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PREPARATION

1. If you have not already read or listened to it, Dr David Calhoun's Worldwide Classroom lecture on III. 6-10 is commended.
2. Note the three-fold division of this chapter on self-denial:
 - a. Sections 1-3 Self-denial established as a (the?) fundamental feature of the Christian life.
 - b. Sections 4-7 The principle of self-denial in our relations with people.
 - c. The principle of self-denial in our relation to God.

<i>1. The rule which permits us not to go astray in the study of righteousness, requires two things—viz. that man, abandoning his own will, devote himself entirely to the service of God; whence it follows, that we must seek not our own things, but the things of God, sec. 1, 2. (Beveridge)</i>		<i>The Christian philosophy of unworldliness and self-denial; we are not our own, we are God's, 1-3 (McNeill)</i>
1.	Consideration of the second general division in regard to the Christian life. Its beginning and sum. A twofold respect. 1. We are not our own. Respect to both the fruit and the use. Unknown to philosophers, who have placed reason on the throne of the Holy Spirit.	We are not our own masters, but belong to God
2.	Since we are not our own, we must seek the glory of God, and obey his will. Self-denial recommended to the disciples of Christ. He who neglects it, deceived either by pride or hypocrisy, rushes on destruction.	Self-denial through devotion to God
<i>II. A description of this renovation or Christian life taken from the Epistle to Titus, and accurately explained under certain special heads, sec. 3 to end.(Beveridge)</i>		
3.	Three things to be followed, and two to be shunned in life. Impiety and worldly lusts to be shunned. Sobriety, justice, and piety, to be followed. An inducement to right conduct.	Self-renunciation according to Titus, ch 2
<i>The principle of self-denial in our relations with our fellow men, 4-7 (McNeill)</i>		
4.	Self-denial the sum of Paul's doctrine. Its difficulty. Qualities in us which make it difficult. Cures for these qualities. 1. Ambition to be suppressed. 2. Humility to be embraced. 3. Candour to be esteemed. 4. Mutual charity to be preserved. 5. Modesty to be sincerely cultivated.	Self-denial gives us the right attitude toward our fellow men
5.	The advantage of our neighbour to be promoted. Here self-denial most necessary, and yet most difficult. Here a double remedy. 1. The benefits bestowed upon us are for the common benefit of the Church. 2. We ought to do all we can for our neighbour. This illustrated by analogy from the members of the human body. This duty of charity founded on the divine command.	Self-renunciation leads to proper helpfulness toward our neighbours
6.	Charity ought to have for its attendants patience and kindness. We should consider the image of God in our neighbours, and especially in those who are of the household of faith. Hence a fourfold	Love of neighbour is not dependent upon manner of men but looks to God

	consideration which refutes all objections. A common objection refuted.	
7.	Christian life cannot exist without charity. Remedies for the vices opposed to charity. 1. Mercy. 2. Humility. 3. Modesty. 4. Diligence. 5. Perseverance.	The outward work of love is not sufficient, but it is intention that counts!
<i>The principle of self-denial in our relation to God, 8-10 (McNeill)</i>		
8.	Self-denial, in respect of God, should lead to equanimity and tolerance. 1. We are always subject to God. 2. We should shun avarice and ambition. 3. We should expect all prosperity from the blessing of God, and entirely depend on him.	Self-denial toward God: devotion to his will!
9.	We ought not to desire wealth or honours without the divine blessing, nor follow the arts of the wicked. We ought to cast all our care upon God, and never envy the prosperity of others.	Trust in God's blessing only
10.	We ought to commit ourselves entirely to God. The necessity of this doctrine. Various uses of affliction. Heathen abuse and corruption.	Self-denial helps us bear adversity

EXPLORATORY

1. What two Biblical passages form the basis for this section? (689, 29 & 690, 6)

- a. Romans 12:1 & 1 Corinthians 6:19.

What, according to Romans 12:1, is the duty of believers? (689, 27ff)

- a. *...to present their bodies to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to him.*

What does Paul tell us this is? (689, 29)

- a. *...the lawful worship of him.*

What further exhortation does Paul base on Romans 12:1? (689, 30ff)

- a. *...be not conformed to the fashion of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of [your] minds, so that [you] may prove what is the will of God.*

What two things are affirmed in 1 Corinthians 6:19? (690, 6)

- a. *...we are not our own but the Lord's.*

What error must we flee? (690, 9ff)

- a. *...let not our reason, nor our will...sway our plans and deeds.*
b. *...seek[ing] what is expedient to us according to the flesh.*

Whither must we, direct all the acts of our life? (690, 14ff)

- a. *...let us therefore live for him and die for him.*
b. *...let his wisdom and will therefore rule all our actions.*
c. *...let all the parts of our life accordingly strive toward him as our only lawful goal.*

Wherein does Christian philosophy differ from carnal philosophy? (690, 30ff)

