

Quotes on Soul Winning

by

Richard Baxter

By how much more we love their persons; by so much the more must we manifest it, by making opposition to their sins.

He that will let a sinner go down to hell for want of speaking to him, doth set less by souls than did the Redeemer of souls; and less by his neighbour, than common charity will allow him to do by his greatest enemy. O, therefore, brethren, whomsoever you neglect, neglect not the most miserable! Whatever you pass over, forget not poor souls that are under the condemnation and curse of the law, and who may look every hour for the infernal execution, if a speedy change do not prevent it. O call after the impenitent, and ply this great work of converting souls.

Oh! that our eyes were a fountain of tears, that we might lament our ignorant, careless people, that have Christ before them, and pardon, and life, and heaven before them, and that have not hearts to know or value them!

‘Is this all thy compassion for lost sinners? Wilt thou do no more to seek and to save them? Is there not such and such — oh how many round about thee! — that are yet the visible sons of death? What hast thou said to them, or done for their conversion? Shall they die and be in hell before thou wilt speak to them one serious word to prevent it? Shall they there curse thee for ever that didst no more in time to save them?’

You are not such monsters, such hard-hearted men, but you will pity a leper; you will pity the naked, the imprisoned, or the desolate; you will pity him that is tormented with grievous pain or sickness; and will you not pity an ignorant, hard-hearted sinner will you not pity one that must be shut out from the presence of the Lord, and lie under his remediless wrath, if thorough repentance speedily prevent it not? Oh what a heart is it that will not pity such a one! What shall I call the heart of such a man? A heart of stone, a very rock or adamant; the heart of a tiger; or rather the heart of an infidel.

Alas Sirs, most of the persons about you are within a step of death, and going to the bar of God, and want nothing but one stroke of death to make them past help, and send them to damnation: And can you find in your hearts to talk idly with such men? O cruel unmerciful people that regard no more your neighbours miseries! If you came to them at the point of death, or if their houses were on fire, would you sit down and tell them an old tale, or talk of the weather, or this trifle, or that? what an absurdity would this be, and insensibility of your brethren's case? And will you do so in a case ten thousand fold greater? Can you find in your heart to stand jesting & prating with a poor unregenerate man that is within a step of Hell?

The work of conversion is the first and great thing we must drive at; after this we must labour with all our might.

Who is able to talk of controversies, or of nice unnecessary points, or even of truths of a lower degree of necessity, how excellent so ever, while he seeth a company of ignorant, carnal, miserable sinners before his eyes who must be changed or damned? Methinks I even see them entering upon their final woe!

If the souls of private persons be worth all the study and labour of our lives, and we must deal faithfully with them, whatever it shall cost us: surely the safety of a Nation, and the hopes of our posterity, and the public interest of Christ, is worthy to be spoken for with much more zeal, and we may suffer more joyfully, for contradicting a public destroyer of the Church, than for telling a poor drunkard or whoremonger of his sin and misery.

If you would prosper in your work, be sure to keep up earnest desires and expectations of success. If your hearts be not set on the end of your labours, and you long not to see the conversion and edification of your hearers, and do not study and preach in hope, you are not likely to see much success. As it is a sign of a false, self-seeking heart, that can be content to be still doing, and yet see no fruit of his labour; so I have observed that God seldom blesseth any man's work so much as his, whose heart is set upon the success of it. Let it be the property of a Judas to have more regard to the bag than to his work, and not to care much for what they pretend to care; and to think, if they have their salaries, and the

love and commendations of their people, they have enough to satisfy them: but, let all who preach for Christ and men's salvation, be unsatisfied till they have the thing they preach for. Every Christian is obliged to do all he can for the salvation of others; but every minister is doubly obliged, because he is separated to the gospel of Christ, and is to give up himself wholly to that work.

Consider, what abundance of great and needful employment you have for your tongues, and then tell me, whether you should spare them to idleness and vanity? O what work hath that little member to perform!... What abundance of poor souls about you are ignorant, hard-hearted, sensual, covetous, empty of grace, in a state of death, and need all that ever you can do for their recovery, and all too little: and yet can you find in your heart to talk with them of vain unprofitable things?

Brethren, what if you heard sinners cry after you in the streets, 'O sir, have pity on me, and afford me your advice! I am afraid of the everlasting wrath of God. I know I must shortly leave this world, and I am afraid lest I shall be miserable in the next.' Could you deny your help to such poor sinners?... Could you find in your hearts to drive them away without advice? I am confident you could not. Why, alas! such persons are less miserable than they who will not cry for help. It is the hardened sinner who cares not for your help, that most needs it: and he that hath not so much life as to feel that he is dead, nor so much light as to see his danger, nor so much sense left as to pity himself — this is the man that is most to be pitied.

What, say they, can he not preach and let me alone? hath he none to rebuke before the Congregation but me! And thus will every ungodly person reject the Word as they are selfish, and self must be let alone in all. But why must you be let alone? will you be ever the safer or better for that! will God let you alone if we should let you alone? No, he will not be frightened from dealing with you as you are: whatever his word hath said against you, he will certainly make good, though you should never more be told of it by Ministers. You have not silenced your Judge, when you have silenced his Messengers. He will handle you in another manner than Ministers do. O how easy is it to hear a Preacher threatening the

everlasting wrath, in comparison of hearing the sentence of the Judge and feeling the execution!