

## CHAPTER XXVI.

*Directions against Selfishness as it is contrary to the Love of our Neighbour.*

THE two tables of the law are summed up by our Saviour in two comprehensive precepts: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and soul, and might:" and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In the decalogue the first of these is the true meaning of the first commandment, put first because it is the principle of all obedience: and the second is the true meaning of the tenth commandment, which is therefore put last, because it is the comprehensive sum of other duties to our neighbour or injuries against him, which any other particular instances may contain; and also the principle of the duty to, or sin against, our neighbour. The meaning of the tenth commandment is variously conjectured at by expositors: some say that it speaketh against inward concupiscence and the sinful thoughts of the heart; but so do all the rest, in the true meaning of them, and must not be supposed to forbid the outward action only, nor to be any way defective: some say that it forbiddeth coveting and commandeth contentment with our state; so doth the eighth commandment; yet there is some part of the truth in both these. And the plain truth is (as far as I can understand it), that the sin forbidden is selfishness as opposite to the love of others, and the duty commanded is to love our neighbours; and that it is as is said, the sum of the second table, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:" as the captain leadeth the van, and the lieutenant bringeth up the rear; so, "Thou shalt love God above all," is the first commandment, and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is the last, for the aforesaid reason. I shall therefore in these following Directions speak to the two parts of the tenth commandment.

*Direct. 1.* 'The first help against selfishness is to understand well the nature and malignity of the sin.' For want of this it commonly prevaileth, with little suspicion, lamentation, and opposition. Let me briefly therefore anatomize it.

1. It is the radical, positive sin of the soul, comprehend-

ing seminally, or causally all the rest. The corruption of man's nature, or his radical sin, hath two parts, the positive part, and the privitive part: the positive part is selfishness, or the inordinate love of carnal self; the privitive part is ungodliness or want of the love of God. Man's fall was his turning from God to himself; and his regeneration consisteth in the turning of him from himself to God; or the generating of the love of God (as comprehending faith and obedience) and the mortifying of self-love. Selfishness therefore is all positive sin in one, as want of the love of God is all privitive sin in one. And self-denial and the love of God are all duties virtually; for the true love of man is comprehended in the love of God. Understand this, and you will understand what original and actual sin is, and what grace and duty are.

2. Therefore selfishness is the cause of all sin in the world both positive and privitive, and is virtually the breach of every one of God's commandments. For even the want of the love of God is caused by the inordinate love of self. As the consuming of other parts is caused by the dropsy, which tumifieth the belly. It is only selfishness which breaketh the fifth commandment, by causing rulers to oppress and persecute their subjects, and causeth subjects to be seditious and rebellious; and causeth all the bitterness, and quarrellings, and uncomfortableness, which ariseth among all relations. It is only selfishness which causeth the cursed wars of the earth; and desolation of countries, by plundering and burning; the murders which cry for revenge to heaven (whether civil, military, or religious:) which causeth all the railings, fightings, envyings, malice; the schisms, and proud overvaluings of men's own understandings and opinions; and the contending of pastors, who shall be the greatest, and who shall have his will in proud usurpations and tyrannical impositions and domination: it is selfishness which hath set up, and maintaineth the papacy, and causeth all the divisions between the Western and the Eastern churches; and all the cruelties, lies and treachery exercised upon that account. It is selfishness which troubleth families and corporations, churches and kingdoms; which violateth vows, and bonds of friendship, and causeth all the tumults, and strifes, and troubles in the world. It is

selfishness which causeth all covetousness, all pride and ambition, all luxury and voluptuousness, all surfeiting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, time-wasting and heart-corrupting sports, and all the riots and revelling of the sensual: all the contendings for honours and preferments, and all the deceit in buying and selling, the stealing and robbing, the bribery and simony, the lawsuits which are unjust, the perjuries, false witnessing, unrighteous judging, the oppressions, the revenge, and in one word all the uncharitable and unjust actions in the world. This is the true nature of carnal selfishness, and it is no better.

3. Selfishness is the corruption of all the faculties of the soul. It is the sin of the mind, by self-conceitedness and pride; it is the sin of the will and affections, by self-love, and all the selfish passions which attend it: selfish desires, angers, sorrows, discontents, jealousies, fears, audacities, &c. It is the corruption of all the inferior faculties, and the whole conversation by self-seeking, and all the forementioned evils.

4. Selfishness is the commonest sin in the world. Every man is now born with it, and hath it more or less: and therefore every man should fear it.

