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# SERMONS ON IMPORTANT SUBJECTS

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SERMON XII.

## LOVE OF THE WORLD.

-- 1 John ii. 15.--

"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."

This lecture was typed in Eugene Detweiler.

In discussing this subject I shall pursue the following order: --

- 1. What we are to understand by the love of the world.*
- 2. Who love the world in this sense.*
- 3. That they do not love God.*

### **I. What are we to understand by the love of the world.**

Negatively. The love of the world here spoken of, is not every kind or degree of desire for worldly objects. God has so constituted us, that a certain amount, and certain kinds of worldly objects, are indispensable to our existence. We need food and raiment, implements of husbandry and trade, and various worldly things. The proper desire of which is not sinful, nor inconsistent with the love of God.

But to love the world, is to make worldly things the principal objects of desire and pursuit.

To love them, and desire them more than to love God and man, to be more anxious to obtain them, and spend more time in their acquisition, than in efforts to glorify God, and save the souls of men, is to love the world in the sense of the text. Where the love of God and of men is supreme in the heart,

there may be a suitable desire for worldly objects; but, where an individual manifests a disposition to give the acquisition of wealth, or of worldly objects the preference, and aims rather at obtaining worldly things than at glorifying God and of doing good to men, it is certain that the love of the world is supreme in his heart.

## II. Who do this?

- 1. All who cheat and defraud to obtain the things of the world. That a man who will cheat and defraud his neighbor, does not love him as he does himself, is too manifest to require proof. That a man who will disobey God for the purpose of obtaining worldly goods, does not love God supremely, is self-evident. Nay, that he loves the things of the world supremely, is a simple matter of fact.
- 2. All those whose anxieties and cares are mostly about worldly things. If they are more careful for the things of the world-- more anxious and earnest in the pursuit of them, than in glorifying God and in doing good to men, they love the world supremely.

Objection. But do any of you ask, May not a man be anxious to obtain worldly things, for the purpose of doing good with money? I answer, a man may be desirous to obtain money for the purpose of glorifying God with it; but, in that case the principal anxiety, and care, and desire, would not terminate upon the acquisition of money, but upon the end which he hoped to accomplish through its instrumentality. To suppose that a man, whose supreme object is to glorify God and do good to man, should concern himself principally about worldly things, is the same absurdity as to suppose, that he was more anxious about the means than about the end which he hoped to accomplish by these means. It is the end that gives value to the means. It is the end that is the main object of thought and of desire; and to suppose that a man's anxieties and cares would cluster about the means of effecting the end, rather than about the end itself, is plainly absurd and impossible.

Suppose a gentleman was engaged to be married, and has commenced a journey for that purpose. His heart is greatly set upon the end he has in view, and is it likely that either the delights or cares of his journey will occupy more of his thoughts, and absorb more of his affections than the object for which he has undertaken the journey. Who does not know that, in such a case, if his heart was greatly set upon the obtaining of his bride, he would pass from stage to stage without being hardly conscious of the incidents that occurred in his progress. His bride and his marriage would fill up his thoughts by day, and be the subject of his dreams by night; and all his cares and desires, that the stages and steamboats should convey him more rapidly, would be for the more speedy accomplishment of his heart's desire. And now, shall a man who loves God supremely, and whose desire for money and for worldly goods, is that he may glorify God, and benefit mankind thereby, can he be so anxious and so busy about the means as to lose sight of the end? that his interest in the end to be accomplished is swallowed up in efforts to obtain the means? This cannot be. And now I appeal to the two classes of persons already mentioned; you that practice fraud, and take advantage of the ignorance of men, and over-reach, and cheat them in little or great things, do you pretend to love God? If so, you are an arrant hypocrite.

And you, who are filled with cares about worldly things, whose time, and thoughts, and affections are swallowed up in efforts to obtain them, know assuredly that you love the world, and that the love of God is not in you.

- 3d. All those who consult only their own interest in the transaction of business.

