

What Saith the Scripture?

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Devotion

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Texts.--I Cor. 10:31: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Col. 3:17, 23: "And whatsoever ye do, in word, or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him; and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

Rom. 6:13: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

Rom. 14:7, 8: "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself, for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

These texts teach the nature and duty of Devotion to God.

In discussing this subject, I design to show,

I. What is not true devotion to God.

II. What is true devotion.

III. That devotion, and nothing short of devotion is true religion.

IV. Notice several mistakes commonly made upon this subject.

I. I am to show what is not true devotion.

- 1. Devotion does not consist in reading the Bible, nor in praying, nor in attending meetings. These may be, or may not be instances of particular acts of devotion, but are not to be regarded as devotion itself.
- 2. Devotion does not consist in closet, public, or social consecration of ourselves to God. These are to be regarded as special acts of devotion, and pledges or promises on our part of devotion, rather than as constituting devotion.
- 3. Devotion does not consist in individual acts or exercises of any kind. Acts or exercises may be devotional acts, i.e. acts of devotion, but let it be remembered that no acts or exercises constitute devotion.

II. I am to show what is true devotion.

It is a state of the mind or of the heart. It is that state of the will in which every thing--our whole life, and being, and possessions, are a continual offering to God; i.e. are continually devoted to God. True devotion, so far from consisting in any individual act, or feelings, must, of necessity, be the supreme devotion of the will, extending to all we have and are--to all times, places, employments, thoughts, and feelings.

Let your own ideas of what a minister ought to be illustrate my meaning. You feel that a minister, in preaching the gospel, should have but one design, and that should be to glorify God, in the sanctification and salvation of sinners. You know that he is professedly a servant of God. You feel that he ought to study, and preach, and perform all his ministerial duties--not for himself--not for his salary--not to increase his popularity--but to glorify God. Now you can easily see if a minister has not this singleness of eye, his service cannot be acceptable to God. It is not an offering to God, it is not a devotion to God, but a devotion to himself.

Devotion, then, in a minister, is that state of mind in which all his ministerial duties are performed with a single eye to the glory of God, and where his whole life is a continual offering to God.

Again, you feel that a minister ought to be as devoted in every thing else as he is in praying and preaching, and in this you are right; for he not only ought to be, but really is as devoted out of the pulpit as he is in the pulpit. If he is influenced by selfish and worldly motives during the week, he is influenced by the same motives on the Sabbath. If during the week he is studying his own interests, and endeavoring to promote his own ends, it must be that he is so on the Sabbath.

You feel, also, that if a minister is not truly devoted he will go to hell. Should you know that a minister preached, prayed, visited, and performed his ministerial duties mainly for the purpose of supporting his family, or in any way honoring or benefiting himself, whatever zeal he might manifest, you would say he was a wicked man, and unless he is converted he must inevitably lose his soul. If these are your views on the subject, they are undoubtedly correct. Here, where you have no personal interest, you form a right judgment, and decide correctly concerning the character and destiny of such a man.

Now remember that nothing short of this is devotion in you. Bear it in mind that no particular acts, or

fervor, or gushings of emotion, or resolutions, or purposes of amendment, or of future obedience, are devotion.

But devotion is that state of the will in which the mind is swallowed up in God, as the object of supreme affection, in which we not only live and move in God, but for God. In other words, devotion is that state of mind in which the attention is diverted from self, and self-seeking, and is directed to God; the thoughts, and purposes, and desires, and affections, and emotions, all hanging upon, and devoted to Him.

III. I am to show that devotion, and nothing short of devotion, is true religion.

Devotion and true religion are identical.

- 1. Because devotion implies and includes supreme love to God. It is impossible that we should be devoted to an object, unless it be the object of our supreme affection.
- 2. It is impossible that we should not be devoted to an object of supreme affection. If we love God supremely, he will be the end for which we live; for that which we love supremely is always necessarily the end and object for which we live. If an individual loves God supremely, he will be as conscious that he lives for God, as that he lives at all.
- 3. Nothing short of this state of mind which I have described is consistent with true religion. Supreme love to an object is a state, and not a mere act of the mind. By state, I mean a voluntary state of mind. Where, therefore, there is a supreme love, devotion, or consecration to God, must be a state--a voluntary state of mind--in opposition to individual acts of mind.
- 4. Nothing short of this can be acceptable to God. Unless devotion be a habit, or state of mind, unless the whole being be an offering to God, he must have a rival in our hearts. This He will not endure; and to attempt to please Him by isolated acts of devotion, when it is not the habit, and state of our minds, is infinitely more abominable than for a wife to attempt to please her husband with an occasional smile, when she lives only to please and gain the affections of another man.
- 5. Nothing short of this can be the result of evangelical faith. Evangelical faith is that state of mind in which eternal things are apprehended as realities. The things of time and of eternity--God's interests and our own interests--his character, and claims, and loving kindness are apprehended by the mind as facts, and as they are.

Now a mind in the exercise of this faith will as naturally live for eternity, and not for time--for God, and not for self--as an unbeliever who apprehends none of these things as they are, would live for time and self, and not for God.

