

Quotes on Flesh Pleasing

by

Richard Baxter

We (must) subdue our sensual desires, by denying them sometimes even in lawful things, lest we should be carried to that which is unlawful before we are aware; and we must avoid the very occasions and appearances of evil, and restrain ourselves in the liberty that we might take, and not go as near the brink of danger as we dare: For it concerneth us to make sure work where the Reign of Christ and our own salvation is so much concerned, as in our victory over the world it is.

So those that would persuade us of the felicity of any worldly enjoyments, & by extolling sensual pleasures, or profits, or honours, would draw our hearts to them, should be despised & esteemed as deceivers by us. No man is more serviceable to the Devil for our destruction, then they that applaud any sensual vanity, and would make us believe what great matters are to be expected from the world, and so would be the Panders of it to entice us to its unchaste embracement. Remember this, when any would persuade you what a fine thing it is to be rich and great, and somebody in the world: what a merry life it is to drink, and sport away your time: These are the Prophets and Apostles of the Devil and the world; and let them be regarded by you accordingly.

Men love Riches so well, because they love sin so well. Did poverty accommodate men's vices, and feed and satisfy their sinful lusts as well as Riches, it would be loved as well... Few men speak highly of Honours, or Riches, or Pleasures at the last; nor hardly of a low or suffering state. And the last judgement is commonly the wisest.

Nature is exceeding ambitious of being beloved: but steal not God's due. You are to be suitors and solicitors for him, to win the hearts of as many as you can: and not to speak for your selves in his stead.

And by pleasing your senses, you will increase their vicious inordinate desires. The more you gratify them, the more they'll crave: you feed your disease by yielding to such desires; but

never think to quiet it by contenting it. The more the flesh hath, the more it would have. The only way to abate the rage of sensual desires is to deny them, and use them constantly to that denial.

Do not think you have ever the more liberty to gratify your appetites in eating or drinking, because you are rich, or to gratify your flesh in inordinate sleep, or ease, or sports, or idleness: but let the flesh have as little as if you had the meanest estate, in which necessity did not deny you that which might fit you for the work of God.

What account do you mean to make to God for the money that you lay out in excess of bravery, will it think you be a good and comfortable account, to say, [Lord, I laid out so much to feed and manifest my Pride and Lust] when such abundance of pious and charitable uses did call for all that you could spare? Many a Lord, and Knight, & Gallant bestoweth more in one suit of clothes, or in one set of hangings, or in the superfluous dress of a Daughter, than would keep a family of poor people for a 12 month, or than would maintain a poor Scholar for higher service than ever they themselves will do; And many a poor boy or girl goeth without a Bible, or any good books, that they may lay out all they have on their backs.

We should take our meat, and drink, and clothes, but to strengthen and sit us for the service of our Master: but how quickly do we turn them to the gratifying of our flesh, and so the service of another Master?

Experience telleth us that most men are best in a low estate: insomuch that a bad man in sickness will speak better, and seem more penitent and mortified, than many better men in health. It's a wonderful hard thing to live like a Christian in a full prosperity; and to be above this world, and have lively apprehensions of the invisible things, and live a heavenly conversation, in Health and Wealth, when our flesh hath so much provision at hand, to accommodate and please it.

Nay many of you think that because you are rich, it is Lawful for you to be Idle, and Lawful voluptuously to give up your selves to pleasures and recreations, and you think that you

may do with your own as you list; as if it had been given you to gratify the flesh... You never *felt* the meaning of those words, *Rom. 8. 13. If ye live after the flesh ye shall die: but if by the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live.*

It's a childish, if not a brutish thing, and below a man, to be captivated unto sense. Its the content of the higher faculties, that are the pleasures of a man: The pleasing of the throat is common to us with the swine. It's the basest Spirit that makes the greatest matter of sensual things: and so must be drowned in unprofitable cares, what he shall eat or drink, and wherewith he shall be clothed. What matter is it to a wise man, Whether his meat be sweet or bitter, or whether his drink be strong or small, or whether his clothes be fine or homely; or whether he be honoured, or derided or past by; save only as these things may have relation to greater things.

