

Quotes on the World and Money

by

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What covetousness has been in many of you! Such has been your inordinate love of the world, and care about the things of it, that it has taken up your heart; you have allowed no room for God and religion; you have minded the world more than your eternal salvation. For the vanities of the world you have neglected reading, praying and meditation; for the things of the world, you have broken the Sabbath: for the world you have spent a great deal of your time in quarrelling. For the world you have envied and hated your neighbour; for the world you have cast God, and Christ, and heaven, behind your back; for the world you have sold your own soul. You have as it were drowned your soul in worldly cares and desires; you have been a mere earthworm that is never in its element but when grovelling and buried in the earth.

Hence we may learn the folly of those that are cold and slack in seeking salvation, seeing that the glory and happiness of those who are saved is so exceedingly great. How unreasonable is it to expect to obtain that which is so great without effort! Men will seek worldly riches and honours that are worth so little, and cannot make them happy, and will soon vanish away, with great and indefatigable labour and diligence; and shall men expect to obtain such eternal glory and blessedness in a slack and cold way of seeking it? How unlike the nature and importance of this blessedness do men treat it that seek it in a cold and careless manner! and can it be expected that God will also treat it so unlike its value, as to bestow it upon such seekers?

God is as holy, just, and jealous, as he hath declared concerning himself in his word; I say, he that is really convinced, and hath settled it with himself, that these things are certainly true, will be influenced by them above all things in the world. He will be more concerned by far how he shall escape eternal damnation, and have the favour of God and eternal life, than how he shall get the world, gratify the flesh, please his neighbours, get honour, or obtain any temporal advantage whatsoever.

How poor you are who have no heaven but this world! In this exceeding and eternal glory of which you have heard, you have no lot or portion; you have nothing but a little part of this clod of earth; and what is all that you have worth? If you have a little more land than some of your neighbours, or if you are in a way to make more money than others, if your accommodations are better than others, and you have more worldly conveniences and pleasures than others, or if you are promoted a little higher among men than some others are, what a poor portion is this; and how miserable are you who have no better happiness that you can call your own! How happy do these things make you, what great satisfaction do they yield to you! Are such things as these the rivers of pleasure that you choose for your portion? O, how miserable are you that have your portion in this life! When a few days are passed you must go to the grave and into eternity, and then your glory shall not descend after you; and how wretched are they of whom it may be said, when they have done with worldly enjoyments, that they have received their consolation!

Another virtue, in which we ought to follow the apostle, was his contempt of the world, and his heavenly-mindedness. He condemned all the vain enjoyments of the world. He despised its riches...He despised the honours of the world...he considered all men and all things as they had relation to a spiritual nature, and to another world. In this the apostle acted as becomes a Christian; for Christians, those that are indeed so, are people that belong not to this world, and therefore, it is very unbecoming in them to have their minds taken up about these things. The example of Paul may make all such persons ashamed, who have their minds chiefly occupied about the things of the world, about gaining estates, or acquiring honours; and yet would be accounted fellow-disciples with the apostle, partakers of the same labours, and fellow-heirs of the same heavenly inheritance. And it should prompt us to strive for more indifference to the world, and for more heavenly-mindedness.

Let us compare ourselves with such an example, and examine how far we are of such a spirit. Let those on this occasion reflect upon themselves, whose hearts are chiefly engaged in their own private temporal concerns, and are not much concerned respecting the interests of religion and the church of Christ, if they can obtain their private aims; who are greatly grieved when things go contrary to their worldly prosperity, who see religion, as it were, weltering in its blood, without much sorrow of heart. It may be that they will say; It is

greatly to be lamented that there is such declension, and it is a sorrowful thing that sin so much prevails. But if we would look into their hearts, how cold and careless should we see them. Those words are words of course. They express themselves thus chiefly, because they think it creditable to lament the decay of religion; but they are ten times as much concerned about other things as these, about their own private interest, or some secular affairs of the town. If anything seems to threaten their being disappointed in these things, how readily are they excited and alarmed; but how quiet and easy in their spirit, notwithstanding all the dark clouds that appear over the cause and kingdom of Christ, and the salvation of those around them! How quick and how high is their zeal against those who they think unjustly, oppose them in their temporal interests; but how low is their zeal, comparatively, against those things that are exceedingly pernicious of the interests of religion! If their own credit is touched, how are they awakened! but they can see the credit of religion wounded, and bleeding, and dying, with little hearty concern. Most men are of a private, narrow spirit. They are not of the spirit of the apostle Paul, nor of the psalmist, who preferred Jerusalem before his chief joy.

As Satan was not willing to be in subjection; and therefore rebelled, and set up himself; so a natural man, in the proud and high thoughts he has of himself, sets up himself upon God's throne. He gives his heart to the world, worldly riches, worldly pleasures, and worldly honours: they have the possession of that regard which is due to God.