God requires you to love your neighbour as yourself. Again he says, "let every one look not upon his own things, but upon the things of others." "Let every one seek not his own, but another's wealth." These are express requirements of God; they are the very spirit and substance of the Gospel. Benevolence is a desire to do good to others. A willingness to deny self, for the purpose of promoting the interest of your neighbor, is the very spirit of Christ, it is the heart and soul of his Gospel. Now, suppose a man, in his bargains with others, aims only at promoting his own interest; he seeks not another's, but his own wealth. He looks not to the welfare of others, but his eye and his heart are upon his own side of the bargain. He does not aim at benefiting the individual with whom he transacts business; his only object is to take care of himself. This is the very opposite of the spirit of the Gospel. Does this man love his neighbour as himself? Does he love that God supremely, who has prohibited all selfishness, on pain of eternal death? No! If he loved God, he would not disobey him, for the sake of making money. If he loved his neighbor as himself; if he felt that it was more blessed to give than to receive; if he had the spirit of the Gospel, he would of course feel and manifest as great a desire for the interest of those with whom he deals, as for his own interest. He would be as anxious to give, as to get a good bargain; nay, he would be more so. Self-denial, to promote the happiness and the interest of others, would be his joy, would constitute his happiness, would be that to which he would be inclined, of course. And now let me ask you who are here present, can you deny this principle? What then is your spiritual state? Have you the love of God in you? How do you transact business? Do you consult the interest of those with whom you deal, as much as you do your own? or in all your bargains, do you aim simply at securing a profit to yourself? If you do, the love of God is not in you. You have not the beginning of piety in your heart.

- 4th. All those that feel chagrined and grieved when they find that the person with whom they have dealt has the best of the bargain, and has made a greater profit than themselves. Now, if a man had the spirit of Christ, he would rejoice in this. It would be the thing at which he would aim, to benefit the individual with whom he deals, as much as possible; and if he afterwards learns that he had made a good bargain, and had been greatly benefitted by it, it would gratify him all the more.

Now, how is it with you, my hearers? Do you find yourselves gratified and delighted, when you find that you have greatly contributed to the interest of those with whom you deal, in having given them the best side of the bargain? Be honest, try yourself by this rule; see whether you love your neighbor as yourself; see whether you love God supremely. He requires you to seek not your own, but your neighbor's wealth. To look not upon your own interest, but the interest of others. Have you the spirit of these requirements? Have you the spirit and temper of that God who lays down this rule of

action? If not, you have not the love of God in you?

- 5th. All those who will make bargains only when they can make a profit by it.

There are many who will never trade only when they can promote their own interest; it matters not how much it might benefit any body else. The interest of the individual, who desires to make the bargain with them, is not taken into the account at all. They do not think of making a bargain to benefit others, and will turn away from the proposal instantly, unless then can promote their own selfish ends. They will stand and bow, and be very accommodating, and kind, and attentive, while there is any prospect of their making a good per centage on their goods; but the negociation is broken off instantly, without courtesy or good breeding, whenever it is settled that they can make nothing by the bargain. This shows that they do not consult the interests of those with whom they deal, and that the world is their God.

- 6th. All those who will take advantage of the ignorance of those with whom they deal, to get a good bargain out of them, love the world supremely.

Cases of this kind often occur. A customer comes in; he is instantly measured from head to foot by every eye; they survey him all around, to see whether he understands the value of the articles which he wishes to purchase; whether it will be difficult, or otherwise, to get a good bargain out of him; whether it will do to set the price of goods high, and how high; and whether it is likely that he will buy much or little. And if he wishes to make a heavy bill, some of the first articles for which he inquires are put low; and thus baits are laid to lead him on, from step to step, under the idea that all the articles are low. All such management as this is supreme selfishness, it is fraud, and the very opposite of the spirit of Christ. For such a man to profess the love of God is naked hypocrisy.

- 7th. Those who will sell useless articles to men, for the sake of profit, have not the love of God in them.

A man that does this cannot be consulting the interest of his neighbor at all. He must be acting on principles of pure selfishness. He takes the money without an equivalent, and consents that they should "spend it for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfieth not." This is the direct opposite of the spirit of Christ.

- 8th. All who sell hurtful articles, for the sake of the profit, have not the love of God in them.

The man that will sell articles of known pernicious tendency to his fellow-men, for the sake of gain, has the very spirit of hell. Shall a man, who will sell rum, or make whiskey, and deal out death and damnation to men, and make them pay for it, and thus not only poison them to death, but worse than rob them of their money, shall he pretend to love God? For shame, thou hypocrite! thou wretch! thou enemy of God and man! thou wolf in the clothing of a sheep! Lay aside your mask, and write your name Satan on your sign-board.