I do therefore again in the name of God, advise and warn you to Take heed of having too pleasant thoughts on a prosperous state. Long not after fullness and plenty in the world. Be not too eager for accommodations to your flesh. A Coffin of two yards long will shortly hold it, and be room enough for it: And will nothing but well built houses, adorned rooms, the neatest clothing and plentiful possessions serve you now? How sad a mark is this of a soul that never had a saving taste of the everlasting riches! Away foolish children, and stand not building houses with sticks and sand! Home with you, to God, and remember where you must dwell for ever.

No man doth admire the world, but he that Judgeth by his fleshly Interest, and is a slave to his sensuality. Set Reason in the throne: let faith illuminate and advance it: subdue your inordinate sensual desires: And then the world will wither of itself. The servants will hide their heads, or comply; if the Master be once conquered. Nay you may then press the world upon a better service.

The General charge that I put in against you, is, That you are Carnal flesh-pleasers, and have loved and lived to the world which you should have Crucified, and have not lived as Devoted unto God, nor hath he been your End, or his Interest predominant in your hearts and lives... What a stir do poor men make to be rich, or to live in some content to the flesh, and what a

stir do rich men make to be richer, or to keep that they have; and yet have they the face to pretend that they are crucified to the world?

When we eat or drink, we must never make the pleasing of our Appetite our end, but must do it to strengthen, and cheer, and fit our selves for the service of God, and therefore we must first ask God, and not our Appetite, what, and how much we must eat and drink: And we must no further please our Appetite, than the pleasing of it doth fit us for the service of God.

If you will not take God and heaven for your portion, and lay all below at the feet of Christ, but you must needs also have your good things here, and have an earthly portion, and God and glory are not enough for you, it is in vain to dream of salvation on these terms, for it will not be. If you seem ever so religious, if yet it is but a carnal righteousness, and the flesh's prosperity, or pleasure, or safety, be still excepted in your devotedness to God, this is as certain a way to death as open profaneness, tho' it may be more plausible.

You look on the swaggering Gallant, but you look not on the ulcerous soul; you hear them laughing and jesting in their joviality; but you hear them not yet groaning in their pains: you see them clambering into the seat of honour, but see them not cast into the grave: you see them run and ride in pomp and pleasure, following the delights of the flesh, attended by their followers that honour and applaud them; but you see them not yet gasping under the pangs of death, nor laid in the dust as still as stones. You see their beauty and glittering attire, but you see not the pale and ghastly face that death will give them, nor the skulls that are stripped of all those ornaments; you smell their perfumes, but you smell not their putrefaction; you see their lands and spacious houses and sumptuous furniture; but you see not how narrow a room will serve them in the grave; nor how little there they differ from the most contemptible of men. Nay more; you see them with *Ahab* going forth to battle, and leaving the Prophets with the bread and water of affliction; but you see them not yet returning with the mortal blow; you see them in their honours and abundance, but see them not on Christ's left hand in judgement: you see them clothed richly and faking deliciously every day; but you see them not in hell torments, wishing in vain for a drop of water to abate their flames: you hear them honoured, and hear their words of pride and

ostentation; but you hear them not yet crying out of their folly, and bewailing their loss of present time, and lamenting in vain the unhappy choice that now they make. Sirs, believe it, future things are as sure as present: These things are no fables, because they are not visible yet.

How unlike are you to the Ancient Christians, that *forsook all and followed Christ...* And how unlike to every gracious soul, that is *dead to the world*, and hath *mortified his members upon earth*, and hath *his conversation in another world*. Are you not such as Paul wept over, *Phil. 3. 18. Whose God is their belly, who glory in their shame, and who mind earthly things, and that are enemies to the Cross of Christ.* though perhaps you are no enemies to his *Name*.

If God have not right to all, he hath right to none. If he has right to all, will you give him none but your leavings? A swine will let another eat when his belly is full.