

Quotes on Christian Duty

by

Richard Baxter

Our incomes of spiritual life and peace are commonly in the way of duty; so that he who is most in duty hath most of God. Exercise of grace increaseth it.

I know carnal wit will never want words and show of reason, to gainsay that truth and duty which it abhors. It is easier now to cavil against duty than to perform it: but wait the end, before you pass your final judgment. Can you make yourselves believe that you will have a comfortable review of these neglects, or make a comfortable account of them to God?

See first whether God will keep you alive without food or raiment, and whether he will give you corn without tillage and labour, and whether he will bring you to your journey's end without a travail or carriage; and, if you speed well in this, then try whether he will bring you to heaven without your diligent use of means, and sit down and say, We cannot sanctify ourselves.

It is a heinous sin to be negligent in so great a business; but to approve of that negligence, and so to be impenitent, and to plead against duty as if it were none, and when they should lay out themselves for the saving of souls, to say, I do not believe that God requireth it... I cannot but think them worthy to be cast out as rubbish, and as 'salt that hath lost its savour, that is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill.'

I have oft wondered that so many that we take for godly persons do so overlook the many and exceeding urgent precepts to liberal Distributions for God and his service, which Scripture doth contain: and how they can think to be saved without obeying these commands... And yet for all this flesh and blood will be wiser then to trust God, and to obey so chargeable a command. They will venture on Damnation to save their money; and let go Heaven for fear of losing by it... *We are not capable, say they, of Giving to God; because that all is his already:* self-condemning wretch! Is all his? Why then hath he not all! Give then to God the things that are his own!

But we are sensible that the Happiness of Many, even of Church and Common-wealth, and the Glory of God, and the accomplishment of his Will, is incomparably more excellent and desirable than our own felicity: And therefore we set ourselves to please the Lord, and study what is acceptable to him, and how we may do him all the service that possibly we can, being confident that he will look to our felicity while we look to our duty; and that we cannot be miserable while we are wholly his, and devoted to his service.

Let the greatest persons that enter into your families, attend the worship of him that is Greater, or let them not be attended. Neglect them that will neglect the service of God.

A man that is crucified to the world, will not *avoid* or flee from any Duty, though the performance of it cross his worldly commodity, or hazard all his worldly interest. He seeth not reason enough in worldly losses, to draw him to the committing of sin to avoid them. An unmortified man will be swayed by his worldly Interest. That must be no Duty to him, which casteth him upon sufferings: and that is no good to him which would deprive him of his sensual Good.

It was for fear of losing his Crown that *Herod* sought the death of Christ. It must be for fear lest Christ should be dethroned in our hearts, and lose his regal Interest, and lest we should lose the Crown of glory, that we must endeavour the crucifying of the world. When Angels and wise men did worship Christ, yet *Herod* did seek his death, and the more seek it, because of their acclamations, as being brought into jealousies of him by the Titles which they gave him. So, when the Princes and great ones of the earth do extoll the world, and magnify its glory, we must be raised hereby into the greater suspicion of it, and the more resolvedly set against it.

You have a will to something or other continually; and it is your will that ruleth the rest of your faculties and actions: but what is it that ruleth your will? whence do you fetch the rise and reason of your desires? Is it from God's will, or is it not?... As a servant dependeth on his Masters will, for all the work that he is to do, and doth not what he will himself, but what his Master will have him do; and as a Scholar dependeth on his Masters will, and learneth only

such books and lessons as he sets him; so must we depend on the will of God; and know what is his will, before we give way to any will of our own.

The harvest is great, the labourers are few; the loiterers and hinderers are many, the souls of men are precious, the misery of sinners is great, and the everlasting misery to which they are near is greater, the joys of heaven are inconceivable, the comfort of a faithful minister is not small, the joy of extensive success will be a full reward. To be fellow-workers with God and his Spirit is no little honour; to subserve the blood-shedding of Christ for men's salvation is not a light thing. To lead on the armies of Christ through the thickest of the enemy; to guide them safely through a dangerous wilderness; to steer the vessels through such storms and rocks and sands and shelves, and bring it safe to the harbour of rest, requireth no small skill and diligence.

The more of God appeareth in our duties, the more authority will they have with men.

'We agree and resolve, by God's help, that so far as God doth make known our duty to us, we will faithfully endeavour to discharge it, and will not desist through any fears or losses in our estates, or the frowns and displeasure of men, or any the like carnal inducements whatsoever.' I pray you study this promise, and compare your performance with it.

Every man must render to God the things that are God's, and that, let it be remembered, is all he is and all he possesses. How are all things sanctified to us, but in the separation and dedication of them to God? Are they not all his talents, and must be employed in his service? Must not every Christian first ask, In what way may I most honour God with my substance?

No man doth shew a higher esteem of goodness, than he that can let go the Name or Reputation of being a good man, rather than let go his goodness itself. The world is so much unacquainted with goodness that they know it not when they see it; but call it by those odious names that least agree with it.

And by slothfulness you rob others as well as your selves: You owe the world the fruit of your labours: You rob the souls of men to whom you should do good. You rob the Church

that should be bettered by you: You rob the Commonwealth of which you are a member, and should have benefit by you... You deserve no room in the Church or Commonwealth, but to be cut off as an unprofitable member, if you bring no advantage to them. They say the Bees will not suffer a drone in the Hive. Nay, if you be hired servants, you plainly rob your Masters if you are slothful, as much as if you stole their money or goods.

We are the nurses of Christ's little ones. If we forbear taking food ourselves, we shall famish them; it will soon be visible in their leanness, and dull discharge of their several duties. If we let our love decline, we are not like to raise up theirs. If we abate our holy care and fear, it will appear in our preaching: if the matter show it not, the manner will. If we feed on unwholesome food, either errors or fruitless controversies, our hearers are like to fare the worse for it. Whereas, if we abound in faith, and love, and zeal, how would it overflow to the refreshing of our congregations.