

Quotes on the World

by

Richard Baxter

The world killeth by its flatteries: It is not the having it, but the Loving it that undoes men: And he is much likely to over-love it, that hath what he would have, and liveth in plentiful provisions for his flesh, then he that hath nothing from it but trouble and vexation. It is not poverty, and prisons, and sickness that are the flattering panders of the world but prosperity and content to the flesh.

Look upon this world and all things in it, with the fore-seeing eye of Faith and Reason, and value it but as it deserves: And then you will neither be eager after it, nor too much delighted in it, nor puff up by it, nor will it so prevalently entice you to venture or neglect eternal things. Did you know and well consider but what an empty fading thing it is, you could never be satisfied with so poor a portion, nor quiet your souls till you had assurance or sound hopes of better things: Nor would you take such pleasure in childish trifles; nor debase yourselves, to be so inordinately employed, about such low and sordid matters, while God and your eternal happiness are laid by.

Many a time have I looked on such men with grief and pity, to see them trudge about the world, and spend their lives, and care, and labour, for nothing but a little food and raiment, or a little fading pelf, or fleshly pleasures, or empty honours, as if they had no higher things to mind.

For it is a thing most certain to us by our constant experience, that the more of the world is upon our hearts, the less is there of God; and the more of God, the less of the world.

So must we despise and reject the world, and hide our faces from it, and not esteem it, disdain even to look upon its pomp and vanity, and to observe its gawky alluring dress, or once to regard its enticing charms. We must *think* it all into a loathsome vanity, till there appear to us no form or comeliness in it, nor any beauty for which we should desire it, and

wonder what they can see in it that so far dote upon it; as to part with Christ and salvation to enjoy it.

As to be proud of fine clothes is a childish or womanish piece of folly, below a man: so to be proud of Victories, and Dignities and wealth, and worldly honours, is the vanity of an Infidel or Atheist, and below a Christian that hath the hopes of heaven. If a man be holy, he is above his worldly greatness, and beareth it as his burden, and feareth it as his snare. And if he be Carnal, he is the faster in his misery; and golden fetters are stronger than any others. A wicked man is one who places his chief content on earth, and loveth the creature more than God, and his fleshly prosperity above the heavenly felicity...Though he will say, that heaven is better than earth, yet doth not really so esteem it to himself; if he might be sure of earth, he would let go heaven, and had rather stay here than be removed thither. A life of perfect holiness, in the sight of God, and in his love and praise for ever in heaven, doth not find such liking, with his heart, as a life of health, and wealth, and honour, here upon earth. And though he falsely profess that he loveth God above all, yet indeed he never felt the power of divine love within him, but his mind is more set on the world, or fleshly pleasures than on God. In a word, whoever loveth earth above heaven, and fleshly prosperity more than God, is a wicked unconverted man.

Esteem the world as an enemy to God and us, and so as a Malefactor that deserveth to be crucified. And this must not be only by a speculative-conception, but by a true confirmed practical judgement, which will set all the powers of the soul on work. It is the want of this that makes the world to Live and Reign in the hearts of so many, yea even of thousands that think they have mortified it.... Almost every man will say, the world is a great enemy to God and us; but did they soundly and heartily esteem it to be such, they would use it as such. Never tell me that that man takes the world for his deadly enemy, who useth it as his dearest friend. Enmity and deadly enmity will be seen.

When once the world would seem to be your home, and promiseth you content and satisfaction, and is indeed the condition that you would have; so that you do not heartily and desirously look any further, but would with all your heart take this for your portion... and say with that stigmatized fool [*soul take thy rest*] then hath the world perniciously

deceived you, and if you be not effectually recovered, will be your everlasting ruin. Whatever it be that presenteth itself to you (of this world) as your felicity, is to be hated, opposed and crucified. Yea if it would but share in this office and honour, and would seem to be some part of your happiness, thus also must it die to you, or your souls must die: You can have but one ultimate principal end and happiness. If you take the world for it, you can expect no more.

There is not so clear a glass in all the world, in which you may see the world in its just complexion and proportion, as the Cross of Christ. There you may see what its worth, and how to be esteemed, by the estimate of one that never was deceived by it, but had a perfect knowledge of its use and value. When you have so long beheld that Cross by faith, as that you can be contented to be hanged between heaven and earth, and become the most forlorn and despicable creature in the eyes of men, and to be stripped of all the comforts of life, and life itself for the sake of Christ, and for the Invisible Kingdom which by his Cross was purchased for you; then are you thoroughly Crucified to the world, and the world to you by the Cross of Christ.

Fathers and Brethren, hearken to the word of Exhortation which I have to deliver to you from the Lord. I know that this world is near you, and the world to come is out of sight... But yet I am to tell you from the word of the Lord, that this world must be forsaken before it forsake you, and that you must vilify and set light by it, and your heart and hopes must be turned quite another way, and you must live as men of another world; or you will undo your selves and be lost for ever. If you have thought that you might serve God and Mammon, and Heaven and Earth might both be your End and Portion, and God and the world might both have your hearts, I must acquaint you that you are dangerously mistaken.

The poison of the world is covered by its sweetness, and that it killeth none but those that love it.

