

Bishop Wilson's Meditations on His Sacred Office, No. 4.-- Wednesday

by J.H. Newman

Self-denial is essential for living a holy life, overcoming corruption, and increasing faith, and is a key virtue of a Christian.

Scripture: Leviticus 4:3, Matthew 7:14, Romans 15:3, 1 Corinthians 9:27, Galatians 5:24, Titus 2:15

Topics: "Self Denial", "Holy Living"

Description

J.H. Newman preaches about the importance of self-denial, mortification, and living a holy life in accordance with God's will. He emphasizes the need to deny ungodliness, worldly lusts, and to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, following the examples set by Paul and Christ. Newman highlights the necessity of self-denial in preparing the soul for grace, overcoming corrupt affections, and ultimately, finding true freedom and acceptance by God through fervent devotion, humility, and obedience.

Transcript

Question from the Office of Consecration

Q--WILL YOU DENY ALL UNGODLINESS AND WORLDLY LUSTS, AND LIVE SOBERLY, RIGHTEOUSLY, AND GODLY, IN THIS PRESENT WORLD, THAT YOU MAY SHOW YOURSELF IN ALL THINGS AN EXAMPLE OF GOOD WORKS UNTO OTHERS, THAT THE ADVERSARY MAY BE ASHAMED, HAVING NO THING TO SAY AGAINST YOU? A--Ans. I WILL SO DO, THE LORD BEING MY HELPER.

1 Cor. ix. 27. "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." And if Paul, what shall be said of us?

Gal. v. 24. "They, that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Nature is content with a little, grace with less.

Tit. ii. 15. "Let no man despise thee;" that is, demean thy self agreeable to the authority which thou hast received from Jesus Christ, not making thy office contemptible by any mean action; but act with the dignity of one who stands in the place of God.

Lev. iv. 3. "If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people, then let him bring a sin-offering." N.B. That the same sin, in a single priest, is to have as great a sacrifice as a sin of the whole people of Israel. The flesh never thrives but at the cost of the soul. Let us ever remember, that mortification must go further than the body. Self-love, pride, envy, jealousy, hatred, malice, avarice, ambition, must all be mortified, by avoiding and ceasing from the occasions of them. The sobriety of the soul consists in humility, and in being content with necessaries.

Matt. vii. 14. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." But, if the difficulties of an holy life affright us, let us consider, "who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" All mankind being under the sentence of death, certain to be executed, and at an hour we know not of, a state of penance and self-denial, of being dead and crucified to the world, is certainly the most suitable, the most becoming temper that we can be found in, when that sentence comes to be executed, that is, when we come to die.

The more we deny ourselves, the freer we shall be from sin and the more dear to God. God appoints us to sufferings, that we may keep close to Him, and that we may value the sufferings of His Son, which we should have but a low notion of, did not our own experience teach us what it is to suffer. Had there been any better, any easier way to heaven, Jesus Christ would have chosen it for Himself and for His followers.

Take up the Cross.

This is designed as a peculiar favour to Christians, as indeed are all Christ's commands. Miseries are the unavoidable portion of fallen man. All the difference is, Christians suffering in obedience to the will of God, it makes them easy; unbelievers suffer the same things, but with an uneasy will and mind. To follow our own will, our passions, and our senses, is that which makes us miserable. It is for this reason, and that we may have a remedy for all our evils, that Jesus Christ obliges us to submit our will, our passions, &c. to God.

The good Christian is not one who has no inclination to sin, (for we have all the seed of sin in us,) but who being sensible of such inclinations, denieth them continually, and suffers them not to grow into evil actions. No pleasure can be innocent which hinders us from minding our salvation. We need but taste any pleasure a very little while, to become a slave to it. The only way to overcome our corrupt affections, is absolutely to deny their cravings. We have reason to suspect every doctrine which would teach us to avoid Sill without suffering, since the Holy Scriptures speak so much of self-denial, of the difficulty of working out our salvation.

Self-denial is absolutely necessary to prepare us to receive the grace of God; it was absolutely necessary that John the Baptist should prepare the way, by preaching repentance and self-denial. Men need not be at pains to go to hell; if they will not deny themselves, if they make no resistance, they will go there of course. One does not begin to fall, when the fall becomes sensible. "They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." This is the only true test of being truly Christians.

Afflictions may make men esteem us less; but God loves us the more for them, if we bear them with resignation; which if we do, it is a certain sign of his grace and care of us. The yoke of Christ is not only safer, but even easier, than that liberty we are naturally fond of. It makes the practice of virtue pleasant; frees us from the violence of corruption, from being ruined by false pleasures. Crosses make death less frightful. And indeed, he that will not obey Jesus Christ must obey his own passions, the world, its customs, humours, which are the worst of tyrants, and downright slavery.