There are those that will sell articles that are not only useless, but hurtful; inasmuch as

they are designed to promote the pride and vanity of men, and to take their hearts from God, and fasten them upon the baubles and gew-gaws of this vain world. To tempt the deceitful hearts of men, and enlist them in the chase of fashion, and gaiety, and worldliness. Now, instead of being pious, they who do this take the devil's place, and tempt mankind to sin.

- 9th. All those who transact business upon principles of commercial justice, rather than on principles of benevolence, love the world supremely.

Business principles, or the principles of commercial justice, are the principles of supreme selfishness. They have been established by selfish men, for selfish purposes, without even the pretence of conformity to the law of love. Upon these principles it is neither demanded, nor expected, that any one should seek another's wealth; but that every one should take care of himself, purchase as low, and sell as high as he can; take advantage of the state of the market, the scarcity of the articles in which he deals; and, in short, to go the whole circle of selfish projects, to promote the interest of self. Can a man love God supremely, and his neighbor as himself, who daily and habitually transacts business upon the principles of commercial justice, founded, as they are, in that which is the direct opposite of the requirement of God? Every day engaged in business transactions, the sum and substance, the aggregate, and the detail of which are designed to promote self-interest that do not even pretend to aim at the promotion of the interest of others; but self is the beginning, the middle, and the end of the whole matter.

- 10th. All those who engage in business, to the neglect of spiritual exercises, love the world supremely.

Many professors of religion seem just about as much determined to do good with their money, as impenitent sinners are to repent. They profess to engage in business for the glory of God, but instead of using their money for this purpose, they enlarge their capital, and their business, and transact business upon the principles of worldly men, and practice upon themselves a constant delusion. Instead of laying out their money as they go along for the building up of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, they add their yearly profits to their capital, until nearly their whole time, and thoughts, and affections, are engrossed with money-making. Now, why do you not see, who practice this, that you are deceiving yourselves?

The only way in which money can be used for the glory of God and the good of men, is to promote the spirituality and holiness of men, and if you pursue business in a way that is inconsistent with your own spirituality, you might as well talk of getting drunk or swearing for the glory of God, as of making money for His glory. For you to neglect communion with God, under the pretence of making money for him, is sheer hypocrisy. If you prefer business to prayer, busy yourselves in your offices, and shops, and business, and neglect your closets, the love of God is not in you. To pretend that you love God is just as absurd as to suppose that your eagerness to make money for the glory of God, leads you to neglect communion with him, or that your great zeal to serve him, and great love for him, leads you to neglect communion with him, and betake yourself to making

money.

- 11th. Those who make their business an excuse for not attending meetings and using means for the conversion of sinners. It is manifest that such persons are not transacting business for God. The only possible use of making money for the glory of God is, to use it for the conversion and sanctification of sinners. This is the great end of doing business for God. But to be so busy in making money, as to neglect to make direct and personal efforts for the conversion of sinners is absurd; it proves to a demonstration, that the object of making money is not to convert, and sanctify, and save sinners. In such cases, it is plain, that money is sought from the love of it, and not for the purpose of building up the kingdom of Jesus Christ.
- 12th. All those whose business diverts their thoughts and affections from God. If they were transacting business for God, the more busy and engaged they were in his service, in doing his will, and in making money for him, the more would he be present to all their thoughts, and the deeper and more mellow would be their piety.
- 13th. All rich men love the world supremely. Jesus Christ has said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Yes, you say, this is true, if he sets his heart upon his riches. Now, what I affirm is, that every rich man under the Gospel, does set his heart upon his riches. If he did not he would not be rich. If he loved the kingdom of God supremely, he would give his riches to promote that kingdom. We always do that which we, upon the whole, choose to do. If you have money, and see an article of furniture, or dress, or any thing else that, upon the whole, you prefer to any given amount of money, you are certain to make the exchange, and give your money for the article, if it is in your power. This is just as certain as it is that your choice governs your conduct. Now, if a man loves the Lord Jesus Christ, and the souls of men, more than he does his money; if, upon the whole, he prefers the glory of God, and the salvation of men, to his own selfish interest, it is as certain that he will cease to be rich, and give his money to promote those objects, as it is that his will controls his actions. So that a man being rich under the Gospel, when it is known that his money can be used for the glory of God and the conversion of souls, is demonstration absolute, that he loves the world supremely. To say that he is rich, but does not set his heart upon riches--that he continues to retain his wealth, and yet does not set his heart upon it, is manifestly absurd and false. For, certainly, nothing but a supreme attachment to it could cause him to hold on to the possession of it, when every wind is loaded down with cries and beseechings to send the bread of life to those that are ready to perish.

