

Quotes on Spiritual Warfare

by

Richard Baxter

A traitorous commander, that shooteth nothing against the enemy but powder, may cause his guns to make as great a sound or report as those that are loaded with bullets; but he doth no hurt to the enemy. So one of these men may speak as loudly, and mouth it with an affected fervency, but he seldom doth any great execution against sin and Satan. No man can fight well, but where he hateth, or is very angry; much less against them whom he loveth, and loveth above all. Every unrenewed man is so far from hating sin to purpose, that it is his dearest treasure. Hence you may see that an unsanctified man, who loveth the enemy, is very unfit to be a leader in Christ's army; and to draw others to renounce the world and the flesh, seeing he cleaveth to them himself as his chief good.

I know that even foreseen labours seem small matters at a distance, while we do but hear and talk of them; but when we come nearer them, and must lay our hands to the work, and put on our armour, and charge through the thickest of opposing difficulties, then is the sincerity and the strength of men's hearts brought to trial, and it will appear how they purposed and promised before.

The ministerial work must be carried on diligently and laboriously, as being of such unspeakable consequence to ourselves and others. We are seeking to uphold the world, to save it from the curse of God, to perfect the creation, to attain the ends of Christ's death, to save ourselves and others from damnation, to overcome the devil, and demolish his kingdom, to set up the kingdom of Christ, and to attain and help others to the kingdom of glory. And are these works to be done with a careless mind, or a lazy hand? O see, then, that this work be done with all your might! Study hard, for the well is deep and our brains are shallow.

(Satan) beareth the greatest malice to those that are engaged to do him the greatest mischief. As he hateth Christ more than any of us, because he is the General of the field, the Captain of our salvation, and doth more than all the world besides against his kingdom; so

doth he hate the leaders under him, more than the common soldiers: he knows what a rout he may make among them, if the leaders fall before their eyes. He hath long tried that way of fighting, neither against great nor small comparatively, but of smiting the shepherds, that he may scatter the flock.

That all sinners are self-destroyers: No enemy could do so much against us as the best of us doth against himself: Did a man hate himself as bad as the Devil hateth him, he could shew it by no worse a way than sin; nor do himself a greater mischief than by neglecting God, and the life to come, and undoing his own soul, as the ungodly do.

There is no escaping of Christian suffering when you are called to it, but by running into eternal suffering. There is no escaping the Prison, and torment, and fire of Martyrdom, when you are called to it, but by running into the fire of Hell. God can deliver you indeed on easier terms, by forbearing to call you to it, or rescuing by his power: But you cannot rescue your selves by refusing to suffer and yielding to sin, without paying dearer for your freedom than it is worth.

It is a sad case that men should be of a calling of which they know not the nature, and undertake they know not what. Do these men consider what they have undertaken, that live in ease and pleasure, and have time to take their superfluous recreations and to spend an hour and more at once, in loitering, or in vain discourse, when so much work doth lie upon their hands? Brethren, do you consider what you have taken upon you? Why, you have undertaken the conduct, under Christ, of a band of his soldiers 'against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places.' You must lead them on to the sharpest conflicts; you must acquaint them with the enemies' stratagems and assaults; you must watch yourselves, and keep them watching. If you miscarry, they and you may perish. You have a subtle enemy, and therefore you must be wise. You have a vigilant enemy, and therefore you must be vigilant. You have a malicious and violent and unwearied enemy, and therefore you must be resolute, courageous and indefatigable. You are in a crowd of enemies, encompassed by them on every side, and if you heed one and not all, you will quickly fall. And oh, what a world of work have you to do!

Of all the enemies you have in the world, pray God to save you from your selves....: Never will you be shut out of Heaven if you run not from it by your own neglect, and prefer not the prosperity of the world before it. And therefore you see that we are nowhere more unsafe than in our own hands. God's Will is good, and would make a good choice for us: but our wills are bad, and will make a bad choice for themselves.

Self is the strongest and most dangerous enemy that ever you fought against. It is a whole Army united; and the more dangerous because so near. Many that have fought as valiantly and successfully against other enemies as you, have at last been conquered and undone by Self. And conquer it you cannot without a conflict: And the conflict must endure as long as you live: And combating is not pleasing to the enemy: And therefore as long as self is the enemy and self-pleasing so natural to corrupted man, (that should be wholly addicted to please the Lord) Self-denial will prove a difficult task.

If your Peace and Comfort be not won from Christ, in a way of self-denial, and as the spoils of the flesh, you have it not in the ordinary way of God. Did you come to your Joy and Peace by humility, and self-denial, and patience, and mortification, and by becoming little Children, and the servants of all, and by learning of Christ to be meek and lowly? If not, take heed lest you nourish a changeling, an Imp of Hell, and a selfish brat, instead of the fruit of the Spirit; the peace and joy of the Holy Ghost.

Without self-denial there will never be true Reformation or Unity; neither sin nor division will ever be overcome... selfishness is so natural and common and obstinate, that so many men as are born into the world, so many enemies are there to Holiness and Peace, till grace in all change them; and that all endeavours, persuasions, convictions, do little prevail against this deadly rooted sin: so that men will preach against it, and yet most shamefully live in it; and after all rebukes, chastisements and heavy judgements of God, the Church is still bleeding, and Princes, Pastors and People are self-conceited, self-willed and self-seekers still.