

**Devotional Thoughts :: MARTYRS MIRROR of the DEFENSELESS CHRISTIANS**

**MARTYRS MIRROR of the DEFENSELESS CHRISTIANS - posted by UntoBabes (), on: 2011/2/22 10:53**

OF THE GREATER DANGER THERE IS AT THIS TIME, THAN IN THE BLOODY AND DISTRESSING TIMES OF THE MARTYRS\*

These are sad times, in which we live; nay, truly, there is more danger now than in the time of our fathers, who suffered death for the testimony of the Lord. Few will believe this, because the great majority look to that which is external and corporeal, and in this respect it is now better, quieter and more comfortable; few only look to that which is internal and pertains to the soul, and on which everything depends, "for what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matt. 16:26.

These times are certainly more dangerous; for then Satan came openly, through his servants, even at noon-day, as a roaring lion, so that he could be known, and it now and then was possible to hide from him; besides, his chief design then was to destroy the body: but now he comes as in the night, or in the twilight, in a strange but yet pleasing form, and, in a two-fold way, lies in wait to destroy the soul; partly, to trample under foot, and annihilate entirely, if this were possible, the only saving Christian faith-- partly to destroy the true separated Christian life which is the outgrowth of faith. Ps. 91:5, 6.

He reveals himself on the one hand as an angel of light, II Cor. 11:14, 15, as a kind, pleasant, yea, even divine messenger, with humble countenance, downcast eyes, plain garb, and living in seclusion from the throng of the worldly-minded, even as the holiest people, yea, the martyrs of God, formerly did. His words are modest, trembling and full of contrition-- seemingly coming from deep meditation, inward fear and apprehension, lest he might speak amiss or untruthfully. Meanwhile, and before one is aware of it, he seizes hold and tears like a wolf in sheep's clothing, robbing the innocent lambs of Christ of their precious faith, which, he pretends to be of small importance, but without which faith it is impossible to please God, Heb. 11:6, nay, without which we, according to the words of Christ shall be condemned, Mark 16: 16; for (says Paul), whatsoever is not of faith is sin, Rom. 14:23.

It grieves us to the heart that we must live to see these times, and therefore speak in this wise. O Lord, strengthen our faith! help Thy weak, trusting lambs, that they may not be led into error, nor moved from the foundations of the most holy faith.

On the other hand, through his instigation, the world now reveals itself very beautiful and glorious, more than at any preceding time, in a threefold pleasing form--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.\* Almost all men run after her, to worship her as a queen supreme; but all are deceived thereby; yea, many who have drunk of the poisoned wine of her lusts from the golden cup of her iniquities and deceptions, die a spiritual death.

As the first design is aimed at the faith, so this is directed against the true Christian life. Here lies great danger. Who shall escape these snares? He that would at no time be taken unawares by it, must indeed be cautious and watchful. But our very flesh seems prone to it. Here must be fasting, watching, praying, and calling upon God for help, otherwise there is no escape.

Many of the ancients who supposed that they had been circumspect and observed their duty, were deceived hereby--; some were lulled into a careless sleep, so that they paid no heed to themselves or to their vocation; others were brought to despair of the divine truth; others were drawn away totally from God; some died a spiritual death; others died both spiritually and bodily; and some have plunged themselves helter-skelter into the abyss of the disfavor of God, to be punished by Him soul and body and forever.

These things which we tell you are no riddles or blind speeches, for we speak the truth, or the Word of God must be false; but as the Word of God cannot lie, what we have said is certain and infallible since God in His Word bears witness of it, yea, declares it emphatically and abundantly. Other histories which make mention of this, we pass by in silence and dismiss them altogether, because we do not hold them in equal estimation with the holy Scriptures. It was the world and its lusts that of old caused all the great calamities of which we have spoken; and not only this, but it has also caused thousands who live in various cities, countries, kingdoms, empires, yea, on the face of the whole earth, to mourn, weep and wail, on account of their natural misery as well as on account of their experiencing the wrath of God in their souls because

e of the magnitude and enormity of the sins perpetrated by them.

It certainly was through worldly lusts that the old world perished; that Sodom, Gomorrah, Zeboim, and Admah were consumed, overthrown and totally destroyed by fire from Heaven; that in forty years, through serpents, fire, and other plagues, the wanton and lustful people of Israel perished to the number of over six hundred thousand in the wilderness; and that the mighty mari

\*" John, the friend of Christ, has presented the deceptive, beautiful appearance of this world in its threefold view of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. I John 2:16. Solomon portrayed the same as a harlot or wanton woman, who allures young men unto her; who is loud and stubborn, and whose feet abide not in her house; but whither those who follow her are led, as an ox to the slaughter, to certain destruction, nay, to death and hell. Prov. 7.