But, perhaps some will say that much depends upon the instructions that rich people have received--that they may be conscientious in the belief that they may lawfully retain and enjoy their wealth. I answer that this does not relieve the difficulty, for the question is not, what they may lawfully do, but what they are disposed to do. Suppose an affectionate wife to have a husband in slavery, whom she tenderly loves; the price of his ransom is fixed, and she, by her earnings and savings, is determined to pay the price. See how she will behave herself. Of what use is it to tell her that she may lawfully purchase such articles of dress and convenience, and that it is lawful for her to have the comforts of life--will she so lay out her money? No: she will scarcely allow herself a pair of shoes. She will practice the most rigid economy, and take a satisfaction in denying herself every

thing but the absolutely indispensables of life, until she has made out the sum demanded for her husband's ransom. It is of no use to preach to her of the lawfulness of appropriating her money to other purposes. She has one all-absorbing object in view. She values money only as it will contribute to the promotion of this object. No false instruction, nor right instruction, in regard to the lawfulness of using her money for other purposes will alter her practice. Every penny that she can spare is laid out for the promotion of this object of her heart's desire. So if a man love God supremely, if he long for the coming and prosperity of his kingdom more than for any thing else, the question with him will not be whether he may lawfully enjoy an estate. The truth is, that could he do it never so lawfully, it is not his choice to do it. He prefers to build up the kingdom of Christ with his money, and accounts his money as of no value, only as it can contribute to this object. Therefore, I hold it to be a certain truth, that if a man is rich and continues to be rich under the Gospel, there can be no other reason than that he prefers wealth to the promotion of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Do any of you object and say, that Abraham, and Job, and David, and Solomon were rich? I answer: the command had never been given in their day to preach the Gospel to every creature, and there is no reason for believing that they so much as dreamed that the world could be converted in the way in which we now know that it can and must be converted. They could not, therefore, have had the same motives for using their wealth for the conversion of the world that we have. We have not the least reason to believe that their property could have been used for the conversion of the world, in the sense in which we can use ours. It was no certain sign, therefore, if they kept their wealth, that they preferred it to the kingdom and glory of God.

- 14. All those who lay up their surplus income, have not the love of God in them.

By surplus income, I mean that which is not necessary for the support of themselves and families; if they lay it up, it must be because they love it. If they preferred the kingdom of Jesus Christ, they would immediately use what they could spare, after providing for the necessities of their families, to the building up of his kingdom. Suppose an individual was on the coast of Africa, and longed exceedingly to return to his home, but had no means of paying his passage, if some one should present him with a purse of gold, would he lay it up, or would he immediately lay it out to gratify the all-absorbing desire of his heart and pay his passage to his native country. This would be the very reason why he would prize the gift. It would be valuable to him on that account, that by it he might accomplish the object of his heart's desire. Can it be that a man loves supremely the kingdom of Christ, and longs exceedingly for its coming and extension, and yet hoards up his money instead of spending it for this supremely desirable object?

- 15th. Although a man may give his surplus income, yet if he practice no self-denial, he gives to God that which costs him nothing, and gives no substantial evidence that he loves God. If he gratify all his wants and the wants of his family, and provide for them all the comforts and conveniences of life, and simply appropriate what remains of his income over and above his expenditures, he really practices no self-denial; he enjoys all that can be enjoyed of wealth, and is really ridding himself of the trouble of taking care of it by appropriating the balance of his yearly income to the cause of Christ. This is like a safety-valve to let off the surplus steam that would otherwise burst the boiler.

Objection. But do any of you object and ask, should every man give up all his capital and means at once of promoting the cause of Christ? I answer, that this might not be Christian economy. A man's capital, if it be not larger than is necessary for the wisest transaction of business, is to be considered in light of tools with which he serves God and his generation. In such cases, if he give his income, after deducting the necessary expenses of his family, I cannot see that such a use of it is inconsistent with the love of God. But for a man to live and die rich, to hoard up his income, to enjoy his wealth, and leave his substance to his babes, is the Psalmist's definition of a wicked man who has his portion in this world.