- a. *...all [carnal] philosophers...set up reason alone as the ruling principle in man, and think that it alone should be listened to.*
b. *But the Christian philosophy bids reason give way to, submit and subject itself to, the Holy Spirit so that the man himself may no longer live but hear Christ living and reigning within him.*

Whence does this difference arise? (690, 30f)

- a. *While it is the first entrance to life, all philosophers were ignorant of this transformation, which Paul calls, "renewal of the mind".*

2. Footnote 2 on p691 (line 10) refers the reader back to I.17.2. It is useful to revisit that section as the descriptions Calvin there provides of unregenerate humanity are a stark contrast with the Christian as described by Calvin in this section,

In this section Calvin turns to, the second point (690, 38). What was the first? (689, 27ff)

- a. *...the duty of believers is "to present their bodies to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to him," and in this consists the lawful worship of him.*

What is self-denial the evidence of? (691, 1f)

- a. *...great progress.*

What is the foremost thought that promotes self-denial? (691, 8ff)

- a. *...it is with God [we have] to deal throughout life.*

Where does this thought have to lodge in order to effectively promote self-denial? (691, 9)

- a. *...within*

If we have, *learned*, self-denial what or who becomes the standard against which we we test our actions and motives? (691, 13)

- a. *God.*

What does looking to God deliver us from? (691, 14)

- a. *...vain thoughts.*

At what point in their relationship with him did Christ stress the need for self-denial to his disciples? (691, 15f)

- a. *...at the outset of their service.*

In the absence of self-denial arising from commitment to the gospel, what must motivate good works? (691, 31)

- a. *...pride.*

Who is nearer to the kingdom of heaven than the prominent people of our age who appear to be committed to public service? (691, 34)

- a. Prostitutes and extortioners.

A world of vices is hidden in the soul of man. What is the only remedy that we can turn to? (692, 5ff)

- a. *...denying yourself and giving up concern for yourself, and turning your mind wholly to seek after those things which the Lord requires of you.*

Not content to tell us what we need to do, Calvin also stresses the motive with which we must do these things if they are to be effective in overcoming the world of vices within. What is that motive?

- a. To seek those things which the Lord requires of you, only because they are pleasing to him.

3. What should characterise our lives as Christians? (692, 10)

- a. Order.

What are the two obstacles that chiefly hinder us from worshipping God? (692, 20f)

- a. *...ungodliness*

- b. *...worldly desires*

How are we to distinguish between ungodliness and worldly desires? (692, 21f)

- a. *...worldly desires...extend mor widely.* In other words we would all like to be more ungodly than we are.

Now he limits all actions of life to three parts... at this stage in both the passage (Titus 2:11-14) and this section of the Institutes, a transition occurs - from what to what?

- a. From negative (*...teaching us to deny*, etc) to positive. Both are effects of the grace of God.

Turning to the positive, to the things the grace of God teaches us to embrace and do, under what three headings are they classified? (692, 28)

- a. soberness
- b. Righteousness
- c. Godliness.

Define soberness. (692, 30f)

- a. *...chastity and temperance as well as a pure and frugal use of temporal goods, and patience in poverty.*

Define righteousness. (692, 31ff)

- a. *...righteousness embraces all the duties of equity in order that to each one be rendered what is his own.*

Define Godliness. (692, 33ff)

- a. *...godliness...joins us in true holiness with God when we are separated from the iniquities of the world.*

In what way are considerations of our future life helpful to us as we try to maintain the life that Paul commends in Titus 2? (693, 9ff)

- a. *In this way he scatters all the allurements that becloud us and prevent us from aspiring as we ought to heavenly glory. Nay, he teaches us to travel as pilgrims in this world that our celestial heritage may not perish or pass away.*

4. 693, 13, *these words*. Which words?

- a. Titus 2:11-14.

How many paths are there by which we may attain true gentleness? (694, 34)

- a. *...one*

Which is that path? (694, 34f)

- a. *...a heart imbued with lowliness and with reverence for others.*

5. What concept does Calvin introduce as part of, our rule for generosity and beneficence? (695, 33 & 30)

- a. Stewardship.
- b. *...all the gifts we possess have been bestowed by God and entrusted to us on condition that they be distributed for our neighbours' benefit (1 Pet 4:10)*

In order to recognise ourselves as stewards rather than as owners, what do we need to understand? (695, 14ff)

- a. *...whatever benefits we have obtained from the Lord have been entrusted to us on this condition: that they be applied to the common good of the church.*

How easily do we accept this? (695, 9ff)

- a. *...we shall do no little violence to nature, which so inclines us to love of ourselves alone that it does not easily allow us to neglect ourselves and our possessions in order to look after another's good.*

What illustration does scripture use that reinforces our status as stewards even more powerfully? (695, 33ff)

- a. *...the powers with which the members of the human body are endowed.*

How do we reconcile our responsibility for ourselves with our responsibilities towards others? (695, 37f)

- a. *...we shall not only join zeal for another's benefit with care for our own advantage, but we shall subordinate the latter to the former.*

What Old Testament requirement taught believers that their possessions were not their own? (695, 42)

- a. The dedication of the first fruits.

