

Quotes on Suffering

by

Richard Baxter

Bind all reproaches as a crown to your heads. Esteem them greater riches than the world's treasures.

Alas, what senseless, careless persons should we be, if it were not for the help of suffering! Grace useth to work by means: and this is the common means.

The Cross is a happy Teacher of many excellent truths: But of nothing more effectually, then of the contemptibleness of the world. If it turn our breath into groans, we shall groan against it, and groan to be delivered, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, 2 *Cor.* 5. 2. We shall cry to heaven against this Task-master, and our cries will come before God, and procure our deliverance. The world gets nothing by its hard usage of the Saints: It maketh a Cross for the Crucifying of itself, and turneth their hearts more effectually against it.

It's a great sin and folly in us, that we strive more to have afflictions removed then sanctified, and so we lose the gain that we might have got. Though affliction alone will do little good, yet grace doth make such use of affliction, that thousands in heaven will have cause to bless God for them, that before they were afflicted, went astray, and were deceived by the flatteries of the world as well as others.

The sufferings of the Saints have done very much to the promoting of the Gospel and building of the Church: Men will see that there is somewhat worth the suffering for, in the Christian Religion, and see that Heaven is taken by believers for a certain thing, when they can let go earth for it: They will be moved to enquire, what it is that moves you to such constancy and patience. And why should we not be willing of that condition, in which we do our Master the best service, whatever the doing of it shall cost us?

It may seem a paradox that the valleys should be nearer Heaven than the Hills; but doubtless *Stephen* saw more of it, than the high Priests: And *Lazarus* had a fairer prospect thither, from among the dogs at the Rich man's gate, than the Master of the house had at his plentiful table. And who would not rather have *Lazarus's* sores with a foresight of Heaven, than the Rich man's fullness without it.

This is the reason why affliction so frequently concurs in the work of conversion. Arguments which speak to the quick, will force a hearing when the most powerful words are slighted. If a sinner made his credit his god, and God cast him into the lowest disgrace, or bring him, who idolized his riches, into a condition wherein they cannot help him, or cause them to take wing and fly away, what a help is here to this work of conviction! If a man made pleasure his god, whatsoever a roving eye, a curious ear, a greedy appetite, or a lustful heart could desire, and God take these from him, or turn them into gall and wormwood, what a help is here to conviction!

When men forsake Christ for fear of suffering, and because they will not forsake the world, they do but shew the effects of that disease, which they had caught long before. When the world pleased them they fell so deep in love with it, that now they will venture their souls to keep it. It is prosperity that *breeds* the disease, though adversity *shew* it. Love not the world and you will easily part with it, and so will easily suffer for Christ: And prosperity is liker to entice your Love to it, than adversity. This is a great reason why worldly Prosperity and true Holiness do so seldom go together: and so few of the great ones of the world are saved.

This Cross is the truest Ladder, by which you may ascend from earth to heaven: When in this wilderness, and as without the gate, you are lifted up with Christ on the Cross of worldly desertion and reproach, you are then in the highest road to Glory, and if you faint not, shall be lifted up with him into the throne. *For if you suffer with him, ye shall also reign with him,* Rom. 8. 17.

Common experience as well as Scripture may satisfy us that a suffering state doth very much further humiliation and mortification, and bring men to a deeper sense of sin, & help all the truths of God to work, and make them more sensible and serious than in prosperity... Why Christian, if thou didst but know that thou shouldst have more of the spirit and its

graces, and less of sin, in a suffering estate, than in ease and plenty, wouldst thou not even choose it and be glad of it?

All that will be Christians, must Deny themselves, and take up their Cross, and follow Christ, and not reserve so much as their very lives, but resolve to resign up all for him... By Denying Self, is meant disclaiming, renouncing, disowning, and forsaking it. Self is here looked on partly as a party distinct from Christ, and withdrawn from its due subordination to God, and partly as his Competitor and opposite: and accordingly it is to be denied, partly by a neglect, and partly by an opposition.

When your flesh would have its pleasure, remember him that pleased nor his flesh; but submitted it to hunger, and thirst, and weariness, to fasting, and watching, and praying whole nights; and at last to scourging, and buffeting, and crucifying. When your appetites must needs be pleased in meats and drinks, remember him that had Gall and Vinegar given him to drink. When your bodies would be set out with such apparel, as may make you seem comelyest in the eyes of others, remember him that wore a seamless coat, and was hanged naked on the Cross for your sakes. When you are tender of every little hurt or suffering of your flesh, though in a way of duty, remember him that gave his hands and feet to be nailed, and his side to be pierced to death for you. When you are ashamed to be reviled for well-doing, remember him that *despised the shame*, Heb. 12. 2. And thus as the sight of the Brazen Serpent did cure them that were stung in the Wilderness, so the Believing views of a Crucified Christ, may get out the poison of worldly delusions from your souls.