

Quotes on Temptation

by

Richard Baxter

You (*who fight for souls*) shall have his (*the devils*) most subtle insinuations, and incessant solicitations, and violent assaults. As wise and learned as you are, take heed to yourselves, lest he outwit you. The devil is a greater scholar than you, and a nimbler disputant; he can transform himself into an angel of light to deceive: he will get within you, and trip up your heels before you are aware: he will play the juggler with you undiscerned, and cheat you of your faith or innocency, and you shall not know that you have lost it; nay, he will make you believe it is multiplied or increased, when it is lost. You shall see neither hook nor line, much less the subtle angler himself, while he is offering you his bait. And his bait shall be so fitted to your temper and disposition, that he will be sure to find advantages within you, and make your own principles and inclinations betray you; and whenever he ruineth you, he will make you the instruments of ruin to others.

If Christians had learned more to deny their senses, they would walk more blamelessly and inoffensively in the world: if they would keep at a distance from the bait, and when they cannot do so, yet shut up these doors, that it may be at a distance from their minds, how safely would they walk that now are stumbling at every creature that is given for their relief! How hard to have serious lively thoughts of the great things of eternity, and serious preparations for death and judgement, when we have health, and wealth, and all the accommodations which our flesh doth desire! Satan knows this well enough: and therefore he is willing that his servants shall have prosperity.

Study your duty, and let the will of God be your will; and if he give you a plentiful estate without seeking it, or give you reputation and the praise of men without your affecting it; receive them not without fear; Think with your selves, What a snare is here now for my soul? Though it be good in itself, and as it comes from God, yet what an advantage hath the Deceiver here against me! How easily may such a carnal heart as mine be enticed to the inordinate love of these, and to be more remiss about higher and greater things, and to be forgetful or insensible about the matters of my endless state.

Remember always that the world is the enemy of your salvation, and that if you be damned; it is like to be through its enticements; and therefore labour to be always sensible that you go in continual danger of it. And this will make you use it as an enemy, and walk in a constant fear lest it should over-reach you.

Have you abundance of earthly Riches, and provision for your flesh? So that you want nothing, but have the world at will? Glory not in it, as the least part of your felicity. This will not keep your souls in your bodies; nor take away their guilt, nor open to you the gates of heaven. You may want a drop of water in Hell, for all your riches on earth. If you escape that danger, no thanks to your riches. If ever you get to heaven you must be beholden to Christ to save you from your riches: And when all's done, you will have a harder journey, and a greater load to burden you then others, and will be saved with very much ado.

Great places and employments have great temptations, and are great avocations of the mind from God. (Romances and other story books) ensnare us in a world of guilt, by drawing us to the neglect of those many, those great and necessary things that all of us have to mind and study. O for a man or woman, that is under a load of sin, unassured of pardon and salvation, that is near to death, and unready to die, to be seen with a story or Romance in their hand! what a gross incongruity is this? Its fitter the Book of God should be in your hand: It's that which you must live by and be judged by.

Romances, and other feigned histories of that nature, with Books of tales, and jests, and foolish complements, with which the world so much aboundeth are a Library of the Devil.

Dear Friend, take heed of a glittering flattering world. Remember that greatness makes few bad men good, and few good men better.

To the rich and powerful in the world..., let them consider, that their Riches are snares to them, and will prove a certain means of their damnation, if they devote them not to God.

The Devil hath nothing but a little *money*, or *sensual pleasure*, or *honours* to hire you with to betray and cast away your souls: And what cares a mortified man for these? Will he part with Christ and heaven for *money*, who looks on *money* as other men do on *chips* or *stones*?

It is the *frame* of men's *hearts* that is the strength of a temptation. To a man that is in *love* with money, O what a strong temptation is it, to see an opportunity of getting it by sin? But what will this move *him* that looked on it as on the dirt in the streets?

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If it comforts you to think that you leave them (*your estates and riches*) to your children; remember that you leave them the fruit of your sins, and bequeath to them the snares that undid your souls, that so they may become the heirs of your wickedness and be deceived and destroyed by the world as you have been.

A subtle tempter indeed, that can persuade the greatest part of the world to go wilfully into everlasting fire, when they have so many warnings and dissuasive as they have. A deceitful thing is sin indeed that can bewitch so many thousands to part with everlasting life, for a thing so base and utterly unworthy! A foolish creature is man indeed that will be cheated of his salvation for nothing, yea, for a known nothing; and that by an enemy, and a known enemy. You would think it impossible that any man in his wits should be persuaded, for a trifle, to cast himself into the fire, or water, or into a coal-pit, to the destruction of his life. And yet men will be enticed to cast themselves into hell.

Moreover it dangerously bewitcheth and corrupteth the minds of young and empty people, to read these books (of romance). Nature doth so close with them, and delight in them, that they presently breed an inordinacy of affection, and steal away the heart from God, and his holy Word, and ways. It cannot be that the Love and delights of the heart can be let out on such trash as these, and not be taken off from God and the most needful things. That is the most dangerous thing to the soul that works itself deepest into the affections, and is most delighted in instead of God.

If you have any spark of Grace in you, you know that the flesh and the world are your dangerous enemies; and you know that the way that the world doth undo men, is by enticing them to over-value it & over-love it; & that those that love it most, are deepest in a state of condemnation; and the less men love it, the less they are hurt or endangered by it. And do you not know that you are liker to over-love a sumptuous house, with gardens, orchards, and such accommodations, than a mean habitation? Why should you be such enemies to your own salvation, as to make temptations for your selves? Have you not temptations enough already?

If God call you into a state of fullness and temptations, watch the more narrowly over your affections, and your practices: and use no more of the creatures for yourself, if you have ten thousand pound a year, than if you had but an hundred: but do not seek and long for temptations: Wish not for danger, unless you were better able to pass through it.

Oh the hourly dangers that we here walk in! Every sense and member is a snare; every creature, every mercy, and every duty is a snare to us. We can scarce open our eyes but we are in danger of envying those above us, or despising those below us; of coveting the honours and riches of some, or beholding the rags and beggary of others with pride and unmercifulness. If we see beauty, it is a bait to lust; if deformity, to loathing and disdain. How soon do slanderous reports, vain jests, wanton speeches, creep into the heart! How constant and strong a watch does our appetite require! Have we comeliness and beauty? What fuel for pride! Are we deformed? What an occasion of repining! Have we strength of reason and gifts of learning? O how prone to be puffed up, hunt after applause, and despise our brethren! Are we unlearned? How apt then to despise what we have not! Are we in places of authority? How strong is the temptation to abuse our trust, make our will our law, and mould all the enjoyments of others by the rules and model of our own interest and policy! Are we inferiors? How prone to envy others' pre-eminence, and bring their actions to the bar of our judgment! Are we rich, and not too much exalted?