- 16th. All those who are more interested in secular news, that relates to money transaction, than in the accounts of revivals of religion, and in those things that pertain more particularly to the kingdom of Christ, love the world supremely.

Show me a man that is looking over the secular news, after the price of stocks, and excited about bank questions and monied speculations, but who does not read or take an interest in reports of revivals, and the onward movements of the church, and if he profess to love God, his profession is base hypocrisy.

- 17th. All those who are more depressed, and feel more keenly commercial and monied embarrassments, than they do the low state of religion, and the state of dying sinners, love the world supremely. This is too plain to need either proof or illustration.
- 18th. All those who would sooner engage in monied speculations than they would in revivals of religion, love the world supremely.

Some professors of religion are all excitement when great speculations are to be made. When stocks are high, or real estate is on the rise, or any opportunity of making money. But if an effort is to be made to promote a revival of religion, they are too much engrossed in their speculations to give their time and hearts to it. They may pretend that they are making money for God, but the promotion of revivals of religion is the only object of appropriating money to the cause of Christ. If this be the great object of embarking in these speculations, to promote revivals of religion, and build up Christ's kingdom, it were passing strange if in the use of means they should have no heart to engage in directly promoting the end at which they aim. The naked matter of fact is, that if they prefer monied speculations to revivals of religion, they love money, and love the world supremely.

- 19th. All those who disobey the commandments of God, for the purpose of making or saving money, love the world supremely.

A man who would travel on the Sabbath to secure a debt, or to avoid the expence of spending a Sabbath at a public house, when on a journey, certainly loves money supremely. Could he think, if he considered the property in his possession as belonging to God, that God would rather he would violate the holy Sabbath, than to lose a debt or spend a few shillings or dollars by stopping on the Sabbath?

- 20th. All those who do not feel more gratified with the appropriation of money to the cause of Christ, than with any other appropriation of it, love the world supremely.

Take again the case of the woman who is earning money to relieve her husband from bondage. What other appropriation can she make of money that would so much gratify her heart? It is this object that gives value to money in her estimation. Should an individual give her a purse of gold, would she say, now I can buy me a nice dress, now I can furnish my house and live fashionably? No, but bursting into tears of joy and gratitude, she would exclaim, Now I can redeem my husband! Just so a man, who loves God, and longs for the coming of his kingdom, will feel gratified, most of all, with appropriating money for the promotion of that darling object. Jesus Christ has said, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." The truly benevolent man has the highest and holiest pleasure in so disposing of his possessions as in the highest manner to promote the glory of God and the good of his fellow-men. Instead of giving to those objects grudgingly and with a sparing hand, here in the promotion of Christ's kingdom he will pour out of his treasures the most unsparingly, and with the fullest, readiest heart. For this his heart is panting. His spirit is longing with unutterable desires. He therefore accounts nothing a privation or a sacrifice which is appropriated to this object. Does the miser account the hoarding up of money a privation, a sacrifice, or a grievance? No, he accounts the hoarding up as the best possible disposition of his money. To every other object he gives sparingly, and takes but little satisfaction in any expenditures which he is obliged to make; but his heart is set upon accumulating treasures. Every shilling that is saved and put into his iron chest is disposed of according to his heart's desire. Now the Christian's heart is just as truly set upon building up the kingdom of Jesus Christ as a miser's heart is upon hoarding up his wealth. In other expenditures, therefore, he will naturally be sparing; but in the promotion of the great object of his heart's desire, he will be liberal and bountiful, and enjoy most of all the appropriation of money to that object.

- 21st. All those who prefer a speculation to a contribution for the promotion of the interests of Christ's kingdom, love the world supremely. If they loved God supremely, they would desire to make the speculation only for the purpose of enabling them to make the contribution. If they made a hundred or a thousand dollars, they would say, "O for an opportunity now to appropriate this money to the cause of Christ." But if they love the speculation, and are not ready and joyful in the contribution, they love the world, and have not the love of God in them.
- 22d. All those who would rather see a customer come in to pay them money, than an agent of some benevolent society to receive and appropriate it to the promotion of Christ's kingdom, love the world supremely. There is a man who smiles and appears delighted when a customer comes in; but when an agent who is collecting funds for the building up of Christ's kingdom calls, he is sour, and dry, and formal, and perhaps uncivil. This demonstrates, beyond all doubt, where his heart is, and shows that he loves his money more than he loves his God.
- 23d. All those who do not really enjoy giving more than receiving, love the world supremely. If they loved God supremely, their supreme object and joy in receiving would be that they might immediately turn round and give to the promotion of their darling object. But if their incessant cry is give, give, wishing always to receive, and not enjoying the giving of money as they do

the receiving of it, it must be because they love the world.