\* The following and other misfortunes which were caused by worldly and carnal lusts cannot be numbered. O, that Solomon, the wisest among the children of men, might have known, conquered, and taken care of himself in this respect. In the cities, Zidon and Tyros, whose ships were trimmed with embroidered, silken sails from Egypt; whose rowers sat upon benches of ivory; where incalculable riches were bought and sold and, from carnal incentives, almost inconceivable arts practiced were reduced to a heap of stones and so leveled to the ground, that the fishermen stretch out their nets to dry on the rocks upon which these cities stood. Gen. 7; Matt. 24:37, 38; Luke 17:26, 27; II Peter 2:5.-Gen. 19:24, 25; Isa. 13:19; Jer. 50:40; Hos. 11:8; Amos 4:11; Luke 17:28, 29; I I Pet. 2:6; Jude 7.-Compare Num. 1:2, 3, 46 with Num. 14:22, 23. Also Num. 11:1 and 16:31-35; 21:6; Jude 5.-Isa. 23:4, 5; Ezek. 27:26-28; 28, the whole chapter.

I will not now speak of Jerusalem, Chorazin, Bethsaida; Capernaum, and other mighty licentious and luxurious cities, which, with all their inhabitants who had in this respect sinned against God, have borne His wrath, and felt, to their destruction, the plagues of His afflicting hand; for this would consume too much time.\* O awful judgments of God! O pernicious worldly-mindedness! O corroding and cankering luxury, that draggest after thee such a train of unspeakable miseries! Help, Lord, that our soul be delivered from all these dangers.

But what danger would there be, if none but the open enemies of God and His holy truth were guilty in this matter? What harm could be done, if they alone, and no others, would arouse and call down upon themselves the wrath of God? For then every pious and serious soul would beware of their example as of a savage beast, venomous serpent, or deadly basilisk. But now such is the state of things that many commoners and such as are not total strangers to religion or the worship of God; who, as they say, would fain be saved; and who, therefore, though they are not truly enlightened, glorify and praise God and His Word with their mouth, show nevertheless (to the seduction of the simple) that the world is their dear friend, yea lies nearest to their heart, since most of their works are directed to its service, that they may thereby partake of its glittering but deceptive reward.

Hence arises that shameful and vast commerce which extends far beyond the sea into other parts of the world, Ezek. 27, but which notwithstanding cannot satisfy those who love it, but, on the contrary, brings great danger, that that which has already been gotten, may be lost, others defrauded, and they themselves, both in soul and body, stripped and robbed of their possessions.

Numerous large, expensive and ornamented houses, countryseats of splendid architecture and provided with towers, parks magnificent as a paradise, and other embellished pleasure-grounds, which are seen on every hand indicate this in no small degree. Dan. 4:29, 30.

\* See Josephus on the Jewish wars; also Egesippus, Eusebius, and Pamphilus.

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The wearing of clothes from foreign countries, whether of foreign materials, uncommon colors or of strange fashions as obtain in the course of time according to the custom of the openly worldly-minded (which are as changeable as the moon), and which custom is followed by many humble and seemingly plain people, confirms greatly what we have before said. Gen. 35:2; Zeph. 1:8; Isa. 3:16-24.

The giving and attending great dinners, lavish banquets and wedding-feasts (though one may never be found in taverns or tippling-houses), where everything is in profusion, and where the beneficent gifts of the Lord which should not be used otherwise than with great thankfulness, and of which a portion naturally belongs to the poor, are squandered and consumed without the least necessity, even by those who are considered sober and temperate, is an incontrovertible evidence of a sensual and wanton heart; and proves also that those who have much to do with these things, cannot be exculpated

ed from living after the flesh; for which carnal life certainly has no promise of salvation, but on the contrary, many severe threatenings of the wrath and displeasure of God, nay, of eternal damnation, are recorded in the blessed leaves of the Word of God, which contains nothing but the truth. Esth. 1:3-8; Dan. 5:1-3; Luke 12:19, 20; 16:19.

O how different is this from the life of a true Christian, who has forsaken himself and his lusts. How great the step that is between their walk and that of the holy martyrs, who delivered up, not only their carnal desires, but also their bodies and lives, unto death for the Lord's sake! But how great a difference will also be between the two classes afterwards! When the former, having had their good things in this life, shall be shut out from the true, heavenly riches, but the latter, because they have love to God, renounced and abandoned their possessions, which might have led them into sin, be admitted to the true enjoyment of the heavenly riches and pleasures, and that for ever and ever! Mal. 3:18.

Here shall obtain what is recorded concerning the end of the luxurious rich man and that of poor Lazarus: that the rich man, when he saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, while he himself was in hell, received this answer to his doleful lamentations, "Son, remember, that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." Luke 16:25. Appropriate is here also Wis. 5:1, 2.

Nevertheless, these and similar evil examples are constantly presented to our eyes, and they are the more pernicious and dangerous for the reason that some worldly-minded people pronounce them to be non-essential, unimportant for either good or evil, and therefore, allowable; while it is the same with them as with the fruit from the tree of knowledge, which stood in the midst of Paradise, and was pleasant to the eyes, but deadly in the use, for whoever ate of it, had to die, Gen. 2:17; or with the apples which grow in the land of Sodom, on the border of the dead sea; which possess a beautiful red appearance, but contain, as some have written, only dust and ashes, and are inedible, nay, even deleterious to health. