; and therefore they cannot take that to be good, which is contrary to these. A feather-bed is no better to a swine than a mire-lake; a banquet is not so good to a cow as a green pasture. As the person is himself, so do all things seem good or evil to him. The toad or snake hath no such odious apprehensions of itself as men have. And hence it is that to ungodly men, the best men and best actions seem to be the worst. And hence also it is, that in all ages godliness hath been matter of reproach; and the best have been laden with calumnies. David had enemies that laid to his charge the things that he never thought of. And it seems by the strain of Shemei in his railing, that they took him to be but a traitor, because king Saul was against him; and to be a bloody man, because he had been engaged in the wars, "Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of belial: the Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned;" 2 Sam. 16:7, 8. See what a wicked person David

was esteemed by such fellows as this! and yet he so far denied himself here, as that he would not hear of revenge upon the railer, but makes it as a trial sent from God. And two special reasons moved him to bear it. One was the remembrance of that sin against God and his servant Uriah, which he knew God was now chastising him for; and therefore being under the rod of the Lord, he durst not think of revenge upon the instrument; and being sensible that he had brought all this upon himself, he durst not let fly too much at others. The other was that God had raised up (by permissive Providence) the son of his bowels against him; and therefore he thought it an unseemly thing to be much offended with a stranger for less. And such reasons as these have we also to persuade us to patience and self-denial in the like case. The Lord Jesus himself, who had no sin at all, escaped not these censures of malicious men. He was esteemed a friend or companion of publicans and sinners, yea, a gluttonous person, and a wine-bibber; yea, a deceiver; yea, a conjurer, that did his works by the help of the devil; Matt. 11:16. Luke 7:34. Matt. 27:63. John 7:12. Matt. 12:27. What usage the holy apostles themselves had, and how they behaved themselves under all, you may conjecture by that one passage (to mention no more), "For I think God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were men appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men: we are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised; even to this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; and labour working with our own hands; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things to this day;" 1 Cor. 4:9–13. The like usage

had the Christians after the apostles' days. They were slandered by the Pagans as if they sacrificed, and eat their own children, and putting out the lights had commonly been unclean together after their holy exercises: and when they cast them to the lions to be devoured, and many ways tormented them, it was as ungodly men, for preaching against the heathen gods, and refusing to offer sacrifice to them. And therefore the rabble was wont thus to cry for judgment against them, 'Tollite impios! Tollite impios!' Away with the ungodly Christians! The wicked multitude that were drowned in filthiness and ungodliness, did think themselves religious men, and the Christians to be ungodly. So that they were fain to live and die under a reputation as contrary to the truth, as darkness is contrary to light.

And this usage hath still been the attendant of true godliness. When the Papists burn God's servants at the stake, it is for supposed heresy and impiety; they put a painted cap and coat upon them, made of paper, on which the images of devils are pictured, to make the people believe they are ungodly persons, the servants of the devil, and possessed by him already, and unworthy to live any longer among men. When they butchered the poor Waldenses and Albigenses by thousands, it was under the name of ungodly heretics. The ignorant, ungodly rabble among us now, that hate and revile those that seek after God more diligently than themselves, have yet more devilish wit than to oppose them directly under the name of honest, godly men; but they first make the world believe that they are hypocrites, and proud, and self-conceited, and covetous, and secretly are as bad as others, and these are the things, if you will believe them, that they hate and speak against them for. But then how comes it to pass that it is their praying and preciseness that is so much in the scorners' mouths? Doth that signify hypocrisy or pride? Why do they not

commend the good, while they speak against the evil? and join with them in the holy worship and ways of God, while they oppose their supposed viciousness? Doth the name (Puritan) signify a covetous man, or a vicious person? or rather one that will not be content to venture his soul in the common, impure, ungodly courses of the world? And how comes it to pass that a man may quietly enough follow such vices, if he will but forbear the profession of godliness? But (to leave these wretches in the dirt where we find them) by this you may see the common measure that is to be expected from the world. If you will be truly godly, you must be taken for ungodly, or for hypocrites, that seem to be godly when you are not.

But it is easy to bear this charge when it falls upon a whole society, and takes us but in the crowd among the rest, and when we have so much honourable company to suffer with us; but it goes nearer us when we are singled out by name, and noted and talked of all about as hypocrites, or proud, or worse than others. But that also must be borne by those that will be Christians.

But the greatest trial of all is, when the servants of God that should help us in our suffering, have got a hard report of us, and by misinformation we have lost our credit even with them. Under all these false and injurious reports, direct and stablish your own minds by the help of these considerations following.

1. It may be there is some special cause that you should try and judge yourselves; and so God doth suffer other men to judge you, to awaken you to self-judging. However, make this use of it, and you are sure to be no losers by the reproach. Enter into your hearts, and search them throughly as before the Lord, and see if there be any way

of wickedness in them which hitherto you have not discovered: Try whether there be hypocrisy and pride or not; especially when it is the servants of God that think hardly of you; and above all, if it be wise, impartial men that are acquainted with you, it is then your duty to be very jealous of your hearts and ways, and to fear lest you are guilty, and to search the more diligently, and not be quiet till you either find out your sin, or be sure that you are clear. And if you be clear in that point, yet suspect and search lest there be some other secret or allowed sin, which God would detect to you, or excite you against by the injurious consures of those that have reproached you.

2. When you have searched and cleared your own consciences, then consider further, that though you are not such as you are censured to be, yet sinners you are, and you know your sins in other kinds are so many and so great, that you should bear the more patiently to be hardly thought of, when you know yourselves to be so bad. If indeed you are godly, you have seen a sink of uncleanness in yourselves, and have condemned yourselves oft, and loathed yourselves for your abominations, and bewailed them before the Lord. And is it suitable for such a spirit to be eager after the reputation of sincerity, and to be much troubled that you are taken by others to be naught?

3. And consider also that your case may be as David's was, and God may possibly make this reproach a chastisement for some former sin, and a means to humble you for it more thoroughly, and to reclaim you from it. Perhaps he bids (by permissive providence) some Shimei curse you. It may be the voice of a slanderer must do that which the voice of a preacher could not do. And then it is your work to look behind you and within you, more than without you, and to hearken

more to the voice of God and conscience, than of the slanderer: and to take it as the rod of God, and a call to a more serious repentance.

4. And consider that when you are under the false censures of the world, you may have the inward peace of a good conscience, which is better than all the applause of men; and this being a continual feast, they cannot do much against your quietness, as long as they cannot deprive you of this.

5. Yea, moreover, you have the approbation of God himself, and that should satisfy against the censure of all the world. Even a proud man, if he have any wit, can bear the contempt of the ignorant vulgar, if he have but the applause of great, and wise, and learned men; as that orator that valued the judgment of Socrates above all the rest of his auditory. But all the wisest men in the world are fools in comparison of God. Having his approbation, you have the greatest, the best, and the wisest on your side; and a judgment for you that will lay down the judgment of ten thousand worlds.

6. And if you value not God's approbation above man's, it is a sign that you are hypocrites indeed, and so the censure is not unjust; but if you do, then you will acquiesce in it, though man condemn you; and say as the apostle, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" Rom. 8:33, 34. And "With me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment—but he that judgeth me is the Lord;" 1 Cor. 4:3, 4.

7. And remember that the great day of judgment is near at hand, that will set all straight which the slanderous tongues of men made crooked. Stay but a while, and the glory of Christ, and the sentence of

your Judge, will dispel all the unjust reproaches that were on you, and wash off all the blots that were falsely laid on your good name; "and he will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noon-day;" for "there is nothing hid that shall not be then revealed."

8. In the meantime God will take care of your name; he will make the very tongues that slander you to honour you; in the blindness of their reproaches, crossing themselves. As the Papists by the poor Waldenses, saying they were the more dangerous heretics, because they held all the articles of faith, and lived godly and honestly, and were reputed holy, but only that they were against the Church of Rome. As you trust God with your health, and wealth, so must you with your reputation, even in point of honesty, and be satisfied that he can clear you when he pleases.

9. And it is not God's ordinary way to leave the reputation of his servants wholly uncleared even in this world. If one condemn them, another shall justify them; and commonly the wisest and best men justify them; and the most foolish and ungodly are they that condemn them. And cannot you bear the words of fools and children? The proudest man can pass by a contempt or slander from a drunken man, an idiot, or a madman, as being no dishonour to him; and cannot you bear the censures of the distracted world? Or if they are better men that slander you, it is two to one but it is the more foolish or passionate sort of them; and that the judgment of the more wise and sober is against them, and vindicateth your reputation. Or if at the present they do not, it is ten to one but Providence shall work to the clearing of your reputation, either in your lifetime, or when you are dead. Most of the servants of God that

were most hated and slandered, while they lived on earth, are cleared and honoured now they are dead. God is not disregardful of his servants' names.

10. But however it go, you are secured of the main; that which you expected or covenanted for with God, you shall be sure of. If you have the thing, you may easily bear the want of the name. Hath the Spirit of God renewed and sanctified you? Are you made the living members of Christ, and the sons of God, and the heirs of heaven? I hope you may well spare then the applause of men, and easily bear it, if you be reputed to be destitute of what you have. If you are in health, it will not much trouble you if it be reported that you are sick; and if you are alive, you can bear it if the report go that you are dead: for as long as you have the thing, you can spare the name. And if you have Christ, and grace, and pardon, and justification, and title to eternal life, cannot you endure to have men think that you are without them? How basely do you undervalue these inestimable things, when the thoughts of a man's mind, or the words of a man's mouth, can blast the comforts of them all! As if you said to the world, it is not Christ, and grace, and pardon, and salvation, that will serve me, without the applause of men! How basely think you of God, and how highly of men, if this be your mind! It is more excusable for a Haman to say of all his honour and wealth that they satisfy him not, or do him no good, as long as he wants but Mordecai's obeisance, than for a Christian to say of God, of Christ, of glory, all this will not serve my turn as long as men take me for a hypocrite or ungodly. For there is not a satisfying sufficiency in honours and wealth, as there is in God and glory. As long as you have the precious treasure, methinks you may give losers leave to talk. It was not for the good words of men that you became Christians, and covenanted with God,

but for pardon and salvation; and these you shall have; God will perform his covenant to you, and give you both his kingdom, and so much of worldly things as over-plus, as is truly good for you; and what would you have more? You shall have the inheritance and crown of blessedness; and will not that serve your turn without a few good words from silly man! I hope you would be loath to change rewards with the hypocrite! Why then do you so much desire his reward, and so much undervalue your own? Though his be present, and yours be future, I hope you think it but a doleful hearing, to have Christ say, "Verily they have their reward;" in comparison of his promise to his reproached servants, "Verily great is your reward in heaven;" Matt. 6:2. 5:12.

And now, I hope, in all these ten particular considerations, you may see reason enough for self-denial in the very reputation of your godliness and honesty; and why you should endure joyfully to be esteemed ungodly and dishonest, rather than be so.

CHAPTER L

A Renowned and Perpetuated Name to be Denied

10. THE last point of honour which self must be denied in, is a renowned and perpetuated name. For to that height doth pride aspire, that no less will satisfy, where there is any apparent hope of this; though in those that sit so low that they see no ground to hope for such a thing, the desires after it are not so kindled as they be in others, that think the prey is within their reach. Fain men would be famous and talked of through the world; they would have their real and supposed worth made known as far as may be. And when they

die, they would fain have their names survive, that they may be great in the estimation of posterity, and magnified by all that mention them. And so deeply are men possessed with this dangerous sin, that they account this perpetuated fame for their felicity. And there was nothing that most of the heathens did prefer before it; but when they seemed to be most virtuous, heroical, and patient, it was but to be thus esteemed of after they were dead.

If you ask me, how far a surviving reputation may be regarded? I answer, 1. So far as the interest of God, or his Gospel, church, or cause, or the public good, or the good of our posterity is concerned in it, and may be promoted by it thus far it is lawful and a duty to value it, desire it, and seek it. For if we have thoroughly searched our hearts, and can say unfeignedly that it is God, and his cause and honour that we principally intend, and desire our own honour but as a means to his, and therefore desire it no further than it is such a means; then we may justly desire both the extension and surviving of our reputation, if we are groundedly persuaded that it is like to conduce to these happy ends. As for example: A prince that owns the cause of God, and makes such laws for the common good as may exceedingly promote it, if they be observed by posterity, must have a great regard to his present and surviving fame, because the honour of his laws will depend much upon the honour of his name: and if once the people vilify him, they will be likely to vilify and cast off his laws, to the hurt of church and commonwealth, and their own undoing. And even to the success of their present government, they should be very careful of their fame: so also a minister of the Gospel must be very careful of his present and future reputation. For at present, the saving good of his auditors doth much depend upon it. For if they have a base esteem of the pastor, they will be unlikely to give diligent

attention to his doctrine, but disesteem it as they do the speaker and it is not likely to go to their hearts; nor will they seek his advice in the great matters of salvation, and the difficult cases and dangers that they meet with; but to the great hazard of their souls will slight the necessary assistance of him that is appointed to be their guide to heaven, and will set light by all the ordinances of God. And therefore the pastor's reputation is ten thousand times more beneficial and necessary to the people than to himself. For, alas, it is but their good thoughts and words that he receiveth; which add little to his happiness: but it is everlasting life which they may receive by that word of God and help from him, which is furthered by his reputation. And therefore, as ministers, should be exceedingly watchful against pride, that they desire not honour for themselves; so when they are sure that God is their end, they must be exceeding careful of their own reputation, and avoid all occasions and appearances of evil, and purchase it by all just means: for though honour be worth little, yet the cause of God and the souls of men are worth much; and we must not be prodigal of our Master's talents, and such as are very useful to his service: our reputation is God's and the church's due, and to be cherished for their use. Especially those ministers must be careful of their reputation, that by reformation or public useful writings are capable of profiting posterity: and they may desire the surviving of their honours, which for itself might not be desired; because their works and writings, and doctrines are like to be much blasted by their own defamations, and do little good to any that come after; nay, the precious truths and cause of God may be most dangerously wronged and disadvantaged by it; and get such a blot and dishonour by their dishonour, that any that shall seek the promoting of it hereafter may be greatly hindered and disadvantaged thereby: for it

will seem enough to cast off such a doctrine for ever, that by the dishonour of the maintainers it was once dishonourable, and rejected as an error. And doubtless some things have been thus made heresies, and so will be long rejected as heresies in many parts of the Christian world, because they were once called by that name; and that was because the person that did own them had some such dishonour or disadvantage as left his doctrine open to this reproach. And therefore you may here see what a potent instrument reputation is in the devil's hand, to do his work; and what abundance of advantage he gets by defaming God's servants. Principally by this means did he long keep the world from the entertainment of the Gospel, the servants of Christ being contemptible in their eyes, and the preaching of the cross but foolishness to them. By this means did the Pharisees hinder the Jews from believing in Christ: and by this means is heathenism, infidelity, and Mahometanism continued in possession of most of the world to this day. By this means it is that popery keeps the common people in thraldom: as the voluminous lies of Cochlæus, Bolsecus, and many others concerning Luther, Calvin, Zuinglius, and other of our reformers and writers, do fully testify. And by personal reproaches and dishonours it is that the doctrine of the reformed divines is made so odious among the Lutherans; and the like instances might be given in others. If now any weighty Christian verity should be asserted by any pastor of the church, in a sounder and clearer manner, than is commonly known or owned, if the person that doth it, should but fall under any reproach (which he shall be sure of, if the devil can procure it), it is two to one but forh is sake his doctrine will be stigmatized with the name of error, and so lie buried for ever, till Divine Omnipotency commands its resurrection. And hence it is that there is not one

instrument that ever God raiseth up to vindicate any truth, or ordinance, or do him any special service, but satan raiseth up tongues and pens, if not hands and swords, against him; and an army of reproachers will presently be on the back of him.

Now in all such cases as these, it is a great duty for any servant of Christ to be very regardful of his reputation even with posterity: for his good name may much promote the truth, as we know the name of Austin, Calvin, and many another doth at this day. And if it be our great duty to extend our service of God as far as we can, to all countries, and to all posterity, to do them good; then it is our duty to endeavour that a good reputation should go along with our labours to further the success, or remove impediments. And thus while we are sincere, and intend all for God, we may and must regard our honour; and yet in so doing we deny ourselves, because we do it not for ourselves, but for God and his church.

And if honour be given in to us this way, even as we partake of it ourselves, as a means to God's honour, we must thankfully accept it, esteem it, and rejoice in it. And therefore it is made the matter of many promises, and spoken of in Scripture as a blessing: "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches;" Prov. 22:1. "The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot;" Prov. 10:7. "A good name is better than precious ointment;" Eccles. 7:1., with many the like.

Thus much I have said to prevent a misapplication of that which followeth; and to help you so to understand me on this point of honour, as not to run from extreme into extreme, and to sin by seeking to avoid sin.

But alas, this kind of seeking our honour for God and his church, and not for ourselves, and as our own, I doubt is more rare than the neglect of honour. The sin that I dissuade you from, is in these two points. 1. That you do not affect and seek after extending or surviving reputation for yourselves; and out of a proud desire to be still somebody in the estimation of the world: 2. That if God deny you even that honour which in the most lawful manner you desire, that you submit to his pleasure, and take it patiently; and in these two respects you must here deny yourselves.

Above all others, these sorts of persons following are in danger of this odious pride, in desiring for themselves an extended and surviving name: 1. Princes and soldiers that have the management of the great affairs of the world, fain would they be renowned to posterity; and hence are their aspiring ambitious designs. For this are their wars and conquests, that they may be famous when they are dead as well as while they live; and thus they make their noble conquests to be but murders of the vilest sort, and worse than any cut-throats and robbers by the highway, while they intend them but for themselves and their own vainglory; and better might they seek honour by whoredom, drunkenness, or theft, which are far smaller sins. Whereas, if their wars had been undertaken for God, and managed according to his will, they had made them truly honoured and renowned. And from this odious pride it is, that Absalom's pillars must be erected, and monuments must be built to perpetuate their names, and tell the world what need they have of means to keep alive their memories, and how destitute they are of nobler means, when marbles and monuments must be the great preservers of their fame. Yea, it were well if this pride and selfishness did not corrupt the noblest of their works, and turn them into deadly sins; if they did

not build their hospitals, colleges, or churches, and endow them with revenues to perpetuate their own names, rather than to do good. Though the works themselves are so good and so rare that I would not cast any dishonour upon them, seeing all that can be said is too little to provoke men to do the like; yet am I bound in duty to tell them, that if self should be the end, instead of God, and pride the cause, instead of charity, hell would be the reward instead of heaven; so great a matter is it to have an honest heart and right intentions in the most excellent and noble works. Insomuch that a poor man that hath a heart to build a college or a hospital, if he had but means, shall be rewarded by God, as if he had done it, if God were the end and charity the principle; when a rich man that doth the work itself, shall have but a poor and temporary reward, if self be the end and pride the principle.

2. Another sort that are specially in danger of this sin, are all rich men who would be great in the world, and perpetuate their names and memory in their houses, lands, and posterity; and therefore they would purchase towns and lordships, that their houses may be famous when they are gone: for it seems a kind of life to them if their greatness do but live in their posterity; "their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwellingplaces to all generations: they call their lands after their own names—This, their way, is their folly; yet their posterity approve their sayings;" Psal. 49:11, 12. Hence also is that ostentation of escutcheons, and arms, and of ancient gentility or nobility, and much more such proud and selfish vanity.

3. Another sort that are in danger of this sin are divines, and learned men in all professions, who make their writings but a means to

perpetuate their own names to posterity. Temptations to this sin may be offered to the best, and too much entertainment they may have with our natures, because of the remnants of selfishness and pride. But yet they do not prevail with the sanctified so far as to aim more at their own honour than at God's. The labours that in themselves are excellent, and a blessing to the church, are lost to him that was the author of them, if self be the end, and pride the fountain. And exceeding great need have the godliest men to watch their hearts in this particular, for they are very deceitful, and selfishness will too often interpose, where nothing but God and public good is discerned. And now, because that the sin is very great and dangerous, I shall here annex a few considerations, which, by opening the evil of it, may help you to abhor it.

1. These proud desires of a great and surviving name, do shew that you lamentably overlook the true eternal honour of the saints. Must you have honour? Choose that which lieth in the esteem of God. Must you be great and glorious? Why you may be so, and God would have you be so, if you will but know where greatness and glory is to be had, even in that blessedness that Christ hath purchased. Must you have your greatness and honour perpetuated? Why you may have that which will never have an end; and when God hath set before you such an endless glory, are you looking after a name among mortal men, to leave behind you on the earth? Do you think to be saved indeed or not? If you do, what need have you of the smoke of man's applause when you are with God? What unworthy thoughts have you of heaven, if you think when you are there you shall have need of men's good thoughts or words on earth? But it is a dangerous sign that you are indeed unbelievers, and lay not up your treasure in heaven, when you are so careful to perpetuate your

names and shadows here with men. The true relish of heavenly honour would put you out of love with this.

2. And do you not plainly see in your own desires the vanity of all these earthly things, when you are put at last to take up with such a shadow, such a nothing, as is a surviving name? Is this all that the world can do for you? And do you not see here the wondrous deceitfulness of the world, and the foolishness of unsanctified men, that they will thus stick to the world for very nothing! When they know that they shall have no more from it, they are contriving for a name when they are dead. Wonderful blindness! that experience and the approach and thoughts of death, should no more open your eyes. Surely, if this be all that the world will do for you at the last, you should even renounce it, and use it accordingly at the first.

3. You cannot but know, that when you are dead and gone, the honour of the world is none of yours, nor can it do you any good any further than it relateth to your eternal blessedness, and your honour is serviceable to the honour of God. What good will it do you to be magnified by men when you neither know nor feel it? What the better is a tree or a house, if men commend it? And for your souls, if they be with God, they will be far above the praise of men.

4. Nay, as such a design is a dangerous sign of your damnation, so I beseech you think what comfort it will be to your soul in hell to be extolled and well spoken of on earth? Will you cast away your souls to leave a name of renown behind you? And how unsuitable will such honour be to your condition? Surely, if you be there acquainted with it, you must needs be more tormented, both to remember that you were seeking the fame of the world, instead of the eternal glory, and

to consider what a miserable wretch it is that men are praising and magnifying on earth. Ah, then you will think with yourselves, 'Little do the poor inhabitants of the earth know what I am suffering while they are extolling me. Is the applause of mortals suitable to a poor tormented soul? Alas, that at one and the same time, men should be extolling me and devils tormenting me! How little ease do all their acclamations afford this poor distressed soul!' How honourable are the names of Alexander the Great, and Cæsar, and Aristotle, here on earth! But, alas, what cause have we to fear that they are lamenting their misery, while we are speaking of their glory!

5. And the sin is much the greater, because it is not a mischosen means, but a mistaken end, that your souls have fastened on. For it seems your very hearts are set upon your honours, and deeply and desperately set upon them, when you dare contrive the continuation of them when you are dead. Were it not a matter exceeding dear to you, undoubtedly you durst not lay such a design for it.

6. And consider whether there be not a love of the deadly sin of pride, and a final impenitency implied in this ambition of a surviving name: for you lay a design that is supposed to be executed after death. And as if you desired an eternity of wickedness, because your pride itself can live no where but with yourself, you would have it leave those tokens behind it by which the world may know that you are proud, and the effects of it you would have perpetuated on earth! And had not the world enough of your pride while you were alive? And had not you enough of it? Is this your repentance, that you would leave the monuments of your pride unto posterity, as if you were afraid there would be no surviving witness against you to condemn you? This is a certain transcendency of sin! The common

wicked ones would fain die the death of the righteous, and wish their last end were like to his. But these men would have their pride to live for ever; and when they themselves are in another world, they would have the demonstrations of their iniquity survive them.

7. And I beseech you consider what a fearful thing it is to die in contrived beloved sin! When men have none but a deathbed repentance, we have much cause to fear, lest it be but fear that is the life of the repentance; but when they have not this much, but are desirous to leave the monuments of their vice to all generations, from whence then shall we fetch our hopes of their forgiveness? And, O! what a power hath pride in that soul, where the thoughts of death itself will give no stop to it, but still they are desirous that pride may overlive them! One would think that the serious thoughts of a grave, much more of our passage into another world, should level all such thoughts of a surviving honour, even in an unsanctified soul! But I much fear lest it be infidelity itself that is the root of all, and that men do not soundly believe an everlasting life with God, which makes them desire to have somewhat like an immortality here on earth.

8. And consider what a silly immortality you desire. The honour can be no greater than the persons are that honour you, nor no longer. And it is but poor mortals that will magnify your names, and what can they add to you? And it will be but a very little while; for it is not long that the world is to continue.

9. And consider what a wickedness is here commonly included. Proud men desire to be thought better than they are, and spoken of accordingly: they limit not men's estimation to the truth of their

deserts; otherwise, if the best and greatest of you all were thought no better or greater than you are, alas, how far would men be from admiring you. What would you be thought but worms and sinners; and such as after all your glory, cannot forbid a crawling worm to feed upon your face or heart? And such as deserve no less than hell; and have many a secret sin that the world was unacquainted with. But it is not a true, but false esteem that the proud desire; they care not how great, or how good, or how wise and learned the world and succeeding ages think them; and thus they desire to cheat men's understandings, and to leave a false history of themselves on earth, and to have all men believe and report untruths, to magnify men whose souls, it is much to be doubted, are in hell, or if they be not, must needs abhor such doings. And thus every proud and selfish man would be a false historian and cheater of the world.

10. Yea, which is yet the worst of all, they would continue sacrilegiously to rob the Lord of his honour, even when they are dead. It is an undue honour, which is stolen from God, which they so much seek for (for were it but such as is a useful means to his honour, he would not be offended with them). And when the saints say, "Not unto us, Lord, but unto thy name give the glory," these sinners are not content to rob God of his honour as long as they live, but they would do it even after death. If we had not certainly known the truth of it, we should have thought it an incredible thing that ever any man should come to that impiety, pride, and madness, as to desire to be worshipped as a God when he was dead. Much more, that the most of the world should be so far distracted as to do it: and yet so it hath been, and so it is in too great a measure. And truly the wicked or proud disposition that is predominant in the hearts of all the unsanctified, doth take up no shorter where it hath but hopes of

success to actuate it. Not a man of them but would be honoured as Gods when they are dead; though I know those of them that feel not this much in themselves, will hardly believe it. Consider what an heinous injury this is to God, and to the souls of men, that you should leave your names as idols to the world, to entice so many thousand men to sin, and to be a standing enemy to the honour of God, by encroaching on his right, and turning the eye of men's observation and admiration from him to you.

11. Consider also, how that by these desires of earthly honour to yourselves, and making this the end of your endeavours, you corrupt abundance of excellent works, (materially considered,) and turn them into mortal sins. If princes rule and fight for themselves, I have told you already what they do; but if this were done for God, it would have another form, and another reward, as it had another end. What a doleful case is it that such excellent works, as almsdeeds, and acts of bounty to church, or poor, or commonwealth, in buildings, lands, or any the like works, should all be turned into sin and death, by such a selfish vainglorious intent! And that their souls should be suffering for those works that others receive much good by! What a sad case is it, that historians, lawyers, physicians, philosophers, linguists, and the professors of all the sciences, should undo themselves for ever by those excellent works that edify the world! Nay, what can be more lamentable to think of, than that able and learned divines themselves should lose their own souls in the studying, and preaching those precious truths, that are saving unto others; and that such excellent writings as remain a standing blessing to the church, should be the authors of mortal sin! And yet so it is, if the renown and immortality of a name on earth be the end that all this work is done for.

12. Lastly, Consider that if honour be good for you, it is better attained by minding your duty for the honour of God, and denying your own honour, than by seeking it; for honour is the shadow that will follow you if you fly from it, and fly from you if you follow it. What Christ here saith of life, is true of honour: he that seeketh and saveth it shall lose it, and he that loseth it for Christ shall find it. The greatest honour is to deny ourselves, and our own honour, and to do most for the honour of God; and to be contented to be nothing, that God may be all. For you have his promise, that them that honour him he will honour, but they that dispise him shall be lightly esteemed.

Though I have endeavoured by a right limitation and exposition of the foregoing parts of self-denial, to prevent mistakes, and give you those grounds by which objections may be answered, yet the stir that is made in the world about this point, by Papists and many other mistaking sects, doth persuade me to give a more distinct resolution of some of the principal doubts that are before us, and therein to shew you that self-denial consisteth not in all things that by some are pretended to be parts of it; but that there is a great deal of sin that goes under the name of self-denial among many of these sorts of mistaken persons.

CHAPTER LI

Whether Self-denial lie in renouncing Propriety?

Quest. 1. 'WHETHER doth self-denial require us to renounce propriety, and to know nothing as our own' as the monks among the Papists swear to do, as part of their state of perfection; and a book called, "The Way to the Sabbath of Rest," doth teach us?

Answ. 1. That there shall be no propriety in goods, or estate among men, is contrary to the will of God, who hath made men his stewards, and trusted several persons with several talents, and forbidden stealing, and commanded men to labour that they may have to give to him that needeth; and he that hath this world's goods and seeth his brother have need, must not shut up the bowels of his compassion. It is a standing duty to give to the poor; and we shall therefore have the poor always with us for this exercise of our charity. And he that hath nothing, can give nothing, nor use it for God. Why did Paul require them to give to the distressed saints, and maintain the ministry, and gather for such uses every first day of the week, if he would have men have nothing to give? This therefore is a conceit which needs nothing but reason, and the reading and belief of Scripture to confute it.

2. But as no man is a proprietary, or hath any thing of his own, in the strict and absolute sense, because all is God's, and we are but stewards; so no man may retain his human analogical propriety, when God calleth him to give it up. No man may retain any thing from God's use and service which he hath a propriety in. We have so much propriety as that no man must rob us; and so much as our works of charity are rewardable, though it be but giving a cup of cold water, which could not be without propriety; for who will reward him that gives that which is none of his own? yea, it is made the matter of the last judgment; "I was hungry, and ye fed me; I was naked, and ye clothed me," &c. Which they could not have done if they had not had food and clothing to bestow. So that the denial of propriety would destroy all exercise of charity in such kinds, and destroy all societies and orderly converse and industry in the world.

But yet when God calls for any thing from us, we must presently obey, and quit all title to it, and resign it freely and gladly to his will.

And 3. There must be so much vigour of charity, and sense of our neighbour's wants, as that no man must shut up the bowels of compassion; but as we must love our neighbours as ourselves, so must we relieve them as a second self; yea, and before ourselves, if God's service or honour should require it. If we must lay down our lives for the brethren, much more our estates. So that 'levelling community' is abominable; but 'charitable community' is a Christian duty, and the great character of sincere love to Christ in his members. And therefore in the primitive church there was no forbidding of propriety; but there was, 1. A resignation of all to God, to signify that they were contented to forsake all for him, and did prefer Christ and the kingdom of God before all. And 2. There was so great vigour of true charity, as that all men voluntarily supplied the wants of the church and poor, and voluntarily made all things as common, that is, common by voluntary communication for use, though not common in primary title; and so no man took any thing as his own, when God, and his churches, and his brethren's wants did call for it. O that we had more of that Christian love that should cause a 'charitable community,' which is the true mean between the 'monkish community,' and the selfish tenacious propriety! Levelling hath not destroyed one soul for ten thousand that an inordinate love of propriety hath destroyed.

CHAPTER LII

Whether it lie in renouncing Marriage?

Quest. 2. 'WHETHER self-denial consist in the forswearing or renouncing of marriage, or the natural use of it by those that are married?'

Answ. To forbid marriage simply, is called by the Holy Ghost "a doctrine of devils;" 1 Tim. 4:1. 3.: and was one of the heresies that the apostles were called out to encounter in their own days. But yet a married state doth ordinarily (not always) call men off from that free attendance on the service of God without distraction which is very desirable; and therefore those that are capable of doing God any notable service, which marriage is like to hinder them from, should avoid it, if they can, without a greater evil. And therefore the church did think it for many ages, so fit for ministers to be single, that they might have the less of worldly affairs and cares to call them off from the work of God, and their carnal relations might not hinder them from more public duties or charitable works. The Papists, therefore, mistakingly take the vow of chastity to be an entering into a state of perfection, and sinfully condemn the marriage of priests; when the apostle expressly saith, "A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife—having his children in subjection;" 1 Tim. 3:12. And so of deacons, verse 12. And others run into the other extreme. But the true meaning is this: 1. Ordinarily marriage is more distracting and hindering to us in the service of God, than a single life; especially to ministers, and such as should wholly addict themselves to the public service of the church. 2. But yet all men are not alike obliged to it or from it. Some may be necessitated to it by the temper of their bodies to avoid a greater evil, even sin itself: and some may have no such necessity. Some may have their worldly estate and affairs in such a plight, that they can far better manage them with freedom for God's service in a married than a single state; but with others it is not so;

and especially with very few ministers. So that a single or married life is in itself indifferent; but as a means to God's service, that is a duty to one that is a sin to another; but because that a single life is more commonly free and fittest for this great end, therefore the apostle preferreth it as better, because more suitable to the state of the most (at least in those times), though to some, marriage may be a duty. So that every one should impartially inquire, in which state they may do God the greatest service, and that they should choose, not on popish ground, as if it were commended to that particular person to whom it is not commanded, and were an evangelical counsel of perfection, and to be vowed; but in a prudent ordering of our lives, applying the general rules of Scripture to our several estates. And thus according to the command of Christ, "He that can receive this saying, let him."

CHAPTER LIII

Or in Solitude and renouncing secular Affairs?

Quest. 3. 'WHETHER self-denial consist in solitude, and avoiding secular affairs, as trades, merchandise, labour, &c.?'

Answ. 1. It is the standing rule of the apostle, of all that are able, "That if any man will not work, neither should he eat;" 2 Thess. 3:10.: and he calls those "disorderly walkers, that work not at all;" 2 Thess. 3:11.: and requireth us to have "no company with such," commanding men, with "quietness to work, and eat their own bread;" verse 12. 14. But yet there are several sorts of labour: some labour with the body, which is usually more private, as to the extent (if not to the intent) of the benefit; and some labour with the mind, which is usually more for public good; as princes, judges, magistrates

of all sorts, lawyers, physicians, ministers, &c. Now men are to consider whether by the labour of the mind or of the body they are like to be more serviceable to God, and which they are fittest for, and called to; and that they ought to set themselves to, and that in true self-denial, and for God. To be idle, is so far from being a part of self-denial, that it is a sinful part of fleshpleasing. And so is it to choose any calling or employment principally for fleshly ease or accommodation. The apostles were some fishermen, and some of other callings, and none of them renounced worldly labour, or affairs, save only so far as they hindered them from the work of God, to which they (and all ministers) were wholly to addict themselves, as appears, 1 Tim. 4:15. 2 Tim. 2:4. To do therefore as many monks do, to be employed in no calling for the public good, under pretence of being religious to themselves, is to be burdens to the earth, and gross violators of the laws of God.

CHAPTER LIV

Or in renouncing Public Offices and Honours?

Quest. 4. 'WHETHER self-denial require men to renounce all public offices, and honours, and not to be magistrates, ministers, or the like?'

Answ. It requireth us not to have such carnal thoughts of these offices, as to look on them only as places of honour, and power, and ease; nor yet to desire them for such carnal ends; nor yet to thrust ourselves upon them without a call, as being the judges of our own sufficiency. But self-denial is so far from forbidding the offices and employments themselves, as that it is a great point of self-denial for a

man that understandeth them well, to undertake them, if he mean to manage them sincerely and faithfully. For were it not that the sweetness of God's interest and his acceptance, and the benefits of the church, our brethren and our souls, did ingratiate these offices and employments to an honest mind, they would be so very burdensome, that flesh and blood would either make them carnal by abuse, or never endure them. And therefore hath God given them an addition of honour to encourage them, and to put an honour on their work, for the furthering of its success. Experience certifieth me that the work of the ministry is far more troublesome to the flesh, than the bodily labour of a poor artificer or ploughman is; so that without great self-denial no man will be a minister, that doth not carnally mistake the function for another thing than indeed it is. And I think I may say the like in its degree, by the magistracy; especially by them in highest power, who have the greatest work. Certain I am, if they faithfully do their duties, they will find more burden to the flesh and mind, than poor men that have only a family to provide for. Though many ignorant, ungodly poor people, that sit at home in peace, and little know the care, and grief, and trouble of their rulers, do wickedly murmur at their very calling, as if they had nothing but honour, and idleness, and excess; yet if they had tried and tasted their care and trouble a few months, they would think a private life the easier, and confess that there is need of much self-denial for a man to accept of magistracy or ministry, that understandeth them, and resolveth to use them accordingly.

Moreover, these offices are of necessity to the common good, and established to that end by God himself. And the fifth commandment requires us to pay our superiors their honour and obedience. And therefore to imagine that it is any part of self-denial to refuse the

office of magistracy or ministry, is to make it self-denial to destroy the church and commonwealth, and be a cruel enemy to mankind, and to our country, and to rebel against the powers that are ordained of God, and thereby to receive damnation to ourselves; Rom. 13:1–3. Heb. 13:17.

But yet this I must say, that if a worthy person stand in competition with us, self-denial requireth us to prefer them before ourselves, and to refuse honours and dignities, when the good of the public doth not call us to deny ourselves more in the accepting them.

CHAPTER LV

Whether it be a denying our Relations?

Quest. 5. 'WHETHER self-denial consist in denying of natural or contracted relations, as of father and mother to sons and daughters, of brothers and sisters, husband and wife, master and servant, prince and people, pastor and flock?'

Answ. You might as wisely imagine that self-denial lieth in hating or denying any of God's works, even the frame of nature; or in denying food and raiment to our bodies, or in denying our own lives, so as to cut our throats. For the same law of nature that made me a man, and requireth me to preserve my life, did make me a son, and require me to love and honour my parents: And it is in the decalogue, the "first commandment with promise," as the apostle calleth it, Ephes. 6:2. It is frequently and expressly commanded in Scripture, that children love, honour, obey their parents; and terrible curses are pronounced on the breakers of these commands; Eph. 6:1. 4. 5:22. 25. Colos. 3:20–22. 4:1. Exod. 21:17. Levit. 20:9. Deut. 21:18; 19. 27:16. Prov. 30:17. Matt. 15:4. 19:19. And if children were not bound to parents, then parents should not be bound to educate children, and then they would be exposed to misery and perish. One would think that there should never such a sect have risen up, that should be worse than the very brutes, who by the instinct of nature love their young ones, and their dams. But the Spirit foretold us, that which is come to pass, that in the last and perilous times, there should be men that are "disobedient to parents, without natural affection;" 2 Tim. 3:3.

And for contracted relations, they are the express institution of God, so frequently owned by him in Scripture, and the duties of them so frequently commanded, that I will not trouble you with the recital of the passages. And as for the adversaries' objections, they are frivolous. The meaning of the apostle's words, "that we know no man after the flesh," I have told you before. The words of Christ to his mother, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" (John 2:4.) which they allege, are nothing for their wicked cause; they being no more but Christ's due reprehension of his mother's mistake, who would prescribe him the time and manner of doing miracles, and have him do them in a way of ostentation; which things did not belong to her, but to the Spirit of God, and the Lord himself. And whereas they allege that text, "that father, mother, brother, sisters, &c. are to be hated for Christ;" Luke 14:26. I answer, even as our own lives are to be hated, which are also numbered with them; that is, they must be all forsaken, rather than Christ should be forsaken; and therefore loved less than he, and but for his sake. If therefore this text require you not at all to cut your own throats, or some way kill yourselves, then it doth not require you to withdraw your due affections from natural or contracted relations. I must crave the reader's pardon that I trouble him with confuting such unnatural opinions, and desire him to believe that it is not before I am urged to it by the arguments of some deluded souls that are not unlikely to do hurt by them with some.

CHAPTER LVI

Or Relieving Strangers before Kindred?

Quest. 6. 'WHETHER self-denial require that we should relieve godly strangers, before our natural kindred, especially that are ungodly? Or that we love them better?'

Answ. 1. Where our natural kindred are as holy and needy as others, there is a double obligation on us, both natural and spiritual, to love and relieve them. 2. Where they are as holy as others, but less needy, there may lie a double obligation on us, to love them, and yet not to give to them. 3. If they be more needy, or as needy as others, though withal they be ungodly, we are not thereby excused from natural affections or charitable relief. 4. We must distinguish between children, or such kindred as nature casteth upon our care for provision, and such kindred as are by nature cast upon others. If parents were not obliged to relieve and provide for their own children, they would be exposed to misery, and man should be more unnatural than brutes. So that even when by ungodliness, they are less amiable than others, yet God hath bound men to provide for them more. 5. Natural love and spiritual are much different; you may have a stronger natural love to an ungodly child, than to a godly stranger, but you must have a spiritual love to that godly stranger, more than to your child; and that spiritual love must be (at least as to the rational and estimative part) much greater than the other natural love: and yet you may be bound to give more, where you are not bound to love more. For it is not love only that is the cause of giving; but we are God's stewards, and must dispose of what we have as he prescribeth us: and his standing law of nature for the preservation of mankind, is, that parents take care of their children, as such.

6. The will and service of God, being it that should dispose of all that we have, we must in all such doubts look to these two things for our

direction: First, to the particular precepts of the word; and there we find the foresaid duty of parents expressed, and withal the duty of relieving all that are needy, to our power: Secondly, to the general precept; and there we find, that we must honour God with our substance, and lay out all our talents to his service. And so the duty lieth plain before us. If you have a child that is wicked, yet as parents, provide him his daily bread; and leave him enough for daily bread, when you die. But more he should not have from me; but the rest (had I ten thousand pounds a year) I would lay out that way my conscience told me may be most serviceable to God. For, 1. I am not bound to strengthen an enemy of Christ, and enable him to do the greater mischief. 2. Nor to cast away the mercies of God. 3. If the law required the parents to cause such a rebellious son to be put to death, (Deut. 21:18.) then surely to provide him daily bread, is now as much as a parent is obliged to. And if it be an express command, "That he that will not labour, shall not eat," (2 Thess. 3:10.) such useless members forfeiting their very sustenance, then surely he that is such or worse, speeds fair if you leave him food and raiment. 4. And the great command of "doing all to God's glory," and "serving him with our substance," will not be obeyed, if you leave your riches and estates in the hands of such persons, merely because they are your children. No doubt but that is a selfish and unconscionable course, and the thing that sets up the ungodly to disturb the church, and lord it over the world, while parents furnish them with riches to do the devil eminent service with.

Object. 'But who knows but God may convert them?'

Answ. You cannot guide your actions by things unknown. You have no promise of their conversion; nor much probability, when they

have frustrated all your counsels and means of their good education; and grace is supernatural: and therefore you must proceed upon grounds that are known.

And for remoter kindred, if they may be as serviceable to God with what I give them as others, nature teacheth me to prefer them before others; but otherwise grace teacheth me, both to love a godly stranger better than ungodly kindred, and to lay out all that I have, as may be most serviceable to God.

CHAPTER LVII

How we must love our Neighbours as ourselves

Quest. 7. 'How is it that self-denial requireth us to love our neighbour as ourselves: is it with the same degree of love?'

Answ. I answered this on the by, before: Briefly, 1. The chief part of the precept is negative: thus q. d. "Set not up thyself against the welfare of thy neighbour: draw not from him, or covet not that which is his to thyself, and confine not thy love and care to thyself." 2. And it comprehendeth this positive, and that as to the kind of love, we should love both ourselves and neighbours as means to God, and for the interest of God; and in that respect there is an equality: we must 'appretiativè' or estimatively love a better and more serviceable man that hath more of God's Spirit in him, above ourselves; and an equal person equally with ourselves, with this rational love, which intendeth all for God. 3. But natural love which is put into man for self-preservation will be stronger to self than to another, and alloweth us, 'cæteris paribus,' to prefer, and first preserve and

provide for ourselves. And in this regard, our neighbour must be loved but as a second self, or next ourselves. 4. But this natural love in the exercise of it, at least in imperative acts, is to be subservient to our rational spiritual love, and to be over-mastered by it. And therefore it is that as reason teacheth an heathen to prefer his country before his life, (though the instinct of nature incline us more to life,) so faith teacheth a Christian much more, to prefer God's honour, and the Gospel, church, commonwealth, and his neighbour's good, when it more conduceth to these ends, than his own, before himself, his liberty or life.

CHAPTER LVIII

Is Self-revenge and Penance Self-denial?

Quest. 8. 'WHETHER self-denial require us after sin, to use vindictive penance or punishment of the flesh, by fasting, watching, going barefoot, lying hard, wearing haircloth, or to do this ordinarily? as some of the papists, monks, and friars do?'

Answ. The easiness of this case may allow a brief decision. 1. The body must be so far afflicted, as is needful to humble it, and subdue it to the spirit, and tame its rebellion, and fit it for the service of God. 2. The exercise of a holy revenge on ourselves may be a lower end, subservient to this. 3. It must also be so far humbled as is necessary to express repentance to the church, when absolution is expected upon public repentance. 4. As also to concur with the soul in secret or open humiliation.

But, 1. He that shall think that whippings, or sack-cloth, or going farefoot, or other self-punishing, are of themselves good works, and meritorious with God, or satisfy his justice, or are a state of perfection, doth offer God a heinous sin, under the name and conceit of a good work. 2. And he that shall by such self-afflicting unfit his body for the service of God, yea that doth not cherish it so far as is necessary to fit it for duty, is guilty of self-murder, and defrauding God of his service, and abusing his creature, and depriving others of the help we owe them; so that in one word, the body must be so used as may best fit it for God's service. And to think that self-afflicting is a good work, merely as it is penalty or suffering to the body, or that we may go further herein, is to think, 1. That we should use our body worse than our beast; for we will no further afflict him than is necessary to tame him, or serve ourselves by him, and not to disable him for service. 2. And it will teach men to kill themselves; for that is a greater penalty to the body than whipping or fasting. 3. And it is an offering God a sacrifice of cruelty and robbery, which we commit against himself and man.

But I must needs add, that though some friars and melancholy people are apt to go too far in this, and pine their bodies, or misuse them with conceits of merit and satisfaction; yet almost all the common people run into the contrary extreme, and pamper and please their flesh, to the displeasing of God, and the ruin of their souls. And I know but few that have need to be restrained from afflicting or taking down the flesh too much.

CHAPTER LIX

Is Self-denial to be without Passion?

Quest. 9. 'WHETHER self-denial consist in the laying by of all passions, and bringing the soul to an impassionate serenity?'

Answ. The Stoics and some of the Behmenists think so: but so doth not God, or any well-informed man. For, 1. God would not have made the affections in vain. It is not the passions, but the disorder of them, that is sinful, or the fruit of sin. 2. We are commanded to exercise all the affections or passions for God, and on other suitable objects. We must love God with all the heart, and soul, and might, which is not without affection, or passion. We must love his servants, his church, his word, his ways. We must fear him above them that can kill us. We must hunger and thirst after his righteousness, and pant after him as the hart doth after the water-brooks. We must be angry and sin not. A zeal for God is the life of our graces: we must "always be zealous in a good matter; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." We must "hate evil," and "sorrow for it," when we are guilty, and grieve under the sense of our miscarriages, and God's displeasure. And all these (expressly commanded in the word) are holy affections or passions of the soul.

3. Yea, it is the work of the Holy Ghost to sanctify all these passions that they may be used for God; and they are called by the names of the several graces of the Spirit. And it is not passion, but disordered passion, that must be denied.

CHAPTER LX

How far must we deny our own Reason?

Quest. 10. 'How far must we deny our own reason?'

Answ. 1. We must not be unreasonable, nor live unreasonably, nor believe unreasonably, nor love, or choose, or let out any affection unreasonably. We are commanded to be ready to give a "reason of our hopes." It is our rational faculty that proveth us men, and is essential to us; and without it we can neither understand the things of God or man: for how should we understand without an understanding?

But yet reason must thus far be denied. 1. We must not think higher of our reason than it deserves, either in itself, or compared to others. 2. We must not satisfy its curiosity in prying into unrevealed things. 3. Nor must we satisfy or suffer its presumption in judging our brethren, or censuring men's hearts or ways uncharitably. 4. Nor must we endure it to rise up against the word or ways of God, or contradict or quarrel with divine Revelations, though we cannot see the particular evidence or reason of each truth, nor reconcile them together in our apprehensions. Though we may not take any thing to be the word of God without reason; yet when we have reason to take it to be his word, we must believe and submit to all that is in it, without any more reason for our belief. For the formal reason of our belief is because God is true, that did reveal this word; and we have the greatest reason in the world to believe all that he revealeth.

CHAPTER LXI

Must we be content with Afflictions, permitted Sin, &c.?

Quest. 11. 'If self-denial require us to content our souls in the will of God, then whether must we be content with his afflictions, or permission of sin, or the church's sufferings; and, 1. How will this

stand with our due sense of God's displeasure and chastisements. 2. And with our praying against them. 3. And our use of means for their removal?'

Answ. 1. The will of God is one thing, and the hurt which he willeth us is another; and the good end for which he willeth it, is a third. The afflicting will of God is good, and must be loved as good: and the end and benefit of chastisement is good, and must be loved: but the hurt as hurt, must not be loved. It is not God's will that we must resist, or seek to change; nor yet is it the end or benefit of the chastisement; but only the hurt, which our folly hath made a suitable means. And we may not seek to remove this hurt, till the effect be procured, or on terms that may consist with the end of it. And this is not against the will of God, that when the good is attained, the affliction be removed.

2. And you must distinguish between his pleased, and displeased will; his complacency and acceptance, and his displacency and rejecting will. Every act of God's will must be approved and loved as good in God: but it is not every one that we may rest and rejoice in as good to us, and as our felicity. We must be grieved for God's displeasure, and yet love even that holy will that is displeased with us; and we must be sensible of God's judgments, and yet love the will that doth inflict them. But it is only the love of God and pleasure of his will to us, that can be the rest and felicity of our souls.

3. Some acts of God's will are about the means, and have a tendency to a further end; and some are about the end itself. His commanding will we must love and obey: his forbidding will must have the same affections: his threatening will we must love and fear; his rewarding will we must love and rejoice in: his full accepting will, that is, his

love and complacency in us, we must rest and delight our souls in for ever. And thus we must comply with the will of God.

CHAPTER LXII

May God be finally Loved as our Felicity and Portion?

Quest. 12. 'You tell us that we must seek ourselves but as means to God: how then may we make our salvation our end; or desire the fruition of God, when fruition is for ourselves, of somewhat that may make us happy? Doth he not desire God as a means for himself as the end; that desireth him as his portion, treasure, refuge, and felicity?'

Answ. There are such abundance of abstruse philosophical controversies 'de anima et fine,' that stand here in the way, that I must only decide this briefly and imperfectly for vulgar capacities. Schoolmen and other philosophers are not so much as agreed what a final cause is. But this much briefly may give some degree of satisfaction to the moderate. 1. No fleshly profits, pleasures, or honours must be made our end. This we are agreed on. 2. The ultimate end of all the saints, is an end that is suitable to the nature of love; and that is, perfectly to love God, and please him, and serve him, and to be perfectly beloved of him, and behold his glory. So that it is not an end of self-love, or love of concupiscence, or for our commodity only; but it is the end of the love of friendship: now all love of friendship doth take in both the party loving, and the party beloved into the end; for the end is a perfect union of both, according to their capacities. And it being 'intentio amantis,' the end of love, both God and ourselves must be comprehended in it, as the parties to be united; and so it is both for him, and for ourselves.

3. But yet though both parties as united be comprised in the end, it is not equally, but with great inequality. For, 1. God being infinite goodness itself, must 'appreciativè' in estimation and affection, be preferred exceedingly before ourselves; so that in desiring this blessed union, we must more desire it to please and praise him, and give him his due, for which he created, redeemed, and glorifieth us, than to be ourselves happy in him. 2. And God being not a mere friend, but our absolute Lord of infinite power and glory, it must be more in our intention to bring to him eternally, than to receive from him; (though both must be comprised:) For receiving is for ourselves, further than we intend it for returns; but returning is for God; not to add to his blessedness; but to please his will, and give him his own; for he made all things for himself. And so that in union with him we may give him his own in fullest love and praise, and service, and thus please him, must be the highest part of our intention, about our own felicity in enjoying him.

So that you may see, that self-denial teacheth no man to ask, 'Whether he could be content to be damned for Christ?' For this is contrary to our propounded end, in the whole. For a damned man hath no union of love with God, and giveth him not his own in love or praises.

Object. 'What say you then by the wishes of Moses and Paul?"

Answ. 1. The saying of Moses is very plain, Exod. 32:32. He doth not desire that his soul might be made a ransom for Israel, but that if God would not pardon them, but destroy them and cast them off, he would blot out Moses' name from his book, that is, from among the number of the living; so that his saying is no other than such as Elias

or Jonas was, "What good will my life do me, if I live to see thy people cast off, and all thy wonders for them buried? Therefore either let them live in thy sight or kill me with them." This is the plain meaning of Moses' request.

And for Paul's, the difficulty is somewhat greater: 1. Some think that Paul meaneth (Rom. 9:3.) that he once wished himself to be no Christian in the days of his ignorance, and all through his zeal for the Jewish nation. But this is improbable. 2. Some think that he meaneth only, I could wish to be given up to death for them, as the accursed under the law.

3. Some think that he meaneth only, I could wish myself yet unconverted to Christ, so they were converted.

4. Some think the meaning is, 'I could wish myself cast out of the church, and given up to Satan for any bodily suffering.'

5. Some say it is only to have his salvation deferred.

6. And some, that it is damnation for a time.

But 7. The plain meaning seemeth to be this; 'so great is my love to my countrymen, the Jews, that if it were offered to my choice whether they, or I without them, should enjoy Christ, I would yield to be cast out of his sight for ever, rather than they should,' where mark; 1. That it is not a wish that it were so, for he knew that this was no means to promote their salvation; but it is a discovery of his affection that would wish or choose this if it were a means to that end. 2. And it is not the sin of not loving Christ that he would choose, but only the misery of being deprived of his blessed presence. 3. And

the reasons of this, his choice, are these two conjunct: 1. Because the souls of so many thousands is, in impartial reason, more to be valued than the soul of one; 2. And principally because by the conversion and salvation of a whole nation, God may be more honoured and served than by one.

And note farther, 1. That this is not set as a mark for every Christian to try the truth of his love by. 2. But yet no doubt but it is a duty and degree of grace that every one should aim at. For 1. We see among heathens that nature itself teacheth them that a man should lay down his life for his country, because a country is better than a man. And proportionably, reason tells us that the salvation of a country being a greater good than of any one, it should be more preferred; and self-love goeth against plain reason when it contradicteth this. What man's reason doth not tell him that it were better he should die than the world should be destroyed, or the sun turned into darkness; yea, or that one church or country perish? And so of salvation.

2. And it is agreeable to the nature of love to desire that most, that most pleaseth him whom we love: and therefore to desire rather that God may have multitudes than one, and be served and praised by them. So much about the matter of self-denial.

III. I have finished the two first things which I promised to you under the use of exhortation, viz. the trial of your self-denial, and the particulars in which it consisteth, and must be exercised; and there I have shewed you, 1. In what respect self must be denied. 2. What that selfishness is that must be denied, as to the inward disposition; and, 3. What is that objective self-interest that must be denied, which consisteth in so many particulars that I cannot undertake to

enumerate all; but I have mentioned twenty particulars under the general head of pleasure, and ten under the general head of honour, and have referred you to another treatise for that which consisteth in worldly profits. And now I come to the third part of my work, which is to shew you a little more fully the greatness of the sin of selfishness, and give you thence such moving reasons as may conduce to the cure of it, which are these that follow.

CHAPTER LXIII

Motives: 1. Selfishness the grand Idolatry of the World

1. SELFISHNESS is the grand idolatry of the world, and self the world's idol, as I have told you before. It usurpeth the place of God himself in men's judgments, wills, affections, and endeavours. It was the work of the ten discoveries in the beginning of the book to demonstrate this: and therefore I shall say but little more. But self-denial destroyeth the world's great idol, and giveth God his own again. The selfish lean most to their own understandings: but the self-denying trust the wisdom of God. The selfish are careful principally, for themselves, and their own felicity, even a terrene and carnal kind of felicity; but the self-denying are principally careful how they may please and honour God, and promote the welfare of his church, and in this way attain the spiritual everlasting felicity of the saints. The selfish must have their own humours pleased, and their own wills accomplished, and their own desires granted; but the self-denying do slay their own carnal wills, desires, and conceits, and lay them dead at the feet of Christ, that his will alone may be exalted. The selfish would have all men love them, admire them, and commend them. But the self-denying would have all men to love,

admire, and glorify the Lord, above himself and all the world. The selfish can bear with God's enemies, but not with their own; and they can suffer men to wrong God, and sin against him, more patiently than they can suffer them to wrong themselves. But it is contrary with the self-denying: a wrong to God and his church seemeth far greater to them than a wrong against themselves. In a word, the selfish intend themselves, and live to themselves, and the self-denying intend to God, and live to him, in the course of their lives. And therefore when the selfish are troubled about many things, the self-denying are minding the one thing necessary. And when the selfish are seeking to know what is good or evil to their flesh; the self-denying are seeking to please the Lord, and desire to know nothing but him in Christ crucified; and they could part with all the knowledge of the creatures, as useful to themselves, if they could but know more of God in Christ. The selfish would be in his own hands, at his own dispose and government, and the self-denying would be in the hands of God, and at his dispose and government.

And doubtless, the very state of man's apostacy did lie in turning from God to self, and to the creature for self; so that he now studieth, and useth, and loveth the creature but for himself: and so he would have himself, and all as far out of the hands of God in his own, as possibly he can. I gave you my thoughts in the beginning, that this was the meaning of man's knowing good and evil by the fall. And since I wrote that, I met with the same exposition in 'Damascene, de Orthodox, fid. li. 11. c. 11. p. (mihi) 113. part of whose words I shall here translate:—In the midst of Paradise, God planted the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge: and the tree of knowledge was for the trial, and proof, and the exercise of man's obedience and disobedience. And therefore it is called the tree of knowledge of good

and evil; or because it gave man a power to know his own nature; which indeed to the perfect is good, but to the infirm is evil; and to them that are yet prone to concupiscence, as strong meats to the weak and those that need milk. For the Lord that created us, would not have us careful and troubled about many things, nor to become contrivers and providers for our own lives: into which it was that Adam fell. For when he had eaten, he knew that he was naked, and made himself an apron of fig-leaves to cover his nakedness. But before both Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed. And God would have had us insensible of (or not to suffer by) such things; for this is but an insensibility and impossibility. But we had one work only to do without vexation and care, which is the work of angels, unweariedly and continually to praise our Creator, and to delight in the contemplation of him, and to cast all our care on him, as he taught us by the prophet David, saying, "Cast thy care on the Lord, and he shall nourish thee;" and the Lord taught his own disciples in the Gospel, "Take no care what ye shall eat, nor wherewith you shall be clothed;" and again, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and these things shall be added to you;" and to Martha, "Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful: Mary hath chosen the best part which shall not be taken from her;" that is, to sit at his feet, and hear his word; and this is the tree of life.—So far Damascene, who you see driveth at the same sense, though it be not clearly and fully expressed by him.

And as man, by his fall, desired to know what was good and evil for himself, that is, to his own nature, for his daily provision and safety, that he might be able to choose for himself, and not trust himself wholly on the provision of God; so accordingly God in judgment hath

given him over to himself, according to his desire, of which more anon.

And accordingly our restoration from this lapsed state, consisteth in retiring from ourselves to God; and giving up to him again those minds, those thoughts, those wills, those affections that have been all this while detained from him, and misemployed by self; down then with this idol, and set up God. Did you make yourselves? or redeem yourselves? or do you sustain yourselves, or are you sufficient for yourselves? Let him that doth all this for you be acknowledged to have the only title to you; and consider what an odious crime it is for such worms to exalt themselves as gods, and so deny the Lord to be their God.

CHAPTER LXIV

Enemy to all Morality; Faith; Prayer; Obedience

2. MOREOVER, this self is the enemy, as of God himself, so also of all the frame of morality: of every article of your belief, and every petition in the Lord's prayer, and of every one of the ten commandments, and of the whole word of God.

1. For your Belief, it advanceth your own reason against it, as to the truth of it; so that you cannot discern these things of God, because they are spiritually discerned. It shutteth up your understandings against the meaning of it; so that when you know the grammatical sense of the words, you know not half the meaning yet for all that. The words are written to signify the spiritual apprehensions and affections which the holy inditers had of the matter signified by

them: and till you come by the help of those words to have the same impress upon your souls, the same apprehensions and affections which the inditers had, and intended to express by them, you have not the perfect understanding of the Scriptures; and therefore while you are wholly without their spiritual apprehensions and affections, you do not so much as sincerely or truly understand them; however you may be able to speak as good grammarians, and true expositors in the explaining of them to others. And also selfishness in the will doth make you disrelish the doctrine which you should believe, because that being practical, either the doctrine, or its consequence, or the practice that it puts you on, is against your carnal self and interest.

2. And for prayer, I might easily shew you, that self contradicteth all the parts of it. You should first pray that the name of God may be hallowed, making his glory the end of your desires; but self must be its own end, and seek the honour of its own name, and less regardeth the hallowing of God's.

You must pray that the kingdom of God may come; but this kingdom treadeth down self as an enemy, and therefore no marvel if self be unwilling of it. Would you be disposed, and subjected to a spiritual government, and do nothing nor have nothing but at the pleasure of Christ? The reign of self is contrary to his reign.

You must pray that the will of God may be done. But self hath a will that is contrary to God's will; and every carnal man would be a law-giver to himself, and unto others, and had rather have his own will done, than God's. Or else whence come all the sins of your lives,

which are nothing but the doing of your own wills, and the not doing the will of God?

You must pray each day for your daily bread, as children that live not on their own provision, but on their Father's love and bounty, and have their address to him for all they want, desiring but such supplies as are necessary or useful to them for his service. But self desireth more than daily bread, and desireth it not so much to strengthen you for God's service, as to delight and gratify the flesh; and had rather have its stock in its own possession, than daily to fetch it as you use it from God.

You must pray daily for the forgiveness of your sins, as people that are grieved for them, and weary of them, and hate them, and are sensible of the want and worth of pardon, and of the abundant grace of Christ that purchased it, and the preciousness of the Gospel-promises that convey it, and of your own unworthiness by reason of this sin. But self is not easily so far abased as to be heavy laden, and sick of sin; nor is it easily drawn to value grace, or feel how much you are unworthy of it, or need it; nor easily driven to renounce all sufficiency and conceits of a righteousness of your own, and wholly to go out of yourselves to Christ for life: self cannot spare sin; for it is its darling and play-fellow, its food, its recreation, and its life.

You must daily pray to be saved from temptation, and delivered from evil; even the evil of sin, as well as of punishment. But self doth love the sin, and therefore cannot long to be delivered from it, and therefore loveth the temptation that leadeth to it, and indeed is a continual tempter to itself. Would the covetous worldling be delivered from his worldliness? Would the ambitious proud person

be delivered from his pride or honours? or the sensual person from his sensual delights? No, they do not love the preacher or people that are against them in these ways; nor the holy self-denial that is contrary to them; nor the Scripture that condemneth them; nor indeed the Lord himself that forbids them, and is the author of all these laws and holy ways which they abhor. So that you see how self is an enemy to every petition in the Lord's Prayer.

3. And it is a violation of all the ten commandments, The first and second it is most directly against, and is the very thing forbidden in them: and all the rest it is against consequently, and is the virtual breach of them, as disposing and drawing the soul thereunto.

The two tables have two great commandments, which are the sum of the whole law, and all the other commandments are consequents or particulars from these. The sum of the first table is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" or above all. This is the first commandment: "Thou shalt have none other Gods before me;" which is put first as being the fundamental law, commanding subjection of self to the sovereign power of God, which necessarily goes before all actual obedience to particular precepts. But self is directly against this, and sets up man as a God to himself: and all the unsanctified love themselves better than God, and therefore cannot love him above all.

And therefore neither second, third, or fourth command can be sincerely kept by such; for when self is set up, and God denied, instead of the right worshipping of God, they are worshipping themselves, or suiting God's worship to the conceit and will of self. Instead of the reverent use of his name, they are setting up their own

names, and will venture on the grossest abuse of God's name, rather than self should suffer or be crossed. And instead of hallowing the Lord's Day, they devote both that and every day to themselves.

The sum of the second table is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and this is the meaning of the tenth commandment, which forbiddeth us to covet any thing from him to ourselves: that is, that we set not up self and its interest against our neighbour and his good; and be not like a bruised or inflamed part of the body, that draweth the blood or humours to itself, or like a wen or other tumor, that is sucking from the body for its own nutrition: so that it is but plainly this. "Be not selfish, or drawing, or desiring any thing to thyself, which is not thy due, but belongeth to another; but let love run by even proportions, between thy neighbour and thyself, in order to God and the public good." And this commandment brings up the rear, that it may summarily comprehend and gather up all other particulars that be not instanced in, in the foregoing commandments. Now selfishness being the very sin that is here forbidden, I need to say no more to tell you that self is the breaker of this law.

Next to this summary concluding precept, the greatest in the second table (if not one of the first) is the fifth commandment; which requireth the preservation of relations and societies, and the duties of those relations, especially of inferiors to superiors, for the honour of God and the common good. And this is set before the rest, because the public good is preferred to the personal good of any; and magistrates and superiors being God's officers, and for the public good, are to be preferred before the subjects. But what an enemy

selfishness is to this commandment, I intend anon to shew you distinctly, and therefore now pass it by.

And for the following commandments, who ever murdered another but out of some inordinate respect to himself, either to remove that other out of the way of his selfish ends, or to be revenged on him for depriving self of profit, or honour, or something that it would have had, or in some way or other to attain your own ends by another's blood?

And what is it but the satisfaction of your own filthy lusts, that causeth adultery and all uncleanness? And what is it but the furnishing and providing for self that provoketh any man to rob another? And what is it but some selfish end that causeth any man to pervert justice, or slander, or bear false witness against his neighbour? so that nothing is more plain than that selfishness is all sin and villany against God and man, comprised in one word.

And therefore you need not ask me, which commandment it is that doth forbid it; for it is forbidden in every one of the ten commandments. The first condemneth self as it is the idol set up, and loved, trusted, and served, before God: the second condemneth it as the enemy of his worship; and the third condemneth it as the profaner of his name; and the fourth as the profaner of his hallowed time. The second table in the tenth commandment condemneth self as it is the tumour and gulf that is contrary to the love of our neighbour, and would draw all to itself. The fifth commandment condemneth it as the enemy of authority and society: the sixth as the enemy to our neighbour's life; the seventh, eighth, and ninth,

condemn it as the enemy to our neighbour's chastity, estates, and cause or name.

So that if you see any mischief done in persons, families, towns, countries, courts, armies, or any where in the world, you need not send out hue and cry to find out and apprehend the actor: it is selfishness that is the author of all. If the poor be oppressed by the rich, and their lives made almost like the life of a labouring ox or horse, till the cry of the oppressed reach to heaven, who is it that doth all this but self? The landlords and rich men must rule and be served by them. I warrant you they would not do thus by themselves.

If the poor be discontented and murmur at their condition, and steal from others, who is it that is the cause of this but self? If another were in poverty, they would not murmur nor steal for him.

It is selfishness that blemishes judges, and justices and officers with the stains of partiality, avarice, and injustice: it is this that disturbeth the peace of nations; that will not let princes rule for God, and consequently overthrows their thrones; that will not let subjects obey them in the Lord, but lets in wars and miseries upon them; that sets the nations together by the ears, and so continueth them; yea, it is self that will not let neighbours live together in peace: that provoketh people to disobey their teachers, and teachers to be man-pleasers, and neglect the people; that will not let masters and servants, parents and children, husband and wife, live peaceably and lovingly one with another; it is the common make-bate and troubler of the world.

Nay, it is self that causeth most of the new opinions and practices in religion; that sets up Popery, and most other sects; and causeth the

pastors to contend for superiority to the troubling of the church, after all the plain prohibitions of Christ.

In a word, selfishness is the grand enemy of God, and man; the disease of depraved lapsed nature: the very heart of original sin and the old man; the root of all iniquity in the world: the breach of every commandment of the law; the enemy of every article of faith, and every petition in the Lord's prayer; and by that time we have added the rest of its deformity, you will see whether it be not the very image of the devil, as the love of God and our neighbour which is its contrary, is the image of God.

But now on the contrary side, self-denial complieth with all divine Revelations, and disposeth the soul to all holy requests, and to the observation of every command of God.

It humbly stoopeth to the mysteries of faith, which others proudly quarrel with in the dark. It makes a man say, 'O what am I that I should set my wit against the Lord, and make my reason the touchstone of his truth, and think to comprehend his judgments that are incomprehensible!' It causeth a man to sit as a little child, at the feet of Christ to learn his will, and say, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." It silenceth the carpings of an unsatisfied understanding, and limiteth the inquiries of a busy, prying, presumptuous wit; and subdueth the contradictions of flesh and blood: it casteth off that pride and self-conceitedness that hindereth others from believing.

In prayer it bringeth an empty soul, that is not stopped up against the grace and blessings of God; it layeth us low in a receiving posture: it emptieth us of ourselves, that we may be filled with God: it hath nothing to say against any one of those requests which Christ

hath put into our mouths, but subscribeth to them all. It is the highest ambition, the greatest desire of a self-denying soul, that God's name may be hallowed and honoured; whatever become of his own name or honour; and that the kingdom of God may flourish, in which he desireth to be a subject; and that the will of God may be done, and the will of himself and all the world conformed and subjected to it: and so of the rest of the petitions. Self-denial is half the life of prayer.

And it is a dutiful observer of all the commandments. It giveth up our love to God as his own, and consequently worshippeth him in love, and reverenceth his name, and observeth his time, and indeed is wholly devoted to him. And it giveth our neighbour that part of our love which belongeth to him; and therefore will not dishonour superiors, or encroach upon the possessions of others, or injure them for his own ends.

And indeed what should draw a self-denying man to sin, (were he but perfect in self-denial) when the poise is taken off, the wheels all stand still. Self-denial doth frustrate temptations, and leave them little to work upon. What should move a self-denying man to be proud, or covetous, or injurious to others? No man doth evil, but as it seemeth good, and for some good that he imagineth it will do him: and this seeming good is to carnal self: and therefore a self-denying man hath taken off the bias of sin, and turned out the deceiver, and when satan comes, he hath little in him to make advantage of. O how easily may you take sin out of the hands of the self-denying, and make them cast it away with lamentation, when other men will hold it as fast as their lives! O try this speedy way of mortification. Would you but destroy this original breeding sin, you would destroy all. All

the sins of your lives are the fruits of your selfishness; kill them at the heart and root, if you would go the nearest way to work. What abundance of sin doth self-denial kill at once? Indeed it is the sum of mortification. And therefore be sure that you deny yourselves.

CHAPTER LXV

Contrary to the State of Holiness and Happiness

3. MOREOVER, selfishness is contrary to the state of holiness and happiness; contrary to every grace, and contrary to the life of glory. For it is the use of all grace to recover the soul from selfishness to God; that God may be loved, and self-love may be overcome; that God may be trusted, and pleased, and his service may be our care and business, when before our care was to please ourselves.

And the very felicity of the soul consisteth in a closing and communion with God. The soul that will be happy, must be conscious of self-insufficiency, and must go out of itself, and seek after life in God; it must forsake itself, and apply itself to him. Men lose their labour till they deny themselves, by going to a broken, empty cistern, and forsaking the fountain of the living waters. The nearer men are to God, and the more fully they are conformed to him, and close with him, and know him, and love him, the happier they are. Glory itself is but the nearest and fullest intuition and fruition of God. And he that hath most of him here in his soul, and in the creatures, providences, and ordinances, is the happiest man on earth, and likeliest to the glorified. And there is no approach to God but by departing from carnal self. I know self-seeking men do think of finding most peace and comfort in that way; but they are always

deceived of their hopes: it is self-denial that is the way to peace and comfort. While we rest on ourselves, or are taken up with anxious caring for ourselves, we are but tossed up and down as on a tempestuous sea; and are seeking rest but never find it: but when we retire from ourselves to God, we are presently at the harbour, and find that peace which before we sought in vain. I confess, in the too little experience that I have myself of the way of peace and quiet to the soul, I must needs say, there is none but this. Never can I step out, but self meets with somewhat that is vexatious and displeasing to it: this business goes cross, and that business is troublesome: this person is troublesome, and that person is abusive and injurious: one is false and treacherous, or slanderous; and another is imprudent and weak, and burdensome: what between the baits of prosperity, and the troubles of affliction, the perverseness of adversaries, and the weakness of friends, and the changes that all states and persons are liable to; the multitudes that would be pleased, and the labour and the cost that it will stand us in to please them, and the multitudes that will be displeased when we have done our best; and the murmurings, reproaches, and false accusations that we shall be sure of from the displeased; and which is the worst of all, the burdensome weaknesses and corruptions of our own souls, and the sins of our lives, and the daily vexation that our dark and shattered condition doth occasion to ourselves; I say, between all these disquieting perplexities, enough to rack and tear in pieces the heart of man, I have no way but to shut up the eyes of sense, and forget all self-interest, and withdraw from the creature, as if there were no self or creature for it in the world, and to retire into God, and satisfy my soul with his goodness and all-sufficiency, and faithfulness, and immutability. And in him is nothing to disquiet or discontent, unless

you will call his enmity to our own diseases and unhappiness a discontenting thing. And this is not my own experience alone, but all that know what Christian peace and comfort is, do know that they lose it, and are torn in pieces while they are caring and contriving for themselves; and that retiring into God, and casting all their care on him, and satisfying themselves with him alone, though all the creatures should turn against them, is the way to their content and quietness of mind. The example of David is exceedingly observable; 1 Sam. 30:6. When besides the distressed estate that he was before in, the city where he left his family and the families of his followers, was taken and burnt down, and their wives and children carried away, and all gone, so that David and the people that were with him, "lift up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep;" and to make up his calamity, the soldiers that were with him talked of stoning him because of the loss of their wives and children; in this desolate condition, saith the text, "But David encouraged (or comforted) himself in the Lord his God." And it is good for us sometime to have nothing in this world left us that will afford us comfort, that we may be driven to God for it: until the house be as on fire over our heads, and we are as it were fired out of every room of it, we will hardly be gone, and partake ourselves to God our only rest. Try it, Christians, when you will, and you shall find it true, that selfish contents do but tice you to straggle away from your true comfort; and when you have done all, it is in returning unto God that you must find the comfort which you lost by seeking it abroad. It is only in the God of peace that your souls will find peace, and therefore away from self and creatures, and retire into God.

CHAPTER LXVI

Self-seeking is Self-losing: Self-denying our Safety

4. MOREOVER, consider that self-seeking is self-destroying, and self-denial is the only way to our safety. We were well when we were in the hands of God, and had no need to care for ourselves. But we were lost as soon as we left him and turned to ourselves. If God care for you, Infinite Wisdom cares for you; whom no enemy is able to overwit or circumvent; who can foresee all your dangers, and is acquainted with all the ways of your enemies, and with all that is necessary to your preservation. But if you be at your own care, you are at the care of fools, and shortwitted people, that are not acquainted with the depths of satan, the subtleties of men, nor the way of your escape, but may easily be over-reached to your undoing. If you are in your own hands, you are in the hands of bad men, that though they have self-love, yet are so blinded by impiety that they will live like self-haters; and this experience fully manifesteth, in that all sinners are self-destroyers: no enemy could do so much against us as the best of us doth against himself: did a man hate himself as bad as the devil hateth him he could shew it by no worse a way than sin; nor do himself a greater mischief than by neglecting God, and the life to come, and undoing his own soul, as the ungodly do. Should you sit down of purpose, to study how to do all the hurt to yourselves that you can and to play the part of your deadliest enemies, I know not what you could do more than is ordinary with ungodly men to do, except to go a little further in the same way. Nothing but sin could alienate you from God, or make you liable to his heavy wrath; and this no man else could make you guilty of, if you did not voluntarily choose to be evil. If you could ask any man that is this day in hell, or that will ever be there, what brought him thither, and who it was long of that he came to such a miserable end, he must needs tell you it was

himself. If you come to any in earthly misery, and ask them, who brought this upon them? If they speak truly they must say, it was themselves. And this will be a great aggravation of their misery, and the fuel that will feed the unquenchable fire, to think that all this was their own doing, and that they had not been deprived of the heavenly glory but for their own refusal or neglect. It will fill the soul with an everlasting indignation against itself, to consider that it hath cast itself wilfully into such misery! that, when satan could not, and men could not, and God would not, if he had not done it himself, he should be so witless and graceless as to be the chooser of sin, the refuser of holiness, and his own undoer. So that the experience of all the world telleth you, how unsafe man is in his own hands; the experiences of those in hell may tell us, whither it is that self would lead us, if we follow its conduct. Whither did self lead Adam when he hearkened to it, but to sin and death? What work hath it made over all the earth! Do we not see a whole world of people, not one excepted, wounded, and slain; and brought into so low and sad a state, and all this by themselves! and yet shall we go on in selfishness still? Of all the enemies you have in the world, pray God to save you from yourselves; escape yourselves and you escape all. You will never miscarry by any other hands. The devil and wicked men will do their worst; but without you they can do nothing. Never will you come to hell if you run not yourselves this their: never will you be shut out of heaven if you run not from it by your own neglect, and prefer not the prosperity of the world before it. And therefore you see that we are nowhere more unsafe than in our own hands. God's will is good, and would make a good choice for us; but our wills are bad, and will make a bad choice for themselves. God is unchangeable, and the same for ever; but we are giddy and uncertain, and if we are in a

good mind to day, are in danger of being in a bad to-morrow. God is able to secure us against all the subtlety, and rage, and power of earth or hell; but we are silly, impotent worms, and unable to defend ourselves, or to accomplish our own desires. So that our safety consisteth in forsaking ourselves and cleaving to the Lord. The more of your happiness lieth on your own hands, the greater is your danger; and the more of it is on the hands of God, the greater is your safety. Fly therefore from yourselves to God, as you would fly out of a torn or sinking vessel into the strongest ship; or as you would haste away from a tottering house that is ready to fall upon your heads: so haste away from self to God. Study his love, and fall in love with him; and that will be more gainful to you, than studying and carnally loving yourselves. Forget yourselves, and remember him; and he will remember you to your greater advantage than if you had remembered yourselves. When any interest of your own, riseth up against the interest or will of God, care not then for yourselves or for your own; set as light by it as if it were nothing worth; and say as the three witnesses of God in Dan. 3:16, 17. when they were ready to be cast into a flaming furnace, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter: if it be so, the God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O King: but if not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Care you for your duty, and God will care for your safety better than you can do: you are safer under God's care, in the midst of a flaming fire, than under your own care in the greatest prosperity, or honour in the world. While Abraham and Isaac depended upon God, they were safe, though in the midst of dangers: but when they fell upon carnal shifting for themselves, to say their wives were their sisters, they

brought themselves but into a snare and double danger; when you have cared, and contrived, and shifted for yourselves as long as you can, it is God that must do the deed, and defend and deliver you, and provide for you when all is done. Is it wise, or safe, or profitable for your child to be casting for provision of meat, and drink, and clothes for itself? Cannot you do it better? and is it not your work? and had you not rather your child would trust you with it, and meddle with his own business, and be careful to please you, and then to depend on your care and love? What good will it do a simple patient, to know the ingredients of every medicine compunded for him, and given by his physician? or to acquainted with his physic himself, that so he may be tampering with his own body, and have the doing of the business himself, till by his unskilfulness he hath undone himself, when he had a wise and faithful physician that he might have trusted to! O that men knew how ready a way it is to their undoing, when they must be satisfied of all the reasons of the ways of God! and when they must have their own wills and ways, and must see a ground of safety in the creature! and must take that course that self tells them is the best! when they are resolved to look to their estates, and honours, and lives, and dare not cast them on the wisdom, and care, and will of God! O that men knew how sure and near a way it is to their felicity, to be contented to be nothing, that God may be all; and then they would be more in God than they could have been in themselves: and to be contented to die, that they may live in God; and to lose their lives, that they may find them in him. Let go your reputation with men, and you will find it made up a thousandfold in the approbation of God. Let men condemn you, so that God may but justify you! Let riches go, and see whether you will not find more in God, than you could possibly lose for him. Can any man be a loser by

God? or can he make an ill bargain that makes sure of heaven? Do you think there is any want of riches or honour there? O sirs, win God and win all: win heaven and never fear being losers. It seems a great loss to flesh and blood to lay down your estates, and honour, and life, for Christ, and the hopes of a life to come; but it is because the flesh is blind, and cannot see so far off as everlasting is. The loss is not so great as to exchange your brass, your dirt, for gold and jewels; or to exchange your sickness for health. It is the most profitable usury to make God your debtor, by putting all your stock into his hand, and venturing all on his service upon the confidence of his promise.

But if you will go about to shift for yourselves, you will lose yourselves: and if you will save yourselves, you will undo yourselves; and if you keep your riches or honours, you do but cast them away: for all is lost that is saved from God; and that is best saved that is lost for God.

CHAPTER LXVII

Selfishness the powerful Enemy of all Ordinances

5. MOREOVER, it is self that is the most powerful resister of all the ordinances of God; and it is self-denial that boweth the soul to that holy compliance with them, which wonderfully furthereth their success.

Were it not for this one prevailing enemy, what work would the Gospel make in the world! O with what confidence should we come into the pulpit, and speak the word of God to our hearers, had we any

to deal with but this carnal self! God can overcome it by his victorious grace; but it is so blind, so wilful, so near men, and so constant with them, that it will overcome us, and all that we can say or do, till God set in. When I come to convince a sinner of his guilt, and shew him the heinous nature of his sin, because it is his own, he will not be convinced of it: when I tell them of their misery, they will not be convinced of it, because it is their own. Were I to speak all this to another, and tell another of his sin and misery, I might have these men consent, so it reflected not upon themselves. Were I to wring the unlawful gains out of the hands of another, I might have their consent: or were I to persuade another from his pride, or lust, or passion, they would give me free leave, because it is not self that is concerned in it, nor self-denial that is necessary to it in them. But when we come to themselves, there is no dealing with them, till God by grace or judgment deal with them. They cannot endure to know the worst by themselves; much less to come out of it. If we tell them of their sin and danger, they say, we speak against them! And therefore they say, It is out of malice, or humour, or pride. And as well might all diseased persons say so of their physicians, that when they tell them of their disease and danger, they speak against them, and speak out of malice or ill-will. It is natural for men to think well of all them that they love, and of all that they do; and whom do they love better than themselves? Pride will not let men think so meanly and hardly of themselves as the Scripture speaks of them, and ministers must plainly tell them. The prophet wept that foresaw the cruelty of Hazael; but he had so good a conceit of himself that he would not believe he should be so cruel: "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do thus?" 2 Kings 8:13. The false prophet, Zedekiah, could not forbear, but struck Micaiah, when he made it known that he was a

lying prophet; 1 Kings 22:24. And Ahab hated him, "because he prophesied not good of him, but evil." It was all the proud men that rose up against Jeremiah, and contradicted his prophecy, and rejected his word; Jer. 43:2. The word of God is quick and powerful, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; and it is the plain word of that God, that feareth not the faces of the proudest sinners on earth, and will not flatter, nor daub with any of them all, but will tell them to their faces what they are, and what will become of them if they do not turn, and what they must trust to. This is the word that God hath put into our mouths, and commanded us to preach to them; not the flattering words of an inferior, nor the tender language of a man-pleaser, but the commanding words of the God of heaven, and the peremptory threatnings of everlasting fire, against all unconverted, unsanctified men, denounced from him that feareth none of them all, but will make them all stoop at last to him, and fear, and tremble before his Majesty. And is it any wonder if proud and selfish sinners are displeased with such a word as this? They stand all the while they are hearing a plain and powerful preacher, as prisoners arraigned at the bar; and sometimes are ready to tremble as Felix did, when he heard Paul dilating of righteousness, and temperance and the judgment to come; Acts 24:25. And can self endure to be thus used and arraigned for its life? especially when they think it is but by a man? For they have not the understanding to know that it is Christ that owneth all that his messengers speak by his commission. Hence it is that men hate those ministers that they feel thus to judge them in their doctrine, and take them for their enemies for telling them the truth; Gal. 4:16. and think they are but the troublers of the country, as Ahah called Elijah the troubler of Israel, which he had troubled himself; 1 Kings 18:17.: and meet them

as he did the same prophet. "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" 1 Kings 21:20. They meet not a minister as the messenger of God that calls them to repentance, but as an enemy in the field, to strive against him, and raise up all the reasonings and passions of their souls against him, because he condemneth their unregenerate state, tells them but what God hath charged him to tell them; when the poor sinners consider not, that before God hath done with them, as sure as they breathe, he will make them either by grace or judgment, condemn themselves as much as any of his ministers condemned them (from the word of God), at whom they were most offended. Ah! little do these proud worms, that rage at us now for faithful dealing, and for telling them that which they will shortly find true, little do they think that they shall shortly say the very same against themselves, which they hated us for saying: nay, with a hundred times more bitterness and self-revenge will they speak these things against themselves, than ever we spoke them. Hence it is that faithful plain-dealing ministers are commonly hated and persecuted by the ungodly, especially by the great ones and honourable sinners. For their message is against self, and therefore self will rise up against them, and so many selfish unmortified persons as there be in the congregation, so many enemies usually hath such a minister. And therefore the lords of Israel petition the king that Jeremy may be put to death; Jer. 38:4. And Amaziah, the priest, calls Amos a conspirator against the king, and tells the king that the land was not able to bear his words, and commands him to preach no more at the king's CHAPTERl or his court; Amos 7:10–13. And what was the matter that deserved all this, yea, and the death of almost all the prophets and apostles of Christ? Why, it was for speaking against self and its carnal interest; but was it not a truth that was spoken? True

or false, if it be against self, it cannot be borne! As the bishop of Ments that Luther speaks of, meeting with a Bible, and reading an hour in it, 'I know not,' saith he, 'what book this is, but I am sure it is against us:' meaning the Popish clergy. So these men say by our preaching and by the word of God itself, 'Be it never so true, we are sure it is against us:' or, rather, we will not believe it, because it is against us.' But if these men had their wits about them, they would see that this is for them, which they think is against them. It is for their healing and salvation, had they hearts to entertain it, though it be for the troubling of them at the present by humiliation. O how tender are carnal persons of this self! How quickly do they feel, if a minister do but touch them! How impatiently do they smart, if he meddle with the galled place, and plainly open their most disgraceful sins, and most dangerous courses, as one that had rather be guilty of displeasing them, than of silently permitting them to displease God, and undo their souls! They fret and fume at the sermon, and go home with passion in their hearts and reproaches in their mouths against the minister: and are of the mind of the desperate Sodomites, that said to Lot when he exhorted them, "Stand back: this one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee than with them; Gen. 19:9. What, say they, 'can he not preach and let me alone? hath he none to rebuke before the congregation but me!' And thus will every ungodly person reject the word as they are selfish, and self must be let alone in all. But why must you be let alone? will you be ever the safer or better for that? will God let you alone if we should let you alone? No, he will not be frightened from dealing with you as you are; whatever his word hath said against you, he will certainly make good, though you should never more be told of it by ministers. You have not silenced your

Judge, when you have silenced his messengers. He will handle you in another manner than ministers do. O how easy is it to hear a preacher threatening the everlasting wrath, in comparison of hearing the sentence of the Judge and feeling the execution! If we should yield to your desires, and let you alone, God would neither let you nor us alone; you would but go the more quietly to hell; and your blood will be required also at our hands; Ezek. 33:6–9. and then what would become both of us and you?

O were it not for the powerful resistance of this selfishness, what work would every sermon make that we preach to you! O what abundance would be converted at a sermon! for what should hinder it? I should make no doubt of persuading you all to close with the Lord upon his reasonable terms, and to become a holy and heavenly people, and presently to forsake your former sin, even this hour. Nay, some ordinances there are that selfishness hath almost shut out of the church; as most of the exercise of the ancient discipline, in open and personal admonitions, and public confessions and lamentation of sin, with rejection of the impenitent, and the absolution of the penitent; besides most of that private address to pastors for their advice in case of falls, and spiritual decays, or weaknesses, and difficulties that meet them in doctrine or duty. Self will not suffer men to stoop to most of these! What, will they be brought to open confessions and lamentations of sin, and to follow the guidance and persuasions of a priest? No, all the priests in England shall not make such fools of them; so wise are these selfish men for a little while! But how long will this hold! and how long will madness go for wisdom! when they are dying, then they will send for the minister and confess; and when some of them come to the gallows, they will confess: and every one of them shall confess at last whether they will

or no; and God will indite their confession for them, and open their shame to all the world in another manner than ministers required them to open it: but then confession will do nothing for remission, and the preventing of execution, as now it might have done.

So also the duty of brotherly reproof and admonition of offenders, is almost quite cast out by selfishness; and especially, the patient and thankful receiving of it. And those ordinances that are continued, are very much frustrated by the opposition of selfishness. It is a very hard task that Scripture and good books, and preachers have to do; when we speak every word to enemies of the doctrine which we preach, and we can do them no good but by their own consent; and who will consent to that which he is an enemy to? Our work is to subdue their flesh and carnal wills to Christ; and this flesh is so dear to them that it is themselves; so that they take all that doctrine to be against them which should save them: and we have as many enemies as unconverted hearers in our assembly; no wonder, therefore, if they carp and quarrel, and strive, when the self-denying humbly submit and obey.

Self-denial openeth the heart to Christ, and giveth the ordinances leave to work; it taketh down all opposition and contradiction; so that though the soul may stay to search the Scripture, and see whether the things that are taught be so, yet it 'searcheth with a childlike teachableness, and willingness to learn, and know and obey. It hath no mind to quarrel with God; how easily will a self-denying man submit to those duties which another man abhors? How easily will he be persuaded to forgive a wrong, to part with his right for a greater good to others, to let go a gainful trade that is unlawful, or any sinful way of thriving: how easily is he brought to ask forgiveness

of those that he hath wronged, to make a public confession of his sins, if the greatness of them, or his duty to God, or the good of others, do require it; to make restitution of all that he hath gotten wrongfully; to bear a plain and sharp reproof; to part with his own for the relief of the poor; to lay out his estate to the best advantage of the cause and church of God, and the common good; to let go any unlawful vanity; any excess in meat, or drink, or sport, or sleep, or any vanity in apparel, or other work of pride: how easily can he bear rebukes, reproaches, and neglects, and undervaluing or ingratitude from others! But what ado shall we have with carnal, unsanctified wretches, to persuade them to all, or any of this? From them a preacher hath such a work to pull their beloved profitable sins (they seem profitable to them till the reckoning comes) as a man hath to pull the prey from the jaws of a hungry wolf, or meat from the mouth of a greedy dog; but when we require the self-denying to do the same thing, it is but as to bid a child obey his Father whom he loveth and honoureth. The doing of these duties, and forsaking these sins, is to an ungodly man as the parting with a right hand, or a right eye, or the skin from his back, or the flesh from his bones; as we see by the rarity, and the unsuccessfulness of the plainest reasons, and great authority of God himself, and the few works of piety, charity, or self-denial that are done by such at any great cost. But to the self-denying, it is but as the casting away a handful of earth, or casting off an upper garment, for the doing of their work.

CHAPTER LXVIII

Enemy of all Society, Relations, and common Good

6. MOREOVER, this selfishness is the enemy to all societies, and relations, and consequently to the common good. And it is not only indirectly and consequentially, but directly that it strikes at the very foundation of all. For the manifesting of this, consider in what respects this selfishness is at enmity with societies.

1. The end of societies is essential to them; and this end is the common good of the society; and therefore a republic hath its name from hence, because it is constituted and to be administered for the commonwealth, or the good of all. Now selfishness is contrary to this common good which is the end of all societies. Every selfish person is his own end; and cares not to hinder the common good, if he do but think it will promote his own. And how is that family, church, or commonwealth like to prosper, where most (alas, most indeed) have an end of their own, that is set up against the end and being of the society? For though the real good of particular persons is usually comprehended in the common good, yet that is but in subserviency to the public good, and is not observed usually by these persons; who principally look at themselves. And it commonly falls out that the public welfare cannot be obtained but by such self-denial of the members, which these men will not submit to; though they incur a greater hurt by their selfishness. Little do that think of the common good; it is their own matters that they regard and mind. So it go well with them, let the church and commonwealth do what it will; they can bear any one's trouble or losses save their own. They are every man as a church, as a commonwealth, as a world to themselves. If they be well, all is well with them; if they prosper, they think it is a good world, whatever others undergo. If they be poor, or sick, or under any other suffering, it is all one to them as if calamity had covered the earth; and if they see that they must die, they take it as if

it were the dissolution of the world, (unless as they leave either name or posterity behind them, in which a shadow of them may survive), and therefore they use to say, 'When I am gone, all the world is gone with me.'

2. Moreover, selfishness is contrary to that disposition and spirit that every member of a society should be possessed with. The public good will not be attained without a public spirit, to which a private spirit is contrary. Men must be disposed to the work that they must be employed in. The work of every member of a society, is such as Mordecai is approved for: "Seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed;" Esth. 10:3. Every true member of the church must have such a spirit as Nehemiah, that in the midst of his own prosperity and honours is cast down in fasting, tears, and prayers, when he heareth of the affliction, reproach, and ruins of Jerusalem, and saith, "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city the place of my fathers' sepulchres lieth waste?" Neh. 1:3. 2:3, 4. And as the captivated Jews; (Psal. 137) that lay by all their mirth and music, and sit down and weep at the remembrance of Zion. A private, selfish disposition is quite contrary to this; and is busy about his own matters, and principally looketh to his own ends and interests, whatever come of the church; and falls under the reproof that Baruch had from God: "Behold that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land; and seeketh thou great things for thyself? seek them not;" Jer. 45:4, 5. This private disposition makes men so foolish as to lose themselves, by seeking themselves; looking to their own goods or cabins when the ship is sinking in which they are; and to their own rooms, when the house is all on fire. But a public spirit saith, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I

do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy;" Psal. 137:5, 6. His love is to the church as the spouse of Christ, and as to the body of which he is himself a member, and his prayers and endeavours are for its prosperity and peace. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee: peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces: for my brethren and companions' sake, I will now say, peace be within thee: because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good;" Psal. 122:6–9. The body of Christ, is all animated by one spirit, that it might aim at one end; and it is so tempered by God, that there should be no schism in it, but that the "members should have the same care one for another, that if one member suffer, all the members should suffer with it; or if one member be honoured, all should rejoice with it;" 1 Cor. 12:13, 24–27. There is no serving public ends with a private selfish spirit.

3. Moreover, selfishness is an enemy to the laws of societies, whether it be the laws of God or man. For it would have them all bended to their private interest, and fitted to their selfish disposition. And therefore for the immutable laws of God, which they cannot change, they corrupt them by misinterpretations, expounding them according to the dictates of the flesh, and putting such a sense on all, as self can bear with. And what they cannot misinterpret, they murmur at and disobey. And for the laws of men, where selfish persons are the makers of them, you shall perceive by the warping of them, who they were made for. Hence it is that princes and parliaments have looked at the laws, and church, and ministers of Christ, with an eye of jealousy as if they had been some enemies that they stood in danger of, and all for fear lest the personal, selfish, fleshly interest of noblemen, and gentlemen, and others, should be

encroached upon by the laws and government of Christ. And hence it is that so many endeavours and hopes of a reformation have been so long frustrated, and even among wise and pious law-makers there hath been so much pains to keep ministers from doing their duty in governing the churches, and laying such restrictions on them, that pastors might be no pastors, that is, no guides and overseers of the church in the worship of God. And when good laws are made, they have as many enemies as selfish men. If the law were not hated, the execution of it would not be hated so much.

4. Also selfishness in an enemy to the very being of magistracy, and to all public officers, and their works; for the very end of the magistracy is the public benefit, as I said before of the end of the commonwealth; and therefore this selfishness is contrary to his end; and such men will not value a magistrate as a public officer, but only as one that is able to help them, or to hurt them; which is but to fear him as a potent enemy, and not to love or honour him as a ruler. They look at magistrates as tyrants that are too strong for them; and as a cur will crouch to a mastiff dog, so they will crouch to them to save themselves; and this is their love, and honour, and obedience; (even such as Hobbs hath taught them in his Leviathan.) But they do not reverence that beam of divinity which God hath communicated to them in their authority; nor love their governors as the fathers of the church and commonwealth, for the common good and the honour of God, which they are appointed to promote.

5. And this selfishness is the deadly enemy of all right administrations of justice, and the due exercise of authority in church or commonwealth. If a minister be selfish, he will be shifting off the troublesome part of his duty, and will overrule his

understanding to believe that it is no duty, because disbelieving is easier than obeying. He will be forward in those duties that are necessary to his maintenance and applause, and are imposed on him by the laws of men, but out of the pulpit it is little that he will do: as if it were the pulpit only that were God's vineyard where he is set to labour. Flesh and blood shall be consulted, and men shall be pleased, and all that the interest of self may be maintained.

And if the people be selfish, they will rebel against their most faithful guides, and kick against their doctrine and reproofs, and fly from discipline, which seems to their distempered minds to be against them. Let but one most notorious, lamentable instance suffice. The greater part of our parishioners in most places of the land are lamentably ignorant and careless in the matters of their salvation, and all that we can do is too little to bring them to understand the matters of absolute necessity: and yet almost all of them are so much wiser in their own conceits than the ablest of their teachers, that if we do not humour them, and be not ruled by them in our doctrine and administrations, about sacraments, prayers, burial, and the rest, yea, if we obey them not in gestures and forms, they turn their backs upon officers, and ordinances, and the church itself, and pour out their reproach upon their teachers, as if we were ignorant in comparison of them (even of them that know not so much as children of seven or eight years old should know). See here the wonderful bewitched power of a selfish disposition.

And in matters of the commonwealth, what is it more than this? nay, what is it besides this, that maketh princes become tyrants, and rulers keep under the ordinances and interest of Christ, or fearfully neglect them, and look after the church in the last place, when they

have no business of their own to call them off, and to begin to build God's house when they have first built their own? Not imitating Nehemiah's labourers, that had the sword in one hand, and the trowel in the other, and builded in their arms. What else makes them give God but their leavings, who giveth them all? And what else could make them such enemies to truth, as to side with those parties, whatever they be, that side most with them, and promote their interest?

And, alas, what work doth selfishness made with inferior magistrates? It is this only that opens the hand to a reward, and the ear to the solicitations of their friends; and it is this that perverteth the judgment, and this that oppresseth the poor and innocent, and this that tieth the tongues and hands of justices, so that abundance of them do little more than possess the room, and stand like an armed statue or a sign-post, which hurteth none; alehouses do what they list for them, and drunkards and swearers are bold at their noses, and they are no terror to evil doers, nor revengers to execute wrath upon them, nor ministers that use their power for much good, but bear the sword almost in vain, contrary to the very nature of their office; Rom. 13:1–4.

And it is selfishness in the people that causeth the trouble of faithful magistrates: every man would do what he lists. The worst offender abhors him that would punish him: and those that will commend justice, and cry down vice in the general, yet when they fall under justice themselves, they take all that they suffer to be injury, and will do all that they can against justice, and the officers of it, when it is to defend themselves, or theirs, from the execution of it: so rare a thing

is it to meet with a man that is a friend to laws and justice, when themselves must suffer by it.

6. Selfishness also makes men withdraw from all those necessary burdens and duties that are for the preservation of church or commonwealth. Such wretches had rather the Gospel were thrust out of doors than it should cost them much: and had rather have the unworthiest man that would be their teacher for a little, than allow the best that maintenance that the Gospel doth command, or give them what the law hath made their own. They would venture the ruin of church and state, and let all fall into the hands of the common enemies, rather than hazard their persons, or lay out their estates for the common preservation. So that if the hand of violence did not sometimes squeeze these spunges, and force these leeches to disgorge themselves, they would but impoverish the commonwealth by their riches, and weaken the body, like wens or imposthumes, by drawing to themselves.

7. And then the selfish are such causes of division, that if they did no other harm, they would break both church and state into pieces, if their humour were predominant, and not restrained or purged out. And in this regard selfishness is the direct enemy of societies, and is always at work to dissolve them into independent individuals. A society is a political body which must have but one head, and one interest, and one end; but when selfishness prevaileth, there are as many heads, and ends, and interests as persons. If they be in a church, every one is the teacher and ruler; and every one must have his opinion countenanced, and his humour satisfied; every one must have his way and will: and how is this possible, when their minds are so various and contrary to one another; and their interests so

inconsistent, and there are as many rulers as persons? When every man is drawing to himself, and there is no centre in which they can unite, what work is there like to be in the church! What progress could be made in the building of Babel, when no man was ruled by another, but every man ran confusedly after his single imagination? What an army will it be, and how are they like to speed in fight, where every soldier is instead of a captain and general to himself, and one runs this way, and another that way, and one will have one course taken, and another another course, and every one fighteth on his own head? Such work doth selfishness make in the church; it is this that hath broken it into so many parcels, and would crumble it all to dust if it should prevail.

And it is this also that causeth the divisions of the commonwealth; faction rising up against faction, and prince and people living in jealousies of each other, as having contradictory interests; which would not be, if the pleasing of God, and the common good were the principal end and interest of them all, and selfishness did not prevail.

And this is it that keepeth Christian princes in most ungodly wars, to the shedding of Christian blood, and the weakening of the common interest, and the strengthening of the common enemy, whom they should all join together to resist.

This also keepeth up so many parties on religious pretences to seek the undermining and ruin of each other, when they should all join together against the common profaneness of the world; and all their conjunct endeavours would be too little. Thus selfishness is the grand enemy that by divisions and subdivisions is still at work for the dissolution and ruin of church and state, and the confusion of the

world, and the disturbance and destruction of order and government.

8. Yea, selfishness makes men false and treacherous, so that they are not to be trusted, and are unmeet materials for any society. For whatever they promise, pretend, or seem, they are all for themselves, and will be no further true and faithful to the society, or any member of it, than suiteth with their own ends. Never trust a selfish person, if it be your own brother, further than you can accommodate and please him, and so oblige him to you upon his own account. It is the complication of interests, that makes husband and wife so much agree and love each other; because that which one hath, the other hath: but if their interests fall out to be any whit divided, it is two to one but selfishness will divide their affections. One would think that the bond of nature should be so strong to constrain a son to love his father, that nothing could dissolve it; and yet sad experience telleth us that even here, it is an unity of interest that doth more with many children than either nature or grace: and that when they have no more dependance upon their parents for their commodity, their affections and respects are gone; and if they shall gain much by their death, they can bear it without much sorrow, if not desire it. So potent is selfishness, that it makes not men unfaithful only to their friends, and treacherous to their governors, and false to all they have to do with, but also unnatural to their nearest relations.

And therefore (next to true piety, which leads up all to an unity in God, and therefore is the most perfect polity,) the chief point of human polity, for the preservation of commonwealths, and all societies, is, a complication of interest: when the constitution makes the governor and the governed as husband and wife, that have

nothing dividedly as their own, but all in common, and take each other for better or worse, and know they must stand or fall together, and that the good or hurt of one, is the good or hurt of both, and that there is no manner of hope that either of them should thrive by the ruin of the other. If politicians had the skill and will to make such an union of interests between the sovereign and the subject, and to make it visible that all might understand it, their republics would be immortal, till either the wrath of a neglected God, or the power of a foreign enemy should dissolve them: for nothing else but self could do it; and self will not do it when it sees its own interest lie in the preservation of the present state.

CHAPTER LXIX

Corrupteth and debaseth all that it disposeth of

7. ANOTHER aggravation of the evil of selfishness is, that it corrupteth and debaseth every thing that it disposeth of. And on the contrary, it is the excellency of self-denial (as joined with the love of God) that it rectifieth and ennobleth all your actions.

Let the work be ever so holy in its nature, yet if you do it but for yourselves, you make but a profane employment of it; and to you it is not holy. A selfish, carnal person is serving himself even in preaching; and hearing, and praying, and sacraments, and other acts of worship and church-communion; much more in the common business of his life. Even when he thinks he is serving God, he is but serving himself of God, and provoking God by his abuse; when he thinks he is very holy because of his services, he is doubly unholy, in that he even profaneth holy things. And as it is not God indeed that

he serveth, so from God he must not expect a reward. And as far as a man's self and flesh is below the blessed God, so far, in a sort, is the work of selfish men debased, in comparison of those works of the saints that are performed purely for God. They make but a low, unprofitable drudgery of that which in the hands of others is the highest and noblest work on earth. For the action can be no better than the end; and therefore is base as it is base.

But on the other side, self-denial makes noble the actions that in themselves seem base. If you are gone out of yourselves, and can truly say, that it is God you serve and seek in your employments, you may be sure that God will take them for his service, and set them on your account among the works that he hath promised to reward (supposing that the matter be such as he alloweth of, and that you think not by good intentions to turn sin into holiness, and make him a service of that which he forbiddeth): O what an honour, what an encouragement, what a comfort is this, to every Christian! The actions of a prince or conqueror are base; if self be their end, and the respect to God do not ennoble them. And the work of the poorest person is honourable that is done for God. It is a great temptation to some poor Christians to grudge at their condition, because they are so unserviceable to God. Alas, thinks a poor tradesman, or ploughman, or servant, What do I but drudge in the world! I have neither parts nor place to do God service with! But such do very much mistake the matter. It is not the parts and place, but the hearty performance of your works for God that makes them such as he will take for service. O, thinks a poor woman, or toiling servant, I can do nothing either for the conversion of souls, or the good of church or commonwealth, but am made unserviceable. But do you not know that any thing is acceptable service which God commandeth, and is

heartily intended to his honour and his pleasure: it is not the metal, but the stamp of the prince, that makes a piece to be current money. If the king's stamp were put by his appointment on a piece of brass or copper, it would pass for coin. Believe it sirs, if your study be to please the Lord in your callings, and you can but get above yourselves, and do the basest servile works, as commanded you by God, that you may be accepted by him, and offer yourselves and all your labours purely to him, and to his honour, and his will, God will take these for honourable services; and you are as truly at his work, even in your shops and fields, as princes are in ruling, or pastors in teaching or guiding the flock: you that are poor, and cannot set so much time apart for reading and other holy duties as some others do, see that you neglect no holy opportunity that you can take, and then consider, that if God set you to do him service even by washing dishes, or sweeping channels, or the meanest drudgery, he will accept it; and the more, by how much the more humble submission and self-denial is found in it. Take him as the only Lord and Master of your souls and lives, and all that you have, and when you are called to your daily labour, look but to your hearts that God be your end, and that you can truly say, 'I do not this principally to provide for myself, but as an obedient child in my Father's service, because he bids me do it, and it is pleasing to him through Christ; I do it not principally from self-love, but from the love of God, that commandeth me my work; and as a traveller that laboureth in his way for the love of his home, so I am here at labour in this world, in the place that God hath set me, that I may in his appointed way attain the everlasting glory that he hath promised.' I say, do but see to it, that thus you dedicate your labours to God, and you may take comfort in the daily labours of your lives, even the meanest and most

contemptible, as well as princes and preachers may in their more honourable works. Nay, all your labours are honoured and sanctified by this; for all is holy that is heartily devoted to God, upon his invitation. And thus all things are pure to the pure. For it is God's interest in your works, that is the holiness and excellency of them. Were servants and labouring people more holy and self-denying, they might have more true comfort in their daily labour, than the best of the unsanctified can have from their prayers or other worship of God. Not that worship may be therefore neglected; but that a Christian must do nothing at all but for God; and then he may be sure of God's acceptance.

CHAPTER LXX

Deny Self, or you will deny Christ

8. MOREOVER, the selfish will never suffer as Christians, but deny Christ in a day of trial; when the self-denying will go through all; and be saved. Nothing doth so thoroughly try whether self or God be best beloved, as suffering for his cause. In this it is that Christ useth to try men's self-denial; and it is a principal use of persecution. When you hear of coming before rulers and judges, and being hated of all men for Christ's name sake, then self riseth up to plead for its interest, and never maketh more ado than when it seeth the flames. The flesh cannot reason, but it can strive against reason, and draw it to its side. No reason seemeth sufficient to it, to persuade it to choose a suffering state. If you persuade a carnal man to let go his estate, to be poor and dispised in the world, and to give up life itself, if it be called for, and all this for the hope of an invisible felicity, you lose your labour (till God set in), and all such reasoning seems to him most

unreasonable. And what a dreadful case such souls are in, my text and many another passage in Scripture may convince you. If you cannot drink of his cup, and be baptized with his baptism, you cannot be advanced with him to glory. Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God. The pleasing of the flesh is the high way to misery by displeasing God; and the voluntary submission to the sufferings of the flesh for the cause of Christ, is the high way to felicity; 2 Tim. 2:11, 12. "It is a faithful saying; for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us;" Rom. 8:17. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution;" 2 Tim. 3:12. The day of trial is a kind of judgment-day to the selfish, unsanctified man; for it discovereth his hypocrisy, and sheweth him to be but dross, and separateth him from the suffering servants of Christ.

But self-denial maketh suffering light, and will make you wish that you had any thing worth the resigning unto Christ, and any thing by the denial whereof you might serve him. For him you would suffer the loss of all things, and account them dross and dung that you may win him; Phil. 3:8. He will count us "worthy of the kingdom for which we suffer;" 2 Thess. 1:5. As the "Captain of our salvation was made perfect by suffering, (Heb. 2:10.) so also must his members, by "filling up the measure," and being "made partakers of his sufferings," and "knowing the fellowship of them;" 2 Cor. 1:5–7. Phil. 3:10. And the "God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after we have suffered awhile, will make us perfect, stablish, strengthen and settle us;" 1 Pet. 5:10.

If therefore you would not prove apostates, and deny Christ in a day of trial, and be denied by him before his Father and the holy angels, see that you now learn this needful lesson of self-denial.

CHAPTER LXXI

The Selfish deal worse with God than with Satan

9. CONSIDER also that selfish carnal men deal worse with God, than they do with the devil and sin itself. God offereth them Christ and pardon, and eternal life, if they will but deny themselves in a thing of nought, and they will not be ruled or persuaded by him: the devil offereth them but the delights of the flesh, and the pleasures of sin for a season, and they will deny ten thousandfold more for this. They will deny God their Maker and Redeemer, their Lord and Judge, their Preserver and their Hope; though he have the only title to them, and their lives and souls be in his hand; they will for the sake of a filthy lust, or of a short and miserable life, deny him that never did them wrong; nay, that hath always shewed them kindness, even all the kindness that ever they received; and that when they know that their everlasting state must stand or fall according to his judgment. They will deny the Lord Jesus the Redeemer of their souls; they will deny and resist the Holy Spirit of God; they will deny his laws, his Gospel-promises, and all his mercies; they will deny his ministers and all their persuasions and daily labours: they will deny their dearest Christian friends, and deny their own consciences and convictions; and deny themselves the peace and joy which they might find in a holy walking with God. Yea, they will deny themselves everlasting life, and the favour of God, and cast themselves into endless misery; and all this for a thing that is ten thousand times

worse than nothiug, or for a very sensual, brutish pleasure. And yet these men cannot deny themselves in life, or liberty, in gain, or honour, no nor in the filthiest lusts, for the sake of Christ and their own salvation; even when they may know that they most deny themselves when they will not deny themselves. They deny themselves eternal glory, because they will not deny themselves in temporal vanity. Heaven and earth will witness against such sottish and unrighteous dealing as this, if true conversion do not prevent it. Hath God, hath Christ, hath your own salvation deserved no better at your hands than this? O miserable souls! All things can be easily denied save sin and carnal self, and these cannot be denied. God can be denied, Christ, and Scripture, and heaven itself can be denied, for flesh and sin; and flesh and sin cannot be denied for God, and for eternal glory. Do you think that this will look like wise or righteous dealing when you stand in judgment? Ask now any stander-by that is impartial, whether God or the flesh should be denied? Whether heaven or earth should be denied, seeing one of them you must deny? And if any impartial man will be now against you, what think you will God be, who is not only impartial, but wronged by you, and a hater of your unrighteous dealing?

CHAPTER LXXII

To be left to Self, is the sorest Plague

10. LASTLY, remember, that to be given over to ourselves, is the heaviest plague on this side hell; and therefore he that delighteth not to be miserable should not desire to be selfish. To be given over to the love of yourselves, is to turn from the love of the blessed God to the love of a filthy sinner, and so to forfeit God's love to you. To be

given over to care for yourselves, is to forfeit the fatherly care of God, and to be at the care of a silly, insufficient, improvident sinner. To be given over to your own conceits or wisdom, is to be forsaken of the sun, and left in darkness, and spend the rest of your days in a dungeon, the beginning of the endless utter darkness. To be given over to your own wills, is to be at the choice and disposal of a fool and of an enemy; and to be in such hands as will certainly undo you, and to be cast out of the hands of God. To be given over to seek yourselves, is to lose yourselves and God, and your salvation. To be given over to live as your own, is to forfeit the protection of God, without which you cannot be kept an hour out of hell. To be given over to the defending of yourselves, and delivering yourselves in danger of soul and body, is even to be exposed to certain and perpetual perdition. To be given over to be ruled by yourselves, is to be relinquished as rebels, and exposed to the tyranny of sin and satan. So that in all things it is most certain, that you are never well but in the hands of God, and never so ill as when you are most in your own hands. In Paradise innocent man was wholly at the government of God; and when by casting off his government he had forfeited the benefit of it, the most of the world became even brutish: and when God had owned the government of Israel above other nations, and kept the choice of the sovereign under him in his own hands; at last the foolish people, in imitation of the nations, must needs have a king, and extort the nomination out of the hands of special extraordinary Providence, that they might have more of it in their own; and this was an increase of their misery. Woe to that man that ever he was born, that is finally given over to himself; for this is a sign that God hath forsaken him, and he stands at the brink of eternal death. O think of this, you that are self-conceited, and self-

willed, and self-lovers, and self-seekers, and know not how to deny yourselves. Must self be so regarded and tenderly used? Take heed, you may have enough of self with everlasting vengeance, if God once give you over to yourselves, and say of you as of them: "But my people would not hearken unto my voice; and Israel would none of me: So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels;" Psal. 81:11, 12. So much for the aggravations.

CHAPTER LXXIII

Ten Directions to get Self-denial

IV. I COME now to the last part of my task, which is to tell you what course you should take to procure self-denial. For though it be the gift of God, yet there are certain means appointed us for the attainment of it, and God useth to give it men in the use of his means, and by those means must it be confirmed and continued.

Direct. 1. 'Set faith a work upon the promises of God and upon everlasting life;' for the flesh will not be taken off these lower things, till you have found out better, and such as will be sure to save you harmless. The most covetous man will let go silver, if he might have gold instead of it. Set faith a pleading the case with the flesh; and urge your own hearts with the certainty, the nearness, the glory, the eternity of the kingdom which by self-denial you may attain; and if they will not yield to such a change as this, they are unreasonable, unbelieving hearts.

Direct. 2. 'Never be deluded to forget the vanity, the brevity and, the emptiness and insufficiency of all these earthly things, which self so

adhereth to, as to neglect the promised life of blessedness. Acquaint your own hearts what a nothing it is that they make so much of, and follow so greedily, and hold so fast; shew them in the sanctuary the glass of the word of God, which will tell them what will be the end of all, and where all their worldly prosperity will leave them. Ask your hearts, 'Can I keep these things for ever, or not? If not, is it not better let them go for something, than for nothing? and to part with them as a child, at the command of my heavenly Father, than to part with them as a thief doth with his prize, at the gallows? Is it not better let them go to ease me, and to secure my eternal peace, than let them go to wound me and torment me? And while I keep them, what will they do for me, that I should buy them at so dear a rate? O how dear must I pay for my ease, and honour, and gluttony, and drunkenness, and sensual delights, if I part not with them when God commandeth! How cheap is a holy, blessed life, in comparison of this which I must pay so dear for!'

Direct. 3. To promote your self-denial, 'Consider frequently and seriously, who God is, and to what end he made, redeemed, sustaineth, and governeth the world: and then bethink you, whether it be meet that this glorious God should be neglected, and frustrated of the end of all these works!' and whether any thing besides him be fit to be the creature's end. You think it meet that every workman should have the use of his own work. Doth any man make a house for its own sake, or for his use to dwell in? Is it for the thing's sake that any man makes an instrument; or for his service by it? Do you think that God made you for yourselves, and not for himself and service? Give therefore to God the things that are God's: all souls are his, and therefore all should acknowledge him, and submit to his dispose and pleasure. Shall the pot quarrel with the potter, or claim title to itself,

and say, 'I am mine own?' It is against the clearest reason in the world, that any but the Creator, Redeemer and Preserver of the world should be Lord, and the Governor, and the End of it; and that men should prefer themselves before him.

Direct. 4. 'Moreover, it will further your self-denial to remember what you will get by selfishness.' God will have his ends and honour out of you one way or other, whether you will or no: he will have your goods from you, and your lives from you; and the faster you hold them, the more you will suffer when he wringeth them out of your hands. The most covetous man would part with his money to buy a lordship, if he knew it would else be taken from him. A worldly treasure is obnoxious to rust, and moths, and thieves; and if you exchange it not for the heavenly treasure in time, and remove not your riches to the world that you must for ever live in, what will you do when you must remove yourselves? And all your self-denial is but such an exchange or removal which all should be glad of, that know they must be gone themselves. Nay, more, consider still that selfishness makes you an idol to yourself, and therefore you do but set up yourselves as a mark for the jealous God to shoot at, and every hour you have reason to expect, that the terrible hand of Justice should lay hold upon you, and try you at the bar of that God whose prerogative you did usurp.

Direct. 5. 'And it may much further your self-denial to take a considerate survey of the world, and see but what self-seeking hath already done, and is still doing in it.' What a doleful sight of wickedness, confusion and misery must you see, which way ever you look: and all is most evidently the fruit of selfishness. Methinks it should awaken every sober man against it, that doth but observe

what work it hath made; that seeth families disordered and ruined by it; neighbours set in dissension by it; churches divided by it; religion dishonoured by it; and multitudes of them that seem to be religious, to be so lamentably deceived and enslaved by it. Princes and great men blinded by it; judges and learned men befooled by it; and the nations of the world almost all set together by the ears by it: so that it hath turned the world into the confusion of Babel, that no man can understand a word of the language that tendeth to unity, peace and building up. Princes understand it not: too many preachers understand it not; but the language of scorn, and strife, and dissension they understand: so that the world is cast all into a hurly-burly, and every man's hand is against his brother when he scarce knows why. No church or state can stand without disturbance; no truths without contradiction. Under pretence of coming in to Christ, they are busily uncovering his house, when the door is wide open, and there are more to invite them than to hinder them. Methinks as a man that observeth the carriage of madmen or drunken men, should never have any mind to be mad or drunken; so he that observeth but what self-seeking hath done in the world, should have little mind to be self-conceited, self-willed or self-seeking, but should love and honour self-denial.

Direct. 6. 'If you would promote self-denial, keep with you the continual feeling of your own unworthiness and insufficiency.' No man will trust upon a broken staff if he know it; nor be so foolish as to go about to walk upon the water, which he knows will not bear him. One would think this should be an easy and an effectual remedy. Should it not be easy for such wretched sinners as we, to carry about with us a sense of our unworthiness? For such lepers to carry about us a sense of our uncleanness? Methinks so many and

great diseases should make us feel them. O then consider, as creatures, you are utterly insufficient for yourselves; and as sinners, much more. God never made you to live upon, or to yourselves; or without him, or without the help of others. There are few beasts when they are first brought forth into the world, but are more able to help themselves than man; when he is newly born he can do nothing to help himself. And when he comes to age, he is naturally formed to a sociable life; so that if he should retire from the world, and live only by and of himself, he would soon find what it is to be selfish: much more if he be left to himself by God, or forsake God, and trust to and depend upon himself. But if ever innocent man had been sufficient for himself; yet sinful man can have no pretence to such a privilege, while he beareth about him so many convincing evidences of the contrary every day. Do you not feel sin as a heavy burden pressing you down, and perceive how easily it entangleth and besetteth you? sure you do, if you be not past feeling. And do you not know enough of the nature and desert of sin, to drive you out of yourselves, and bring you to him that calleth the weary and heavy laden to come to him for ease and rest; Matt. 11:28. Do you not feel a continual burden of infirmities? and doth not experience tell you that you are not sufficient to relieve yourselves in any pain or sickness that doth befal you? You cannot support yourselves a moment; you are still in the hands of that invisible God whom you abuse by your self-seeking. You would drop into hell if he withdrew the hand of his patience and support, as sure as a stone would fall to the earth that were loose in the air! As truly as the earth beareth you, so truly doth he bear the earth and you. It is easier for houses, and towns, and mountains to stand in the air without the earth, than for you, or any thing, to subsist a moment without the Lord. Who keeps your heart and pulse

still beating, and your blood and spirits in continual motion, and warm in your veins? Is it God, or you? Who is it that causeth your lungs to breathe, your stomach to turn your meat to nourishment; and that nourishment into blood, and spirits, and strength? Is it God, or you? Who is it that causeth the sun to rise upon you in the morning to light you to your labours, and to set upon you at night, that the curtains of darkness may be drawn about you, and you may quietly repose yourselves to rest? Who giveth you strength to labour in the day, and refresheth you with sleep at night, and provideth all the creatures for your assistance? Is it you or God? O sirs, methinks such silly worms, that cannot live a minute of themselves, and cannot fetch a breath of themselves, should easily see that they should not live to themselves, but to him from whom and by whom they live.

Direct. 7. 'If you would live in self-denial, be sure that you keep the mastery of your senses:' and do not let them be ungoverned, but shut them up when reason doth require it. It is your appetite and senses that feed this carnal, selfish vice; but reason and faith are both against it. Whenever you consult with sense, you may know what brutish advice you may expect. Ask not therefore what is delightful, nor what is for your carnal ease and peace; but what is necessary to please the Lord, and for your everlasting peace. And if the tempter tell you, 'This is the easier and the broader way;' tell him that it is not the honester nor the safer way: and the question is not, which is the fairest way? but, which is the way to heaven? It is better go the hardest way to glory, than the smoothest to damnation. If you cannot keep under your sensitive appetite, and subdue the eager desires of the flesh, and learn to want, as well as to abound; to be empty, as well as to be full; you will never attain to self-denial.

Direct. 8. 'To promote your self-denial, methinks it should be effectual to understand the great advantage that you have by the communion and society which you enter into when you deny yourselves.' Though a prince or lord would he loath to enter into a college, or monastery, where there is no propriety, and yet withal, no care or want; yet a poor labouring man, or a beggar would be glad of such a life. So you that cannot live of yourselves, methinks should be glad of such a community.

1. Consider that the Lord Jesus is the Head of the society, who hath undertaken to make provision for the whole, and is engaged for their security, and to save them harmless: and all the riches of his grace and love belong to that society, and will be yours; which is more than all that you can part with of your own, yea more than all the treasures of the world. It is therefore the noblest and richest society in the world that you shall live in communion with, if you will deny yourselves.

2. And the saints that are the members of that society are the brethren of Christ and the heirs of heaven. And all these are your brethren; endeared in special love to you, engaged to assist you, by prayers, and counsel, and pains, and purse, and every way that they can; so that well might Christ say that he that forsaketh any thing for him, shall receive even a hundredfold in this life, and in the world to come eternal life. For this one sorry self that you forsake, and its poor accommodations, you have God for your Father, and Christ for your Head, and the Holy Ghost for your Sanctifier and Comforter, and the Scripture for your guide, and saints for your brethren, companions and assistants, engaged to you in truer and dearer love than your unsanctified friends, that cast you off for the sake of

Christ. And had you rather be toiling and caring for yourselves, than let go self, and enter into so blessed a community, where you may cast all your care away upon God, who hath promised to care for you; and may feed yourselves in the daily delightful forethoughts of life eternal?

Direct. 9. 'And methinks it should much promote your self-denial, to study well the self-denying example of Christ, and his eminent servants that have trod in his steps.' Christ had no sinful self to deny, nor any corrupted flesh to mortify or subdue. And yet he had a self-denial in which we must imitate him; "For even Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me;" Rom. 15:3. We are told therefore by Christ's example, that it is not only the pleasing of self as corrupted by sin, but also a pleasing of natural self, in things where God may lay a restraint upon it, or put it to the trial, that we must avoid, and in which we must deny ourselves: even as Adam was to have denied his natural appetite before sin had corrupted it; and Christ had an innocent natural will, of which yet he saith, "Not my will, but thine be done." His whole life was a wonderful example of self-denial: he lived in a low estate, and denied himself of the glory and riches of the world, and "became poor, though he were Lord of all, that by his poverty we might be made rich;" 2 Cor. 8:9. He lived under the reproach of sinners; of sinners that he created; of sinners whom he died for. He would wear no crown, but a crown of thorns; he would wear no robes, but the robes of their reproach; he yielded his cheeks to be smitten, and his face to be spit upon by the vilest sinners, whom he could with a word have turned into hell. And at last he gave himself for us on the cross, in suffering a reproachful, cursed death; Heb. 7:27. Tit. 2:14. Ephes. 5:2. 25. Gal. 1:4. And can you read such

an example of self-denial, given you by the Lord of glory, and not be transformed into the image of it? I think the study of a self-denying Christ, is one of the most excellent helps to self-denial. Take it from the apostle himself; "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves: look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: wherefore God also hath highly exalted him;" Phil. 2:2–8. "Look therefore 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. Consider him that endured such contradictions of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds;" Heb. 12:2–4.

Direct. 10. But the greatest help to self-denial, is, 'To retire from the creature unto God, and live in the love of him, and employ the soul continually upon him.' Men will not be frightened from self-love. It must be another more powerful love that must draw them from it: and that can be none but the love of God. When you have soundly discerned a surer friend than self, a wiser, a better, an abler governor and defender, and one that much more deserveth all your love and care; then you will turn away from self, and never till then. See therefore that you espouse no interest but God's; and then you will have nothing to call you from him. Let love so close you with him,

and unite you to him, that you may know no happiness but his love and glory, and see with no other light than his; and know no will but the will of God; nor meddle with any work, which, for matter and end, you cannot call the work of God. Then you have indeed denied yourselves, when you are nothing, have nothing, and do nothing, but as from God, and by him and for him. Own not any self but in and for God, and then you may love and seek it freely; for this is to be called a loving and seeking of God, and not of self. Own not any knowledge, but that which is from the light of God, by his word, works, Spirit and ordinances, and which leadeth you to God in holiness and peace, and guideth you in his service, and then you need not condemn yourselves of self conceitedness, or a selfish understanding. Know not any will in yourselves, but that which is caused by the will of God, and directed by it, and intended to fulfil it; so that you may be able to say of every desire of your soul, I desire this, because that God would have me desire it, and I am resolved to follow his will in the seeking of it, and the end of my desire is, that I may please him, and his will may be done, and then you may say, you have conquered self-will. O see then that you be more with God; and study his mind and will, his excellency, sufficiency, and love, and remember that you are a dependent being, that are nothing but in and by him, and therefore should know no interest but him and his interest, nor possess any thing but for him, nor know any will or way but his will and way, and so let his be yours, and yours be his, by a holy resignation, conformity and subserviency unto his; and this is the true rectitude and holiness of man, this is a finding ourselves by losing ourselves, and the only saving and exalting of ourselves, by denying ourselves. Nothing but the light of God will master self-conceitedness; and nothing but the love of God will overcome self-love; and nothing but

an union and closure with the will of God will overcome self-will; and nothing but an espousing and intending God and his interest will cause a true denial of carnal self-interest; and nothing but a seeking of God, conversing as with him, and living to him will cure the soul of self-seeking, and an ungodly and unprofitable living to ourselves.

One other Direction I should add, which is to be always jealous and suspicious of self; but this will fall in the Conclusion.