5. Selfishness is the hardest sin in the world to overcome. In all the unregenerate it is predominant: for nothing but the sanctifying Spirit of God can overcome it. And in many thousands that seem very zealous in religion, and very mortified in all other respects, yet in some way or other selfishness doth so lamentably appear, yea, and is so strong in many that are sincere, that it is the greatest dishonour to the church of Christ, and hath tempted many to infidelity, or to doubt whether there be any such thing as true sanctification in the world. The persons that seemed the most mortified saints, if you do but cross them in their self-interest, or opinion, or will, or seem to slight them, or have a low esteem of them, what swellings, what heart-burnings, what bitter censurings, what proud impatience, if not schisms and separations will it cause? God hath better servants; but too many which seem to themselves and others to be the best, are no better. How then should every Christian abhor and watch against this universal evil.

*Direct. 11.* 'Consider oft how amiable a creature man would be, and what a blessed condition the world and all societies would be in, if selfishness were but overcome.' There would then be no pride, no covetousness, no sensuality, no tyranny or oppressing of the poor, no malice, cruelty or persecution: no church-divisions, no scandals, nothing to dishonour religion, or to hinder the saving progress of the Gospel: no fraud or treacheries, no over-reaching or abusing others: no lying nor deceit, no neglect of our duty to others: in a word, no injustice, or uncharitableness in the world.

*Direct. 111.* 'Judge of good and evil by sober reason, and not by brutish sense. And then oft consider, whether really there be not a more excellent end than your selfish interest? Even the public good of many, and the pleasing and glorifying of God. And whether all mediate good or evil should not be judged of principally by those highest ends?' Sense leadeth men to selfishness and privateness of design; but true reason leadeth men to prefer the public, or any thing that is better than our self-interest.

*Direct. iv.* 'Nothing but returning by converting grace to the true love of God, and of man for his sake will conquer selfishness.' Make out therefore by earnest prayer for the Spirit of sanctification: and be sure that you have a true apprehension of the state of grace; that is, that it is indeed the love of God and man. Love is the fulfilling of the law; therefore love is the holiness of the soul: set your whole study upon the exercise and increase of love, and selfishness will die as love reviveth.

*Direct. v.* 'Study much the self-denying example and precepts of your Saviour.' His life and doctrine are the liveliest representation of self-denial that ever was given to the world. Learn Christ, and you will learn self-denial. He had no sinful selfishness to mortify, yet natural self was so wonderfully denied by him, for his Father's will and our salvation, that no other book or teacher in the world will teach us this lesson so perfectly as he. Follow him from the manger, or rather from the womb to the cross and grave: behold him in his poverty and contempt; enduring the contradiction and ingratitude of sinners, and making himself of no reputation: behold him apprehended, accused, condemned,

crowned with thorns, clothed in purple with a reed in his hand, scourged, and led away to execution, bearing his cross, and hanged up among thieves : forsaken by his own disciples, and all the world, and in part by him who is more than all the world : and consider why all this was done : For whom he did it, and what lesson he purposed hereby to teach us : consider why he made it one half the condition of our salvation, and so great a part of the Christian religion, to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow him : and will have no other to be his disciples <sup>a</sup>. Were a crucified Christ more of our daily study, and did we make it our religion to learn and follow his holy example, self-denial would be better known and practised, and Christianity would appear as it is, and not as it is misunderstood, adulterated and abused in the world. But because I have long ago written a "Treatise of Self-denial," I shall add no more.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

*Cases and Directions for Loving our Neighbour as ourselves.*

*Tit. 1. Cases of Conscience about Loving our Neighbour.*

*Quest. I.* ' IN what sense is it that I must love my neighbour as myself? Whether in the kind of love, or in the degree, or only in the reality.'

*Ans.* The true meaning of the text is, you must love him according to his true worth, without the diversion and hindrance of selfishness and partiality. As you must love yourself according to that degree of goodness which is in you, and no more; so must you as impartially love your neighbour according to that degree of goodness which is in him. So that it truly extendeth to the reality, the kind, and the degree of love, supposing it in both proportioned to the goodness of the object. But before this can be understood, the true nature of love must be well understood.

*Quest. II.* ' What is the true nature of love, both as to myself and neighbour?'

*Ans.* Love is nothing but the prime motion of the will

<sup>a</sup> Luke xiv. 26. 31. 33.