

Sermon on John 12:24,25
 Lessons: Genesis 44:6-17
 John 12:20-33; A.C. 6138

by the Rev. Theodore Pitcairn
 June 1, 1969
 Bryn Athyn, Penna.

"Amen, Amen, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

(John 12:24-25)

Our text commences with the words "Amen, Amen", or, as in the King James version of the Bible "Verily, Verily", or it might be said "Truly, Truly". When the Lord said "Amen, Amen", it means that what follows is of the greatest importance.

The word "Amen" comes from the Hebrew word meaning the true. The repetition of the word "Amen" means that the true must be received in both the understanding and in the will, and thus this true must rule in the whole of man's life.

On account of the great importance of the teaching of our text, this teaching is given in different terms seven times in the New Testament. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." (Matthew 10:37-39) "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it." (Matthew 16:24,25) And nearly the same words are repeated in Mark 8:34,35 and in Luke 9:23,24. In Luke 17:33 it is said "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it."

In the Apocalypse it is said: "And they loved not their soul, even unto death." (12:11)

In explication of these texts we read: "And they loved not their souls unto death",...signifies the faithful who have endured temptation, and who have regarded the life of the world as of no account in comparison with the life of Heaven." (A.E.750)

Again "Jesus said Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringth forth much fruit.

Sermon on John 12:24,25

-2-

(John 12:24) The same is true of man, who that he may rise again, must die both as to the body and as to his proprium, which is in itself infernal; for unless both of these die, he does not have the life of Heaven." (A.E. 899)

Again "'And they loved not their soul unto death',...signifies who love not themselves more than the Lord....'Not loving his soul'.... signifies not to love himself and the world more than the Lord, and the things which are the Lord's; 'unto death'....signifies to be willing rather to die." (A.R. 556)

We read: again "'And we shall live, and our ground, servants to Pharaoh'. This signifies total submission....In order that He may make a man blessed and happy, the Lord wills a total submission, that is, that he be not partly his own and partly the Lord's; for then there are two lords, which no one can serve at the same time. Total submission is also meant by the Lord's words in Matthew, 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me', where by father and mother are signified in general those things which are man's proprium from inheritance, and by son and daughter those things that belong to his proprium from actual life. Man's proprium is also signified by soul in John, 'He that loveth his soul shall lose it; but he that hateth his soul in this world shall keep it unto life eternal'. (John 12:25) A.C.6138.

The great question is, Do we love our proprium? Are we averse to it? Before regeneration everyone loves his proprium and the things of the proprium; there is nothing more dear to him. Not only does he love it, but he thinks it is good and beautiful; nor can he will to have it die until he comes to see how ugly it is. There are many who appear kindly, charming, friendly, entertaining, even lovable, and yet all these appearances belong to their old proprium, which they are not willing to give up.

Because externally seen their propriums appear pleasing, they not only appear good before others, but they cannot even imagine that they are not good. If they are members of the Church, they know the teaching concerning the proprium, and may even accept it, in a way, intellectually, but in their heart they do not accept it in relation to themselves; nor is it easy to accept this, for in many cases in the external, as to the appearance, it is quite opposite to the internal reality. To come to see our proprium as it really is, is not easy, and one can only come to see it little by little. This also is of the mercy of the Lord, for if man came to see his proprium in all its ugliness suddenly, he would be so overwhelmed that he would be paralyzed,

and would do nothing. It is of the utmost importance, that by self-examination, reflection and meditation, we come little by little to see the nature of our proprium. Not only must we come to a confession that our proprium is evil, for such a general confession accomplishes little, but we must come to see it in the particular things of our life. Everyone's proprium is different from that of others, and we must come to see the particular form of our proprium both as to the hereditary things represented by father and mother, and in the actual things we have made our own, represented by sons and daughters, and be willing to leave these. Observe how, if you have accomplished an outstanding piece of work, especially if you have been highly praised for it, how pleased you are with yourself, and how you merit in it: or if you have gone out of your way to be helpful to someone, and the one you have helped is appreciative, what a glow of self-satisfaction this gives you. If you have been in company, and have been particularly charming or entertaining so that others are impressed with what good company you are, observe how this pleases your vanity.

The worst form of love of self is in relation to the truths of the Word, and the things of the Church. If one understands and discovers things in the Word that others have not seen, the pride of one's own intelligence, if not shunned, immediately takes over. If one has performed uses for the Church which are appreciated, pride immediately rises up, and has to be recognized and fought against or it carries one away.

On the other hand, if we have done what we consider an outstanding piece of work, and no one expresses appreciation, how resentful one feels. Or if one feels he is being more ignored than others, how a feeling of jealousy is aroused. If others are praised and honored more than us, how we tend to resent it. If we reflect on such things, we can see how powerful the love of self is.

Persons who are ordinarily friendly, kindly, and tolerant, if something occurs which threatens the love of their own intelligence by showing them to be ignorant or stupid, or which appears to them to threaten their position, power, or honor, suddenly become violent, and attack, irrationally, or if they externally restrain themselves, bitterness takes possession of their spirit. We have seen this in others in the Church, but everyone of us is like that as to our proprium, and we remain like that unless we lose the life of the proprium. The fact that such outbreaks do not so often occur does not mean that the spirit of hatred and revenge is not latently present. And it can only be removed by seeing the nature of the proprium, followed by repentance, a repenting not only once but many times, a repentance not only as to that which we manifest, but a repentance in relation to our hidden feelings and thought.

Sermon on John 12:24,25

-4-

Observe how personal things, and personal feelings, tend to dominate you, how they monopolize your thoughts; while the things which are of the Lord appear abstract and distant. Then with grief you may feel how far we are away from the state of a total submission in which we are not partly the Lord's and partly one's own, and do not serve two masters.

"He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life, in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal."

AMEN