You are also guilty of the high contempt of the Kingdom of Glory, while you prefer these transitory things before it. Your hearts and lives speak that which you are ashamed to speak with your tongues. You are ashamed to say that Earth is better for you then Heaven, or that

your sin is better for you then the favour of God: but your lives speak it out. If you think not your present condition better for you then heaven, why do you choose and prefer it? and why do you more carefully and laboriously seek the things of earth, then the Heavenly Glory? If your child would sell his inheritance for a cup of Ale, you would think he set light by it: And if he would part with father and mother for the company of a beggar or a thief, you would say he had no great love to you. And if you will venture your part in heaven for the pleasures of sin, and will part with God for the matters of this world, would you have him think that you set much by his Kingdom or his love? O the unreasonableness of sin! The madness of worldly fleshly men! Is it indeed more desirable to prosper in their shops, their fields, and their pleasures for a few days or years, then everlastingly to live in the presence of the Lord?

The believing Meditation of the Cross of Christ, doth make us apprehensive of the Vanity and Enmity of the world, and so doth kill our esteem of it, and affection to it. For when we consider how little Christ did set by it, and how he made it his work professedly to contemn it, this will tell us how to think of it ourselves. For doubtless the judgement of Christ was true: He was able to discern between good and evil: If it had been valuable, he would have valued it. He would not have condemned it, if it had not been contemptible. He could have had better usage in the world, if he had desired it, and thought it meet. But he would shew us by his Example as well as by his Doctrine, how to judge of it, and what to expect from it.

The *opposing* world must be apprehended as an enemy to God and us, and so far Hated: The *glozing* world appearing as our felicity, or a competitor with God, must be conceived of as Worthless, and Contemned: And the world as it would appear as a separated Good, being anything to us, or having any thing for us, out of God, must be annihilated in our conceptions, and taken as Nothing.

The world must be abhorred, and crucified by us, as it *standeth at enmity to God and his holy ways...In what degree so ever the world would turn your hearts from God, or stop your ears against his word, or take you off from the duty which he prescribed you, in that measure must you seek to crucify it to your selves. If Father or Mother would draw us away from Christ, though as parents they must be honoured still, yet as enemies to Christ they must be contemned. When your honours would hinder you from honouring God, and your*

credit doth contend against your conscience, and your worldly business contradicteth your heavenly business, and your gain is pleaded against your obedience; it is time then to use the world as an enemy, and to vilify those honours, and businesses, and commodities.

Be sure that you deal with the world as a Deceiver: Be very suspicious of all your Riches, and Honours, and Delights. Feed not on these luscious summer fruits too boldly, or without fear. Remember how many millions the world hath deceived before you. None come to Hell but those that are cheated thither by the flesh and the world. With what exceeding vigilance then have you need to deal with such a dangerous deceiver; when all your happiness, and all your hopes is at the stake? and if you be deceived, you are undone.

The earth beareth yet all the good it doth you, but Hell hath hidden from you the mischief that it hath done to millions of your Ancestors: and therefore though this, their way was their folly, yet do their posterity approve their sayings.

Your worldliness and sensuality is a sin against your own experience, and the experience of all the world.... You sin also against your very Reason it self.... You know most certainly that the world will serve you but a little while... Naked you came into it, and naked you must go out of it.... O what low thoughts will every one of you have of all your pomp and pleasure, your vain-glory and all your fleshly accommodations, when you perceive that they are gone, and leave your souls to the justice of that God, whom for the love of them you wilfully neglected?

A wicked man is one that maketh it the principal business of his life to prosper in the world, and attain his fleshly ends. And though he may read and hear, and do much in the outward duties of religion, and forbear disgraceful sins, yet this is all but the by, and he never makes it the principal business of his life to please God, and attain everlasting glory, and puts off God with the leavings of the world, and gives him no more service than the flesh can spare; for he will not part with all for heaven.

Once more, in the name of the God of heaven, I shall do the message to you which he hath commanded us, and leave it in these standing lines to convert you or to condemn you; to

change you, or to rise up in judgment against you, and to be a witness to your faces, that once you had a serious call to turn. Hear, all you that are drudges of the world, and the servants of flesh and Satan! that spend your days in looking after prosperity on earth, and drown your consciences in drinking, and gluttony, and idleness, and foolish sports, and know your sin, and yet will sin, as if you set God at defiance, and bid him do his worst and spare not! Harken, all you that mind not God, and have no heart to holy things, and feel no favour in the word or worship of the Lord, or in the thoughts or mention of eternal life, that are careless of your immortal souls, and never bestow one hour in inquiring what case they are in, whether sanctified or unsanctified, and whether you are ready to appear before the Lord! Harken, all you that, by sinning in the light, have dinned yourselves into infidelity, and do not believe the word of God.

Halt not any longer between two opinions: If the Lord be God, follow him; if your flesh be God, then serve it still. If heaven be better than earth and fleshly pleasures, come away then, and seek a better country, and “lay up your treasure where rust and moths do not corrupt, and thieves cannot break through and steal, and be awakened at last with all your might to seek the kingdom that cannot be moved,” Heb. xii. 28. and to employ your lives on a higher design, and turn the stream of your cares and labours another way than formerly you have done. But, if earth be better than heaven, or will do more for you, or last you longer, then keep it, and make your best of it, and follow it still. Are you resolved what to do?