THE CONCLUSION

I HAVE now finished what I had to say to you on this great and needful subject; and I have staid the longer on it, that I might occasion your own thoughts to be the longer on it; for it is not a few hasty running thoughts that will make any great impression on the soul. And now Christian friends, whoever you are that hear or read these words, I earnestly entreat you in the name of God, that you will set your hearts to the deep consideration of the nature and odiousness of this sin of selfishness; and of the nature and necessity of self-denial. You will never effectually hate and resist the sin which you think lightly of, and is not in any great discredit with you; nor will you fly from it with fear, and care, and vigilancy, till you apprehend the dangerousness of it. I have not only told you, but proved it to you; that this is one of the most odious and dangerous sins in the world, even the sum of all iniquity, that containeth a thousand sins in the bowels of it: this is it that generateth all other vices, and fills the world with swarms of mischief. It is this selfishness that corrupteth all estates, and distracteth all societies, and disturbeth all affairs. Never look further for the cause of your calamities: it is self that causeth the miscarriages and negligence of

the princes, governors, and magistrates of the world, while they look at their own interest, and little at the things of Jesus Christ, or at least prefer themselves before him. It is self that causeth the disobedience of subjects, while they judge themselves capable of censuring their rulers for matters that are beyond their reach; and grudge at all necessary burdens for the common good, because they are a little pinched by them. It is self that hath kindled the miserable wars that are laying waste so many countries, and that makes such woful havock in the world. It is self that hath so lamentably abused religion, and introduced so many fantastical self-conceits under the name of high scholastical subtleties; and that hath let in so many errors in doctrine and worship, and defiled God's ordinances, and corrupted and almost extinguished the discipline of Christ in the church. It is self that hath caused the leaders of the assemblies, that should be exemplary in unity, and holiness, and industry, to be some of them idle and negligent, and some of them carnal and vicious, and so many of them in discord and fierce opposition of one another: so that every man that is grown up to a high degree of wisdom in his own eyes, (and such degrees are soon attained) is presently venting his own conceits, and perhaps publishing them to the world, and seeking out an adversary to shew his manhood upon, and reviling all that are not of his opinion; as if there were no difficulty in the matter, but he is learned and wise, and they are all unlearned and ignorant: he is orthodox, and they are heretics, or what his pride and self-conceitedness is pleased to call them. It is this selfishness that makes even godly ministers the dividers of the church, the reproach of their holy calling, the occasion of the increase of triumph of the adversaries, and the causes of no small part of all our unreformedness, distractions and calamity; and the refusers and

resisters of the remedies that are tendered for healing and reformation. I dare boldly say, if this one sin were but rooted out of the hearts of the ministers themselves that are the preachers of self-denial, it would make so sudden and wonderful a change in the church, as would be the glory of our profession, the joy of the godly, and the admiration of all! O happy and honourable magistrates at court and country, if self were but thoroughly conquered and denied! O happy and reverend ministry, the pillars of religion, the honour of the church, if it were not for the shameful prevalency of self! O happy churches, happy cities, corporations, societies and countries, were it not for self! But alas! this is it that saddeth our hearts, and makes us look for more and more sad tidings concerning the affairs of the church, from all parts of the world; or frustrates our hopes, when we look for better. For we know on the one side, that without self-denial, there will never be true reformation or unity; neither sin nor division will ever be overcome; and on the other side, we see that selfishness is so natural, and common, and obstinate, that so many men as are born into the world, so many enemies are there to holiness and peace, till grace shall change them; and that all endeavours, persuasions, convictions, do little prevail against this deadly rooted sin: so that men will preach against it, and yet most shamefully live in it; and after all rebukes, chastisements and heavy judgments of God, the church is still bleeding, and princes, pastors and people are self-conceited, self-willed and self-seekers still. Alas for the cause and church of Christ! Must we give it up to the lusts of sense? Must we sit down and look on its miserable torn condition, with lamentation and despair? and shall we deliver down this despair to our posterity? Were not our hope only in the omnipotent God, it must be so. When we look at men, at magistrates, or ministers, we

see no hope. What higher professions can be made by those in succeeding ages, than have now been made? And yet what negligence of magistrates, and what contentiousness of ministers destroy all hopes! So that we look at the restoration of the church, as at the resurrection, that must be done by Omnipotency. God must raise up another generation of more self-denying, prudent, zealous magistrates, and of more self-studying, peaceable, humble, zealous, industrious ministers before the healing work will be done. The selfish spirit that prevaileth now in the most, is neither fit to be the matter or instrument of the reformed, peaceable state which we expect. While the enemies are destroying us by secret fraud and open force, we stand at a distance and unite not against them; yea, we are calling each other heretics and deceivers, and teaching them how to revile us, and putting such words into their mouth against us, as may help our people to despise us, and reject us, and warrant them from our own mouths or pens to rail at us, and forsake us: one part of us being heretics or deceivers by the testimony of the other part, and the other part by the testimony of too many of them.

Dear brethren, If selfishness shall not now be left, when we are in the sight of the havoc it hath made, and stand in the field among those that it hath slain, and see the church of God so horribly abused by it: when then shall it be forsaken? I here entreat every man that loveth his present or everlasting peace, and the peace of the church or commonwealth, that he will resolve upon a deadly enmity with this selfishness in himself and others! And that you will suspect it, and watch against it in every work you have to do. Are you upon any employment spiritual or secular? Presently inquire when you set upon it, 'Is there no self-interest and selfish disposition lurking here? How far is my own worldly, fleshly ends or prosperity concerned in

it?' And if you discover that self is any way concerned in it, I beseech you suspect it, and follow self with an exceeding watchful eye; and when you have done your best, it is ten to one but it will overreach you. O look to it that you be not ensnared before you are aware. Take heed of it, especially you that are great and honourable, and have so much self-interest to tempt you in the world! How hardly will you escape! When all other enemies are conquered, you have yet self, the greatest enemy to overcome. Take heed of it, you that have any rising, thriving project, little know you on what a precipice you stand: take heed of it you that are in deep and pinching wants, lest self make them seem more grievous than they are, and provoke you to venture upon sin for your relief. Take heed, all you that have raging appetites or passions, or lustful inclinations, and remember that your enemy is now discovered, and you have him to deal with before your face; and therefore see that you be resolute and vigilant. Take heed, all you that have learning, parts, or fame and honour, or any thing that self hath to glory in, and to abuse, lest the noblest gifts should by this deadly principle be turned into a plague to the church, and to your souls. Suspect self in the choice of your parties and opinions; suspect it in your public labours; yea, and in your private duties, and greatest diligence in religious works; lest when your eyes are opened at last, it should appear, that you preached, or prayed, or professed or wrote, or lived for self, and not for God. I do but transcribe the counsel to you, that God is daily giving in to my own soul: and as I feel exceeding great use of it to myself, so I am sure there is to others; and woe to me and you if we take it not, and be not found among the self-denying. Doubtless God will put you to the trial, and find you frequent use for this grace. Let me take the boldness to tell you from my own (though, alas, too small)

experience, that as it is mere selfishness, that is the perplexer and disquieter of the mind, without which nothing that befals us could discompose it; so it is God only that quiets it, and gives it rest: and I bless the Lord, I can truly say, that I have found that content in loving and closing with the will of God, and endeavouring to know no interest but his, to disquiet or quiet me, which I never could find in any other way. When God is enough for us, and his will is in our eyes, the will of a Father infinitely good, it may satisfy the soul in the darkest condition; when we understand not the particular meaning of his providence, nor what he is doing with us, yet still we may be sure that he is doing us good; and therefore a child may not only submit to the will of God, because it cannot be resisted, as enemies must be forced to do; but he may rest in that will as the centre of his desires, and the very felicity and heaven of his soul.

And now, sirs, I must let go this subject, as to you that have heard it preached; for we must not be always on one thing: but I am exceedingly afraid lest I have lost my labour with most of you, and shall leave you as selfish as I found you; because sad experience tells me that it is so natural and obstinate an enemy that I have discovered, and that you have now to set yourselves against. I have done my work; but self hath not done, but is still at work in you. I cannot now go home with every one of you, but self will go home with you. I cannot be at hand with every one of you, when the next temptation comes, but self will be at hand to draw you to entertain it. When you are next tempted to error, to pride, to lust, to contention with your brethren, by words or real injuries, what will you do then, and how will you stand against this enemy? If God be not your interest, and the dearest to your souls, and you see not with his light, and will not by his will, and self-denial be not become as it were your

nature; you will never stand after all this that I have said, but self will be your undoing for ever! If you have not somewhat within you, as selfishness is within you, to be always at hand as it is, and ready, and constant, and powerful to overcome it, it will be your ruin after all the warnings that have been given you. And this preserving principle must be the Spirit of God, by causing you to deny yourselves; believe in Christ, and love God above all. I say again that you may think on it, and live upon it: the sum of all your religion or saving grace is in these three, Faith, Self-denial and the Love of God. Departing from carnal self, returning home to God by love, and this by faith in the Redeemer, is the true Christianity, and the life that leadeth to everlasting life.

A DIALOGUE OF SELF-DENIAL

FLESH.

WHAT! become nothing! ne'er persuade me to it.

God made me something: and I'll not undo it.

SPIRIT.

Thy something is not thine, but his that gave it;

Resign it to him, if thou mean to save it.

FLESH.

God gave me life: and shall I choose to die

Before my time? or pine in misery?

SPIRIT.

God is thy life: if then thou fearest death;

Let him be all thy soul, thy pulse and breath.

FLESH.

What! must I hate myself? when as my brother

Must love me? and I may not hate another?

SPIRIT.

Loathe what is loathsome: love God in the rest:

He truly loves himself, that loves God best.

FLESH.

Doth God our ease and pleasure to us grudge?

Or doth religion make a man a drudge?

SPIRIT.

That is thy poison which thou callest pleasure:

And that thy drudgery which thou count'st thy treasure.

FLESH.

Who can endure to be thus mewed up?

And under laws for every bit and cup?

SPIRIT.

God's cage is better than the wilderness,

When winter comes, liberty brings distress.

FLESH.

Pleasure's man's happiness: the will's not free

To choose our misery: this cannot be.

SPIRIT.

God is man's end: with him are highest joys:

Sensual pleasures are but dreams and toys.

Should sin seem sweet? Is satan turn'd thy friend?

Will not thy sweet prove bitter in the end?

Hast thou found sweeter pleasures than God's love?

Is a fool's laughter like the joys above?

Beauty surpasseth all deceitful paints:

What's empty mirth to the delights of saints?

God would not have thee have less joy, but more:

And therefore shews thee the eternal store.

FLESH.

Who can love baseness, poverty and want?

And under pining sickness be content?

SPIRIT.

He that hath laid his treasure up above,

And plac'd his portion only in God's love;

That waits for glory when his life is done:

This man will be content with God alone.

FLESH.

What good will sorrow do us? Is not mirth

Fitter to warm a cold heart here on earth?

Troubles will come whether we will or no:

I'll never banish pleasure and choose woe.

SPIRIT.

Then choose not sin: touch not forbidden things:

Taste not the sweet that endless sorrow brings.

If thou love pleasure, take in God thy fill:

Look not for lasting joys in doing ill.

FLESH.

Affliction's bitter: life will soon be done:

Pleasure shall be my part ere all be gone.

SPIRIT.

Prosperity is barren: all men say,

The soil is best where there's the deepest way.

Life is for work, and not to spend in play.

Now sow thy seed: labour while it is day.

The Huntsman seeks his game in barren plains,

Dirty land answers best the ploughman's pains.

Passengers care not, so the way be fair.

Husbandmen would have the best ground and air.

First think what's safe and fruitful: there's no pleasure

Like the beholding of thy chiefest treasure.

FLESH.

Nature made me a man, and gave me sense:

Changing of nature is a vain pretence:

It taught me to love women, honour, ease,

And every thing that doth my senses please.

SPIRIT.

Nature hath made thee rational; and reason

Must rule the sense, in ends, degrees and season.

Reason's the rider, sense is but the horse:

Which then is fittest to direct thy course?

Give up the reins, and thou becom'st a beast;

Thy fall at death will sadly end thy feast.

FLESH.

Religion is a dull and heavy thing,

Whereas a merry cup will make me sing.

Love's entertainments warm both heart and brain:

And wind my fancy to the highest strain.

SPIRIT.

Cupid hath stuck a feather in thy cap;

And lull'd thee dead asleep on Venus' lap:

Thy brains are tippled with some wanton's eyes:

Thy reason is become lust's sacrifice.

Playing a game at folly, thou hast lost

Thy wit, and soul, and winnest to thy cost.

Thy soul now in a filthy channel lies,

While fancy seems to soar above the skies.

Beauty will soon be stinking, loathsome earth:

Sickness and death mar all the wanton's mirth.

It is not all the pleasure thou can'st find

Will countervail the sting that's left behind.

Blind, brutish souls! that cannot love their God!

And yet can dote on a defiled clod!

FLESH.

Why should I think of what will be to-morrow?

An ounce of mirth is worth a pound of sorrow.

SPIRIT.

But where's that mirth when sorrows overtake thee?

Will it then hold when life and God forsake thee?

Forgetting death or hell will not prevent it:

Now lose thy day, thou'lt then too late repent it.

FLESH.

Must I be pain'd and wronged, and not feel;

As if my heart were made of flint or steel?

SPIRIT.

Dost thou delight to feel thy hurt and smart?

Would not an antidote preserve thy heart?

Impatience is but self-tormenting folly:

Patience is cordial, easy, sweet and holy.

Is not that better which turns grief to peace,

Than that which doth thy misery increase?

FLESH.

When sport, and wine, and beauty do invite,

Who is it whom such baits will not incite?

SPIRIT.

He that perceives the hook and sees the end,

Whither it is that fleshly pleasures tend:

He that by faith hath seen both heav'n and hell,

And what sin costeth at the last can tell:

He that hath tried and tasted better things,

And felt that love from which all pleasure springs.

They that still watch, and for Christ's coming wait,

Can turn away from, or despise the bait.

FLESH.

Must I be made the football of disdain?

And call'd a precise fool or Puritan?

SPIRIT.

Remember him that did despise the shame,

And for thy sake bore undeserved blame:

Thy journey's of small moment if thou stay

Because dogs bark, or stones lie in the way.

If life lay on it, wouldst thou turn again,

For the winds blowing, or a little rain?

Is this thy greatest love to thy dear Lord,

That canst not for his sake bear a foul word?

Wilt thou not bear for him a scorner's breath,

That underwent for thee a cursed death?

Is not heav'n worth the bearing of a flout?

Then blame not justice when it shuts thee out.

Will these deriders stand to what they say,

And own their words at the great dreadful day?

Then they'd be glad, when wrath shall overtake them,

To eat their words, and say they never spake them.

FLESH.

How? Forsake all! Ne'er mention it more to me,

I'll be of no religion to undo me.

SPIRIT.

Is it not thine more in thy Father's hand,

Than when it is laid out at sin's command?

And is that sav'd that's spent upon thy lust?

Or which must be a prey to thieves or rust?

And wouldst thou have thy riches in thy way,

Where thou art passing on, and canst not stay?

And is that lost that's sent to heav'n before?

Hadst thou not rather have thy friends and store,

Where thou mayst dwell for ever in the light

Of that long glorious day that fears no night?

FLESH.

But who can willingly submit to death,

Which will bereave us of our life and breath;

That lays our flesh to rot in loathsome graves,

Where brains and eyes were, leaves but ugly caves?

SPIRIT.

So nature breaks and casts away the shell,

Where the now beauteous singing-bird did dwell.

The secundine that once the infant cloath'd,

After the birth, is cast away and loath'd.

Thus roses drop their sweet leaves under-foot;

But the spring shews that life was in the root.

Souls are the roots of bodies: Christ the head

Is root of both, and will revive the dead.

Our sun still shineth when with us it's night:

When he returns, we shall shine in his light.

Souls that behold, and praise God with the just,

Mourn not because their bodies are but dust.

Graves are but beds, where flesh till morning sleeps:

Or chests where God awhile our garments keeps.

Our folly thinks he spoils them in the keeping;

Which causeth our excessive fears and weeping:

But God, that doth our rising day foresee,

Pities not rotting flesh so much as we.

The birth of nature was deform'd by sin:

The birth of grace did our repair begin:

The birth of glory at the resurrection

Finisheth all, and brings both to perfection.

Why should not fruit when it is mellow, fall?

Why should we linger here when God doth call?

FLESH.

The things and persons in this world I see;

But after death, I know not what will be.

SPIRIT.

Know'st thou not that which God himself hath spoken?

Thou hast his promise which was never broken.

Reason proclaims that noble heav'n-born souls,

Are made for higher things than worms and moles.

God has not made such faculties in vain,

Nor made his service a deluding pain.

But faith resolves all doubts, and hears the Lord

Telling us plainly by his holy word,

That uncloath'd souls shall with their Saviour dwell,

Triumphing over sin, and death, and hell.

And by the power of Almighty love,

Stars shall arise from graves to shine above.

There we shall see the glorious face of God:

His blessed presence shall be our abode:

The face that banisheth all doubts and fears;

Shuts out all sins, and drieth up all tears.

That face which darkeneth the sun's bright rays,

Shall shine us into everlasting joys.

Where saints and angels shall make up one choir,

To praise the Great Jehovah evermore.

FLESH.

Reason not with me against sight and sense:

I doubt all this is but a vain pretence.

Words against nature are not worth a rush:

One bird in hand is worth two in the bush.

If God will give me heav'n at last, I'll take it:

But for my pleasure here, I'll not forsake it.

SPIRIT.

And wilt thou keep it? brutish flesh how long?

Wilt thou not shortly sing another song?

When conscience is awakened, keep thy mirth!

When sickness and death comes, hold fast this earth:

Live if thou canst, when God saith come away:

Try whether all thy friends can cause thy stay.

Wilt thou tell death and God, thou wilt not die?

And wilt thou the consuming fire defy?

Art thou not sure to let go what thou hast?

And doth not reason bid thee then forecast,

And value the least hope of endless joys,

Before known vanities and dying toys?

And can the Lord that is most just and wise,

Found all man's duty in deceit and lies?

GET thee behind me satan; thou dost favour

The things of flesh, and not his dearest favour,

Who is my life, and light, and love, and all,

And so shall be whatever shall befal.

It is not thou, but I, that must discern,

And must resolve: It's I that hold the stern:

Be silent Flesh; speak not against my God;

Or else he'll teach thee better by the rod.

I am resolved thou shalt live and die,

A servant, or a conquered enemy.

LORD, charge not on me what this rebel says,

That always was against me and thy ways!

Now stop its mouth by grace, that shortly must

Through just but gainful death, be stopt with dust.

The thoughts and words of Flesh are none of mine,

Let Flesh say what it will, I will be thine.

Whatever this rebellious Flesh shall prate,

Let me but serve thee, Lord, at any rate.

Use me on earth as seemeth good to thee,

So I in heaven thy glorious face may see.

Take down my pride: let me dwell at thy feet:

The humble are for earth and heav'n most meet.

Renouncing Flesh, I vow myself to thee,

With all the talents thou hast lent to me.

Let me not stick at honour, wealth or blood:

Let all my days be spent in doing good.

Let me not trifle out more precious hours;

But serve thee now with all my strength and powers.

If Flesh would tempt me to deny my hand;

Lord, these are the resolves to which I stand.

RICHARD BAXTER.

October 29, 1659.

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