

A heavy burden

Thomas Brooks:

Riches are a heavy burden, and often a hindrance to heaven, and happiness.

All the felicity of this world is MIXED. Our light is mixed with darkness, our joy with sorrow, our pleasures with pain, our honor with dishonor, our riches with wants. If our minds are spiritual, clear and quick, we may see in the felicity of this world—our wine mixed with water, our honey with gall, our sugar with wormwood, and our roses with prickles. Surely all the things of this world are but bitter sweets. Sorrow attends worldly joy, danger attends worldly safety, loss attends worldly labors, tears attend worldly purposes. As to these things, men's hopes are vain, their sorrow certain, and joy feigned. The apostle calls this world 'a sea of glass,' a sea for the trouble of it, and glass for the brittleness and bitterness of it. (Rev. 4:6, 15:2, 21:18). The honors, profits, pleasures and delights of the world are like the gardens of Adonis, where we can gather nothing but trivial flowers, surrounded with many briars.

Tell why do you then neglect your duty towards God—to get the world? Why do you then so eagerly pursue after the world—and are so cold in your pursuing after God, Christ and holiness? Why then are your hearts so exceedingly raised, when the world comes in, and smiles upon you; and so much dejected, and cast down, when the world frowns upon you, and with Jonah's gourd withers before you?

The world is troublesome, and yet it is loved

Worldly things are not able to secure you from the least evil; they are not able to procure you the least desirable good. The crown of gold cannot cure the headache, nor the velvet slipper ease the gout, nor the jewel about the neck take away the pain of the teeth. Our daily experience evidences this, that all the honors and riches which men enjoy, cannot free them from calamities, diseases, or death. Why then should that be a bar to keep you out of heaven—which cannot give you the least ease on earth?

Polycrates gave a large sum of money to Anacreon, who for two nights afterwards, was so troubled with worry how to keep it, and how to spend it; that he took the money back to Polycrates, saying that it was not worth the pains which he had already taken for it.

King Henry the Fourth asked the Duke of Alva if he had observed the great eclipse of the sun, which had lately happened. No, said the duke, I have so much to do on earth, that I have no leisure to look up to heaven. Ah, that this were not true of most professors in these days! It is very sad to think, how their hearts and time are so much taken up with earthly things, that they have scarcely any leisure to look up to heaven, or to look after Christ, and the things that belong to their everlasting peace!