

## **DRIVING SHARP BARGAINS.**

Selfishness is a prolific weed which has sprung up and flourished for six thousand years in the midst of the thorns and thistles where man with weariness and sweat of face has been compelled to earn his daily bread. In the endeavor to obtain the necessities and comforts of this life, the idea of getting as much as possible for as little as possible, or, to use a common phrase, of driving close bargains, has well nigh crushed out every noble impulse.

If selfishness flourished only among the miserably poor, it would be at least measurably excusable; but it flourishes no less in the hearts of the rich and comfortably circumstanced. The weed has grown and strengthened its roots and branches so wonderfully from generation to generation that it has come to be regarded largely as a legitimate and natural trait of human nature. It is not surprising, therefore, that the saints, when they diligently compare themselves with the perfect standard of uprightness presented in the Word of God, find this weed in their own hearts, and that as they endeavor to purify themselves, even as their Pattern is pure, they find this one of the most difficult weeds to eradicate. How great is the inclination, even among the children of God, to permit this weed and to eat of its fruit. Would that all could realize more fully how unbecoming it is in the Royal Family.

One of the worst forms of the evil, however, is that which manifests itself toward God. Accustomed to getting as much as possible for the amount paid, or paying as little as possible for the thing secured in daily life, the same disposition often manifests itself in dealing with God for the "Crown of Life," the "glory, honor and immortality," promised to the faithful overcomers.

God covenants with those justified by faith in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, that if they consecrate and sacrifice themselves wholly to his service, he will give them, at once,

"exceeding great and precious promises," and in the future the blessed realities. Our little *all* is indeed a meagre pittance. How little remains of our three-score-years-and-ten! how little of mental vigor! how little of physical strength! how little of money and influence! And yet that *little all*, however great or insignificant it is to us, is all that God requires in exchange for his great favor. It is by no means an exchange of equivalent values, but it is nevertheless an exchange which will prove to the fullest extent our love and devotion to God.

We confess that it is a *great bargain* – such exceeding riches and glory for a price so mean as to be unworthy to be compared with it; and yet shall we, like Ananias and Sapphira, be found endeavoring to *keep back part* of the price?

According to our covenant, we should do our best to use in Jehovah's service "*all* our mind, *all* our soul, and *all* our strength," which of course includes the products of these – all our influence, all our money and all our time as well. Yet how apt are we in action to say to the Lord – I know it is cheap, but can you not take a little less? I think you will not deny me the prize, even though I keep back part of the price.

Thus many desire a crown of life and glory, if they can get it *cheap*; if they can get it for less than their little all; if they can hold on to their money, their good name, and fare none the less and if possible a little better than formerly. O shame! such meanness, such a low appreciation of our Father's grace, is unworthy of the high exaltation to which we are called. And surely, if our own hearts condemn us as unworthy because of the incompleteness of our sacrifice, the Lord, before whom all hearts are open, and who is looking for a loyal and loving bride whose heart is already wedded to his, and who counts no possible sacrifice too great to express the strength of her devotion to him, will not choose such. He does not desire for that blessed relationship one who is mean and selfish.

Consider well, therefore, dearly beloved, what the sacrifice of *all* implies *to you*; consider it, not in the light of your past conduct and that of other professors, but in the light of your covenant and of the examples of our Lord and the apostles; and count not your ease, your comfort, your good name, your friends, your property, your business, your money, your health, your life, or anything dear to you; but, esteeming them all as dross in comparison, be zealous in your endeavor to [R1170 : page 7] testify your love and devotion by your deeds as well as by your words. If you are loyal and zealous, be not surprised if you are counted fanatical. Men esteem those fanatical who think and act outside the beaten track of custom, and in whose course they see no reasonable end in view; but we must think and act as seeing him who is invisible and the glory and honor of being joined with him as co-heirs and co-laborers – reasons which the world and worldly church cannot appreciate and which are therefore foolishness unto them.

Selfishness, while detestable always, is especially so in connection with our covenant relationship to God. Let us rather be very ambitious to increase our capacity that we may thereby increase our service and sacrifice, saying with the Apostle: "I count all things but refuse, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, *that I may win Christ*...that I might know him and [experience] the power of HIS RESURRECTION [to spiritual being], and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death: If by any means I might attain unto THE resurrection out from among the dead." – Phil. 3:8-11.

"This is the first [chief] resurrection," and it includes all the overcomers of the Gospel age – all the blessed and holy. These are they who are gladly sacrificing *all they have* in the service of the Lord and the truth, who are not trying to keep back part of the price in violation of their covenant. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day that I come to make up my jewels" – the covenant-keeping

sacrificers. (See, Psa. 50:5 and Mal. 3:17.) These shall be with the Lord and behold and share his glory. "They that are with him are *called* and *chosen* and *faithful.*" – Rev. 17:14.

As we seek to be just toward God in fulfilling our covenant, our hearts will be drawn into closer and closer union with our Lord's, and we shall become more generous, less selfish, in our dealings with our fellow-men. It will lead us nearer and nearer to that grand statement, that golden rule, of our duty to our fellow-men, voiced by our great Teacher – Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you. And obedience to this rule will work a blessing upon ourselves also; for if we learn to deal generously and justly with our fellow-men, it will help us also to exercise the same principle in our dealings with God.

Let us, then, learn to be just in carrying out our own obligations, and generous in our exactions from others. And while so dealing with God and our neighbor, let us not forget the same rule in our homes. It is surprising and lamentable that many show less justice and less generosity in their dealings with their own families than with others, and are more willing to take advantage of their own flesh and blood than of others. No wonder that such lose influence over each other and lose respect for one another.

Beloved, let us more and more strive to be God-like, – just and generous.

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