Every day deny yourself some satisfaction; your eyes, objects of mere curiosity; your tongue, every thing that may feed vanity, or vent enmity; the palate, dainties; the ears, flattery, and what ever corrupts the heart; the body, ease and luxury; bearing all the inconveniences of life, (for the love of God,) cold, hunger, restless nights, ill health, unwelcome news, the faults of servants, contempt, ingratitude of friends, malice of enemies, calumnies, our own failings, lowness of spirits, the struggle in overcoming our corruptions; bearing all these with patience and resignation to the will of God.

Do all this as unto God, with the greatest privacy. All ways are indifferent to one who has heaven in his eye, as a traveller does not chuse the pleasantest, but the shortest and safest way to his journey's end; and that is, if we were to chuse for ourselves, the way of the cross, which Jesus Christ made choice of, and sanctified it to all his followers. It being much more easy to prevent than to mortify a lust, a prudent Christian will set a guard upon his senses. One unguarded look betrayed David.

Job made a covenant with his eyes. Evil communications corrupt good manners. Sensuality unfits us for the joys of heaven. If that concupiscence which opposes virtue be lessened, a less degree of grace will secure innocence. All ways are indifferent to one who has heaven in his eye. Self-denial has respect to the good estate of the soul, as it hinders her from being carried away to the lower pleasures of sense, that she may relish heavenly pleasures. "The Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." (Matth. viii. 20.)

This should fill us with confusion, whenever we are over-much concerned for the conveniences of life. Our affections being very strongly inclined to sensible good, for the sake of which we are often tempted to evil, and fall into great disorders, we should resolve to sacrifice our will to reason, and reason to the Word of God. God does not require it of us, that we should not feel any uneasiness under the cross, but that we should strive to overcome it by His grace.

Virtues of a Holy Life.

Fervency in devotion; frequency in prayer; aspiring after the love of God continually; striving to get above the world and the body; loving silence and solitude, as far as one's condition will permit; humble and affable to all; patient in suffering affronts and contradictions; glad of occasions of doing good even to enemies; doing the will of God, and promoting His honour to the utmost of one's power; resolving never to offend Him willingly, for any temporal pleasure, profit, or loss. These are virtues highly pleasing to God. There is no pleasure comparable to the not being captivated to any external thing whatever. Self-denial does not consist in fasting and other mortifications only, but in an indifference for the world, its profits, pleasures, honours, and its other idols. It is a part of special prudence, never to do any thing because one has an inclination to it; but because it is one's duty, or it is reasonable; for he who follows his inclination because he wills, in one thing, will do it in another. He that will not command his thoughts and his will, will soon lose the command of his actions. Always suspect yourself, when your inclinations are strong and importunate. It is necessary that we deny ourselves in little and indifferent things, when reason and conscience, which is the voice of God, suggests it to us, as ever we hope to get the rule over our own will. Say not, it is a trifle, and not fit to make a sacrifice of to God. He that will not sacrifice a little affection, will hardly offer a greater. It is not the thing, but the reason and manner of doing it, viz. for God's sake, and that I may accustom myself to obey His voice, that God regards, and rewards with greater degrees of grace. (Life of Mr. Bonnell, p. 122.)

Rom. xv. 3. "Even Jesus Christ pleased not Himself;" as appears in the meanness of His birth, relations, form of a servant, the company He kept, His life, death, &c. The greater your self denial, the firmer your

faith, and more acceptable to God. The sincere devotion of the rich, the alms of the poor, the humility of the great, the faith of such whose condition is desperate, the contemning the world when one can command it at pleasure, continuing instant in prayer even when we want the consolation we expected: these, and such like instances of self-denial, God will greatly reward. They who imagine that self-denial intrenches upon our liberty, do not know that it is this only that can make us free indeed, giving us the victory over ourselves, setting us free from the bondage of our corruption, enabling us to bear afflictions (which will come one time or other), to foresee them without amazement, enlightening the mind, sanctifying the will. and making us to slight those baubles, which others so eagerly contend for.

Mortification consists in such a sparing use of the creatures, as may deaden our love for them, and make us even indifferent in the enjoyment of them. This lessens the weight of concupiscence, which carries us to evil, and so makes the grace of God more effectual to turn the balance of the will. (Norris's Christian Prudence, p. 300.) It is the greatest mercy, that God does not consult our inclinations, in laying upon us the cross, which is the only way to happiness. Jesus Christ crucified would have few imitators, if God did not lay it upon us, by the hands of men, and by His providence. "Let him deliver him now, if he will have him." (Matth. xxvii. 43.) Carnal man cannot comprehend that God loves those whom he permits to suffer; but faith teaches us, that the cross is the gift of his love, the foundation of our hope, the mark of his children, and the title of an inheritance in heaven. But unless God sanctify it by his Spirit, it becomes an insupportable burden, a subject of murmuring, and an occasion of sin.

(To be continued.)

OXFORD,

The Feast of St. Andrew.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jh-newman/bishop-wilsons-meditations-on-his-sacred-office-no-4-wednesday/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net