- 24th. All those who are more parsimonious in their expenditures for the kingdom of Christ, than in their expenditures upon themselves and their families, love the world supremely. There are multitudes of professedly pious people who seem to think it a Christian duty to have every thing connected with the worship and service of God of the cheapest kind, while in their own houses, and about their own persons, and that of their families, they practice upon a very different principle. If a church is to be fitted up, every thing must be done with as little expense as possible. If there are carpets, they must be of the cheapest kind; if there are stoves, or cushions, or lights, or other conveniences, almost any thing will answer, provided it is cheap; things are suffered to be out of order; filth is suffered to accumulate, and the house of God to lie waste; and all this is done under the pious pretence of Christian economy. Many churches in the country have no lamps, and some of them have no stoves, and others have the panes of glass broken out; the doors of others are so dilapidated that they will scarcely shut; others have the stoops rotten, and the church either not painted at all, or so faded, that if it was a dwelling house, you would suppose it the abode of the drunkard. Most of the churches in the country have no carpets; and in churches carpets are more needed than in any other house, to prevent the disturbance that always occurs where people are going out and in upon an uncarpeted floor; and in the city there are many who are entirely unwilling to be at the expense of fitting up a house of worship as commodiously as they fit up their own dwellings. Now, it is manifest, whatever may be the pretence, and however such things may be baptized by the name of Christian economy, all such conduct has its foundation in the love of the world, and in supreme selfishness. Men are always most free in appropriating their money to the promotion of the objects dearest to their hearts. This is simple matter of fact. If, therefore, the heart is set supremely upon honoring God with our substance, it is certain that if in any thing we are bountiful and liberal in our expenditures, it will be in fitting up places for his worship, and in all those things that are essential to decency, to comfort, and enjoyment in his service.

### **III. Having noticed some of the principal evidences of supreme attachment to the world, I now proceed to suggest several reasons why such persons cannot love God.**

The text is a form of expression that is to be understood as expressing a very strong negative. "If any man love the world," says the apostle, "how dwelleth the love of God in him;" that is, the love of God is certainly not in him. This is the language and the doctrine of the whole Bible; so that, so far as Scripture testimony goes, the proof is conclusive. But I will mention several considerations that belong to the philosophy of mind, that will demonstrate beyond all contradiction, that individuals upon whom these marks of worldliness are found, have not the love of God in them. The argument runs thus, and is very brief.

- 1. It is impossible that a man should have two supreme objects of affection. If he have any acceptable love to God, it must be supreme; and to affirm that a man loves the world in the sense of this text, and that he loves God with any acceptable love, is a contradiction. It is the same as to say, that he loves both God and the world supremely.
- 2. A man cannot love two objects, that are entirely opposite to each other, at the same time. The apostle immediately subjoins to the text, "for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the

lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world." The love of the world, and the love of God, are directly opposite states of mind, so that to exercise them both at the same time is impossible.

- 3. It is minding the flesh which the apostle declares to be enmity against God.
- Lastly. It is supreme selfishness, which is the direct opposite of the love of God and man. These considerations need only to be named, to be seen to be proof conclusive, that if any man love the world, the love of God is not in him.

## REMARKS.

1. You can see from this subject, that if men should transact worldly business upon the principles of the Gospel, it would be infinitely better for the world in every respect. If every one sought to promote the happiness and interest of others, the amount of property, and of every other good, would be greatly increased. Some persons seem to suppose, that unless they consult solely their own interest, it is impossible that society should exist. What! they say, would you have us all seek not our own interest, but the interest of others? What then would become of our own interest? I answer, your interest would be secured, if, while you were mainly solicitous to benefit others, they were just as solicitous to benefit you. The secular interests of men would be thus as highly, and more highly advanced, than under the present arrangement of society, while the spirit that would be cherished and cultivated by this course of conduct, would shed a sweet, and healing, and refreshing influence over all the discords and inquietudes of selfishness; and peace, and love, and heaven, would reign in the bosoms of men.