- 6. A departure from this state is heart apostasy. Whatever a man's outward deportment may be, the moment he turns aside in heart from sincere devotion to God--from a supreme consecration of his whole being to the service of God--he has in heart apostatized from true religion. He is no longer in the service of God, but is serving the object upon which his heart is set, and that is the

object of his devotion, i.e. it is his God.

IV. I am to notice several mistakes commonly made upon this subject.

- 1. Many imagine that there is a real distinction between devotion and other duties, as if a man could be doing his duty in that which is not devotion to God, the duties of devotion are generally supposed to be closet and family prayer, reading the scriptures, together with singing and praying in the public exercises of God's house. These are called the devotional parts of worship, while the preaching and hearing are called less devotional. On the Sabbath men imagine themselves to be devotional, while on the weekdays, excepting in those few acts which they call religious duties, they are serving themselves, and are supremely devoted to their own interests. Now all such ideas as these arise out of the total absence of true devotion; and individuals who entertain such views have not yet understood what true religion is.--Nothing is duty that is not performed for God. A man that is truly religious is as truly devotional in his daily business, as on the Sabbath. The business of the world is performed by him in the same spirit, and with the same design as he prays and reads his Bible, and attends the worship of God on the Sabbath. If this is not the case, he has no true religion.
- 2. Some, who seem to do all for God, and are manifestly in a devotional state of mind, do not, after all, seem to realize that every act devoted to God is as acceptable as prayer or praise. If, by necessary duties, they are kept from spending much time in their closets, and going a great deal to meeting, Satan takes advantage of their ignorance, and brings them into bondage, he endeavors to persuade them that they are neglecting their duties to God, and attending to other things. Now you who are devoted to God should understand that if the providence of God confine you at home to nurse the sick, or prevent you from observing those hours of secret prayer which you are wont to observe, you are not to be brought into bondage on this account, if you are conscious that these other duties are performed for God.
- 3. Others think that devotion may be sincere, and yet extend only to certain duties, i.e. that a man may pray sincerely, and from right motives, and yet be worldly in the transaction of business. Now a little reflection will convince any honest mind that it is naturally impossible. Devotion to God cannot be sincere any further than it annihilates selfishness. Devotion and selfishness are eternal opposites.
- 4. It is a very common idea that we are to be more devotional, i.e. more religious, on the Sabbath, and in secret and social prayer, than at other times and in other things. But the text shows that whatever we do--whether we eat or drink--at all times--in all places--and in all things--we are to do all for the glory of God.
- 5. Many mistake the religion of emotion for that of the will or heart. This is manifest from their lives. You will often witness the gushings forth of their emotions. They weep, and appear to melt and break down. They promise reformation, and entire consecration to God; but attempt to trade with them the very next day, and you will find them supremely selfish--that they are not devoted to God, but to their own interest, and are ready to take any advantage, even of their brethren, to benefit themselves.

Now in this case it is manifest that their melting and breaking down was merely a gushing of the emotions, and not a will subdued and devoted to God. Devotion belongs to the will, and there may be many paroxisms of emotion, where the consecration of the will to self remains supreme.

- 6. Many mistake the consecration and devotion of the imagination for that of the heart. They can write poems, or sermons, or religious articles for the paper--they can talk, and pray, and preach, and exercise any degree of zeal in the cause of religion, and yet meet them on any ground where the deep foundations of their hearts are developed, and you find they will be supremely selfish.
- 7. Many expect devotion without faith. This is naturally impossible. The mind cannot be devoted to God without confiding in Him.
- 8. This shows that they confound faith with hope, or the expectation of salvation. A man may be devoted without a hope, and may consecrate his whole being to God, while he thinks nothing of his own salvation.
- 9. Many do not distinguish between that naked faith in the simple truth, which invariably begets devotion, and their ever varying states of emotion, which they are prone to call religion. Simple faith in the character of God, as revealed in the Bible, naturally and necessarily begets a spirit of consecration to God. But there may be any amount of emotion, without any true devotion.

REMARKS.

1. A spirit of devotion will make the most constant cares and the most pressing labors the means of the deepest and most constant communion with God. The more constant and pressing our duties are, if they are performed for God, the deeper and more incessant is our communion with him; for whatever is done in a spirit of devotion is communion with God.

2. They are not Christians who do not hold communion with God in their ordinary employments. If you do not hold conscious communion with God in your ordinary business, it is because it is not performed with a spirit of devotion. If not performed in a spirit of devotion, it is sin. But if your ordinary employments are sin, then certainly you have no religion, unless a man can be truly religious, and yet ordinarily a servant of the Devil.

3. They are certainly not in a sanctified state who cannot attend to the ordinary and lawful business of life, without being drawn away from God.

4. That is unlawful which cannot be done in a spirit of devotion. If you feel the incongruity of performing it ,as an act of devotion to God, it is unlawful, yourself being judge.