What does the phrase, *sanctified to us* (696, 4) mean?

- a. Set apart as our own possession.

How does Calvin describe the failure to recognise that all we enjoy really belongs to God and is to be consecrated to him before we apply it to ourselves? (696, 6)

- a. *...a corrupt abuse.*

Because God cannot be enriched by anything we give to him, to whom should our generosity extend? (696, 9)

- a. *...the saints on earth.*

How does the New Testament show that this same responsibility carries over the the Christian dispensation? (696, 9ff)

- a. *And alms are compared to holy sacrifices as to correspond now to those requirements of the law (Heb 13:16)*

6. To what should we respond in others? (696, 18ff)

- a. *Scripture...teaches that we are not to consider that men merit of themselves but to look upon the image of God in all men, to which we owe all honour and love.*

What thought might pass through our minds, discouraging us from extending love and generosity indiscriminately to all - and with what thoughts should we counter these temptations? (696, 25ff)

- a. He is not someone I know - his flesh, which is the same as your flesh should move you with compassion to meet his needs (Is 58:7);
- b. He is contemptible and worthless - he is made in the image of God;
- c. I am not in his debt - but you are in God's debt and God has brought you into contact with this person in order that you may discharge obligations to him (God);
- d. He is undeserving - You are undeserving;
- e. He deserves the opposite of love, generosity and support - as do you, but you are called to be like God who does not treat you as you deserve.

How many methods or techniques are there that will enable us to, achieve what is not merely difficult but utterly against human nature: to love those who hate us, to repay their evil deeds with benefits, to return blessings for reproaches? (697, 3)

- a. ...there is only one way.

What is it?

- a. *It is that we remember not to consider men's evil intention but to look upon the image of God in them, which cancels and effaces their transgressions, and with its beauty and dignity allures us to love and embrace them.*

7. What are the component parts of truly Christian benevolence? (697, 25ff)

- a. *First, they must put themselves in the place of him whom they see in need of their assistance, and pity his ill fortune as if they themselves experienced it and bore it, so that they may be impelled by a feeling of mercy and humaneness to go to his aid just as to their own.*

If we do not approach benevolence in this way, what does it become? (697, 12)

- a. Mere performance.

What will the adoption of right motives and attitudes prevent us from doing? (697, 31ff)

- a. Corrupting our, *own duties by either arrogance or upbraiding;*
- b. Despising, *the needy brother or enslav(ing) him as one indebted to himself.*

What limit should we place on our willingness and ability to give? (698, 14f)

- a. *...the end of (our) resources.*

8. What opponents to self-denial does Calvin identify in this section? (698, 25ff)

- a. *To covet wealth and honours, to strive for authority, to heap up riches...our lust is mad, our desire boundless.*
- b. *...wonderful is our fear, wonderful our hatred, of poverty, lowly birth, and humble condition!..we are spurred to rid ourselves of them by every means.*

What does the convergence of these drives lead us to do? (698, 32f)

- a. *...live (our) lives according to (our) own plans.*

To what does this lead? (698, 32)

- a. Mental unease.

Where should our hope of prosperity reside? (699, 2f)

- a. In, *the Lord's blessing.*

What do we tend to rely on in place of relying on the Lord's blessing? (699, 5ff)

- a. Our own effort;
- b. Our diligence;
- c. *...the favour of men.*

What phrase does Calvin use to sum up these three things? (699, 4)

- a. *...the flesh*

What determines the degree to which we benefit from our skill and labour? (699, 9)

- a. God

9. What benefit do we gain from looking to God for material prosperity, especially when prosperity does not come to us or does not come to the degree that we seek? (700, 4f)

- a. *...we will be restrained from impatience and loathing of our condition.*

Whence this restraint?

- a. ...we shall know that this is to murmur against God, by whose will riches and poverty, contempt and honour, are dispensed.

What if prosperity comes? How will the attitude that Calvin is commending help in those circumstances? (700, 11ff)

- a. ...nor will he, if things go well, give credit to himself, or even to his diligence, or industry, or fortune. Rather he will give God the credit as its author.

What phrase does Calvin use to sum up the benefit of an attitude of trust? (700, 18)

- a. ...a solace

10. What is the best that non-Christians can come up with, to explain the apparent lack of justice in how things turn out? (701, 22ff)

- a. ...fortune, or some similar concept.

Why does Fortune make so many mistakes? (700, 26)

- a. ...she was blind and unseeing.

FOR REFLECTION

1. Christ introduced the need for self denial at *the outset* of his disciples' relationship with him. What does this teach us about the place it should occupy in our lives?
2. Prostitutes and extortioners are nearer to the kingdom of God than many notable people of our age. Yet, who would we be more flattered to have contact with?
3. What is, *order*?
4. How do you reconcile Calvin's definition of, *soberness*, with Paul's statement that, *God has given us all things richly to enjoy*?
5. Is it wrong, based on this chapter, for the Christian to have ambition?