As to worldly enjoyments, their foundation is a sandy one that is continually wearing away, and certainly will at last let the building fall. If we take pleasure in riches, riches in a little while will be gone; if we take pleasure in gratifying our senses, those objects whence we draw our gratifications will perish with the using; and our senses themselves also will be gone, the organs will be worn out, and our whole outward form will turn to dust. If we take pleasure in union with our earthly friends, that union must be broken; the bonds are not durable, but will soon wear asunder. But he who has the immediate intellectual vision of God's glory and love, and rejoices in that, has his happiness built upon an everlasting rock. It is meet that the kingdom of heaven should be thus sought, because of the great Excellency of it. We are willing to seek earthly things, of trifling value, with great diligence, and through much difficulty; it therefore certainly becomes us to seek that with great earnestness which

is of infinitely greater worth and excellence. And how well may God expect and require it of us, that we should seek it in such a manner, in order to our obtaining it! Such a manner of seeking is needful to prepare persons for the kingdom of God. Such earnestness and thoroughness of endeavours, is the ordinary means that God makes use of to bring persons to an acquaintance with themselves, to a sight of their own hearts, to a sense of their own helplessness, and to a despair in their own strength and righteousness. And such engagedness and constancy in seeking the kingdom of heaven, prepare the soul to receive it the more joyfully and thankfully, and the more highly to prize and value it when obtained.

The pleasure which the soul has in seeing God, is not only its delight, but it is at the same time its highest perfection and Excellency. Man's true happiness is his perfection and true Excellency. When any reasonable creature finds that his Excellency and his joy are the same thing, then he is come to right and real happiness, and not before. If a man enjoys any kind of pleasure and lives in it, how much so ever he may be taken with what he enjoys, yet if he be not the more excellent for his pleasures; it is a certain sign that he is not a truly happy man. There are many pleasures that men are wont violently to pursue, which are no part of their dignity or perfection, but which, on the contrary, debase the man and make him vile. Instead of rendering the mind beautiful and lovely, they only serve to pollute it; instead of exalting its nature, they make it more akin to that of beasts. But it is quite the contrary with the pleasure that is to be enjoyed in seeing God. To see God is the highest honour and dignity to which the human nature can attain.

Christ, by thus appearing in mean and low outward circumstances in the world, has poured contempt upon all worldly wealth and glory; and has taught us to despise it. And if it becomes mean men to despise them, how much more did it become the Son of God!

Though the light that shines in the world be so exceeding glorious, yet how few are there that do see it. The glory of God's wisdom in this work is surpassing the brightness of the sun: but so blind is the world that it sees nothing. It does not know that the Sun of righteousness shines. Thus it has been in all ages.

They (*natural men*) entertain very low and contemptible thoughts of God. Whatever honour and respect they may pretend, and make a show of towards God, if their practice be examined, it will show, that they certainly look upon him as a Being that is but little to be regarded....They count him worthy neither to be loved nor feared. They dare not behave with that slight and disregard towards one of their fellow-creatures, when a little raised above them in power and authority, as they dare, and do, towards God. They value one of their equals much more than God, and are ten times more afraid of offending such, than of displeasing the God that made them. They cast such exceeding contempt on God, as to prefer every vile lust before him. And every worldly enjoyment is set higher in their esteem, than God. A morsel of meat, or a few pence of worldly gain, is preferred before him. God is set last and lowest in the esteem of natural men.

The pleasures of the wicked are poison to the soul, they tend to enfeeble it, to consume it, and kill it. But the pleasures of the godly feed the soul, and do not consume it; they strengthen, and do not weaken it; they exalt, and do not debase it; they enrich, and do not impoverish it. Death and corruption are the natural fruit of the pleasures of sin, but life is the fruit of spiritual pleasures.

A traveller is not wont to rest in what he meets with, however comfortable and pleasing, on the road. If he passes through pleasant places, flowery meadows, or shady groves; he does not take up his content in these things, but only takes a transient view of them as he goes along. He is not enticed by fine appearances to put off the thought of proceeding. No, but his journey's end is in his mind. If he meets with comfortable accommodations at an inn, he entertains no thoughts of settling there. He considers that these things are not his own, that he is but a stranger, and when he has refreshed himself, or tarried for a night, he is for going forward. And it is pleasant to him to think that so much of the way is gone. So should we desire heaven more than the comforts and enjoyments of this life...Our hearts ought to be loose to these things, as that of a man on a journey; that we may as cheerfully part with them, whenever God calls....—these things are only lent to us for a little while, to serve a present turn; but we should set our *hearts* on heaven, as our inheritance for ever.

He (*the saint*) prefers God before any earthly enjoyment of which he *hath a prospect*. The children of men commonly set their hearts more on some earthly happiness for which they *hope*, and after which they are seeking, than on what they *have* in present possession. But a godly man prefers God to anything which he has in prospect in this world. He may, indeed, through the prevalence of corruption, be for a season carried away with some enjoyment; however, he will again come to himself; this is not the temper of the man; he is of another spirit.

All other concerns of life ought to be entirely subordinate to this (our life's journey to heaven). When a man is on a journey, all the steps he takes are subordinated to the aim of getting to his journey's end. And if he carries money or provisions with him, it is to supply him in his journey. So we ought wholly to subordinate all our other business, and all our temporal enjoyments, to this affair of travelling to heaven. When anything we have becomes a clog and hindrance to us, we should quit it immediately. The use of our worldly enjoyments and possessions should be with such a view, and in such a manner, as to further us in our way heavenward.

The things among which we are to make our choice are but few in number; there are but two portions set before us, one of which must be our portion; either life or death, either blessing or cursing; either a life of universal and persevering obedience, with eternal glory, or a worldly, carnal, wicked life, with eternal misery. If there were many terms in the offer made us, many things of nearly an equal value, one of which we must choose, to remain long in suspense and undetermined would be more excusable; there would be more reason for long deliberation before we should fix. But there are only two terms, there are but two states in another world, in one or the other of which we must be fixed to all eternity.