5. That is unlawful which is not so done; i.e. whatever the act may be in itself, if it is not actually performed as an act of devotion to God, it is sin. Hence "the plowing of the wicked is sin." Eating and drinking, and the most common acts of life, if not done in a spirit of devotion, are sin.

6. Any thing not right or wrong in itself, may be either right or wrong, as it is or is not done in a spirit of devotion. Hence:

7. A selfish mind may condemn a sanctified mind for what is no sin in that particular individual; for the selfish man might naturally enough suppose the other to be actuated by the same motives by which he knows himself to be actuated.

So, again, a sanctified mind might give credit to a selfish mind where in is not due, taking it for granted that when the act is right the motive is right. So the sinner may sin in copying the example of a Christian--I mean the example of the Christian when he does not sin--Christian example may influence him to go to meeting, but still, if his motives are not right, it is sin.

8. Sinners may, and often do give themselves credit for outwardly imitating the example of Christians, when, in reality, the very thing for which they give themselves credit is among their greatest sins.

9. There is no peace of mind but in a state of devotion. No other state of mind is reasonable. In no other state will the powers of the mind harmonize. In any other state than that of devotion to God, there is an inward struggle, and mutiny, and strife in the mind itself. The conscience upbraids the heart for selfishness. Hence "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

10. They have "perfect peace whose minds are thus stayed upon God" in an attitude of constant devotion. It is impossible that they should not have peace; for devotion implies and includes peace.

And now, beloved, have you the spirit of true devotion? Do not reply, I hope so; for nothing but consciousness should satisfy you for a moment. If you are devoted to God, you are conscious of it; and if you are not conscious of being devoted to God, it is because you are not so devoted. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; for he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, and he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

GLOSSARY

of easily misunderstood terms as defined by Mr. Finney himself.

Compiled by Katie Stewart

1. **Complacency, or Esteem:** "Complacency, as a state of will or heart, is only benevolence modified by the consideration or relation of right character in the object of it. God, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, in all ages, are as virtuous in their self-denying and untiring labours to save the wicked, as they are in their complacent love to the saints." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE VII)*. Also, "approbation of the character of its object. Complacency is due only to the good and holy." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE XII)*.
2. **Disinterested Benevolence:** "By disinterested benevolence I do not mean, that a person who is disinterested feels no interest in his object of pursuit, but that he seeks the happiness of others for its own sake, and not for the sake of its reaction on himself, in promoting his own happiness. He chooses to do good because he rejoices in the happiness of others, and desires their happiness for its own sake. God is purely and disinterestedly benevolent. He does not

make His creatures happy for the sake of thereby promoting His own happiness, but because He loves their happiness and chooses it for its own sake. Not that He does not feel happy in promoting the happiness of His creatures, but that He does not do it for the sake of His own gratification." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE I)*.

3. **Divine Sovereignty:** "The sovereignty of God consists in the independence of his will, in consulting his own intelligence and discretion, in the selection of his end, and the means of accomplishing it. In other words, the sovereignty of God is nothing else than infinite benevolence directed by infinite knowledge." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXVI)*.
4. **Election:** "That all of Adam's race, who are or ever will be saved, were from eternity chosen by God to eternal salvation, through the sanctification of their hearts by faith in Christ. In other words, they are chosen to salvation by means of sanctification. Their salvation is the end- their sanctification is a means. Both the end and the means are elected, appointed, chosen; the means as really as the end, and for the sake of the end." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXIV)*.
5. **Entire Sanctification:** "Sanctification may be entire in two senses: (1.) In the sense of present, full obedience, or entire consecration to God; and, (2.) In the sense of continued, abiding consecration or obedience to God. Entire sanctification, when the terms are used in this sense, consists in being established, confirmed, preserved, continued in a state of sanctification or of entire consecration to God." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LVIII)*.
6. **Moral Agency:** "Moral agency is universally a condition of moral obligation. The attributes of moral agency are intellect, sensibility, and free will." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
7. **Moral Depravity:** "Moral depravity is the depravity of free-will, not of the faculty itself, but of its free action. It consists in a violation of moral law. Depravity of the will, as a faculty, is, or would be, physical, and not moral depravity. It would be depravity of substance, and not of free, responsible choice. Moral depravity is depravity of choice. It is a choice at variance with moral law, moral right. It is synonymous with sin or sinfulness. It is moral depravity, because it consists in a violation of moral law, and because it has moral character." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.
8. **Human Reason:** "the intuitive faculty or function of the intellect... it is the faculty that intuits moral relations and affirms moral obligation to act in conformity with perceived moral relations." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
9. **Retributive Justice:** "Retributive justice consists in treating every subject of government according to his character. It respects the intrinsic merit or demerit of each individual, and deals with him accordingly." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXIV)*.
10. **Total Depravity:** "Moral depravity of the unregenerate is without any mixture of moral goodness or virtue, that while they remain unregenerate, they never in any instance, nor in any degree, exercise true love to God and to man." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.

11. **Unbelief:** "the soul's withholding confidence from truth and the God of truth. The heart's rejection of evidence, and refusal to be influenced by it. The will in the attitude of opposition to truth perceived, or evidence presented." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LV)*.