

Quotes on Selfishness

by

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Selfishness is the souls 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.

They will see all supposed conveniences provided for themselves, before they will supply the Necessities of others. And what thanks is it to them to shew their poor Brethren the charity of a swine, that will leave that to others which he cannot eat himself. And yet there are multitudes that will not use this bestial charity, because their own flesh and their posterity are an insatiable gulf, that swallow up all: And what they cannot use, they will lay up for Provision, lest their lust should be extinguished for want of fuel; and when their flesh hath had its fill, they may leave the rest behind them, that their children may live in golden fetters, and be gulled of their salvation, and enticed from God as well as they.

Selfishness is the grand Idolatry of the world, and self the worlds Idol, as I have told you before. It usurpeth the Place of God himself in men's Judgements, wills, affections and endeavours.

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, (that should be wholly addicted to please the Lord) Self-denial will prove a difficult task.

It is the daily grief of my soul to observe, how the world is captivated to it SELF; and what sway this odious sin doth bear among the most forward 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.

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 Common-wealth, 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 neighbours, and of our own salvation.

Is not that man's belly his God, that will bestow a more costly sacrifice on his belly than he will do on God? If God command and his Ministers request, they are most frequently denied: If Christ require it, and his Members need, and perhaps crave it, they are denied; but if the back and the belly crave, they are seldom denied.

A filthy stir you make in the world, some of you, to the disquiet of all about you that you may be richer or greater than you are. It takes up your heart, your time, your strength; and visibly it is the very work you live for, and the great game that you play, and the main trade that you drive on; and all your Religious affairs come in but on the by, and God is put off with the leavings of the world: And if you are low in the world, or miss of your desires, and suffer in the flesh; you whine, and repine, as if you had lost your God and your Treasure. If you will deceive yourselves by denying this, that bettereth not your case: Neither God, nor any wise man, that seeth your worldly lives, and how much you set by worldly things, and how little Good you do with your wealth, and how much the flesh and your posterity have as devoted unto them, and how little God hath devoted unto him; I say, no wise man that seeth this will believe that you are mortified heavenly men. I do here proclaim to you this day from the Word of the Lord, that *this your way is your folly, Psalm 49. 13.*

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 your selves.

As man in Innocence 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... Though all of them know speculatively that all is God's, yet practically they take it and use it as their own.

Many actual sins may be laid by, and we may for the time be free from them. But selfishness is at the heart, and lives with us continually; It parteth 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's this that must have the strictest, constant watch, or else we shall never have any peace for it. How cheap a Religion do many think to come to heaven with?

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 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.

Self must be denied as it is the great resister of the Holy Ghost. The sanctifying spirit hath 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 hence it find the chief resistance. Not a holy motion can be made to the soul but self is against it. No work hath 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, dishonouring holiness, dissuading you from duty, persuading you to sin, down with it and deny it, as you would be true to the spirit and your selves.

Down with thine own Idolatrous self-will; know not a will or desire in thy self, that's 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 a 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.

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 the 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.

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?