But does any one object and say, that inasmuch as worldly men will not practice upon these principles, it is impossible that Christians should, without giving up all the business of the world into their hands. This is a radical and ruinous mistake. Suppose it were known that Christians universally discarded all selfishness in their business, and acted upon principles of entire benevolence; that in all their dealings they sought the interest of those with whom they deal, equally with their own. No sooner would this fact be known, than worldly men would be forced to transact business upon these principles, or give up all the business of the world into the hands of Christians; for who would deal with a man who acted upon principles of supreme selfishness, when he might just as well transact business with those who would not only treat him with equity, but with entire benevolence; so that it is perfectly within the power of the church to compel worldly men to transact business upon Gospel principles, or not transact it at all. And woe to the church, if she does not reverse and annihilate the whole system of doing business on principles of selfishness.

II. Perhaps some of you will say, if the doctrine of this sermon be true, who then can be saved? I answer, certainly not those who manage their affairs upon principles that are in direct opposition to the benevolence of the Gospel; who make commercial justice, which is founded in selfishness, the rule of their lives, and satisfy themselves with being honest in this sense of honesty, instead of being governed by the law of love; who seek their own, and not their neighbor's wealth; who mind earthly things, and account it more blessed to receive than to give. If there be any truth in the word of God, all such men are in the way to hell.

III. But will any one object, and say, this is very uncharitable. If this be true, nearly all the church are hypocrites. I answer, the doctrine is true, whatever the inference may be. I do not pretend to be more charitable than God is, and to hope that those persons are pious of whom God has said that his love is not in them. I will not be charitable enough to throw away my Bible, or suppose that the lovers of the world are the friends instead of the enemies of God. That multitudes of professors are deceived, that they love the world supremely, is as evident as if they had taken their oath of it; and because the great mass of professing Christians give evidence of this state of mind, we are not to dispute our Bibles, and charitably hope that they may be saved.

IV. You see from this subject why it is that so few professors of religion have a spirit of prayer. The truth is, the love of God is not in them. Look around this great commercial city; nearly the whole population are here for the purposes of worldly gain. The principles upon which almost the entire business of the city is transacted, is that of supreme selfishness. How then can a spirit of prayer prevail in such a community as this. This same principle prevails almost universally through the country. Farmers, mechanics, merchants, and men and women of every occupation, without hesitation, transact their business upon selfish principles, and seek supremely their own and not their neighbor's wealth. It is impossible that the love of God should prevail in the church, or in any heart, while actuated by such principles.

V. You see from this subject why it is that young converts so uniformly wax cold in religion. Let any individual pass through one business season, acting upon business principles, and it is impossible that the love of God should be alive in his heart. He is assiduously cultivating and cherishing a spirit of selfishness; and in all his daily avocations, he does not so much as intend to seek the good of others, but his own good; and can we be at a loss for the reasons of such universal backsliding?

VI. From this subject you may see that the religion of the great mass of the church is not the religion of love, but of fear. They fear the Lord, but serve their own gods. They are dragged along in the dry performance of what they call duty, by their consciences. They have a dry, legal, earthly spirit; and their pretended service is hypocrisy and utter wickedness.

VII. You can see from this subject why so little is effected by all the means that are used for the building up of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Men had much rather give their money than to live holy lives and walk with God. An effort seems to be making now to convert the world with money. Unbounded speculations are entered into by professedly pious men; and while their heart, and soul, and lives are absorbed in the spirit of this world, they are trying to persuade themselves that their money will be a substitute for a holy life, and compensate for the neglect of personal exertions to save the souls of men; but, rely upon it, God will teach them their mistake.

VIII. The spontaneous conduct of the primitive church shows what true piety will do in leading men to renounce the world; and while the love of God pervaded the church, men were manifestly actuated by different principles from those of commercial justice. They sought not their own, but the things of Jesus Christ.

IX. But do you ask, are nearly all the church wrong? I answer, that upon this subject they are wrong. In most things the church of the present day is orthodox in theory, but vastly heretical in practice. Nor

is it any thing new for the church to be nearly all wrong. More than once or twice have nearly the entire body of the church departed from God, and satisfied themselves with the religion of selfishness.

Lastly. I beg of you who are convicted of worldliness, not to go away and say that you hope that you love God, notwithstanding some, or nearly all of these evidences are against you. I declare to you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, that if these marks of worldliness are upon you, the love of God is not in you. And O, "be ye not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

[First "Sermons On Important Subjects"](#)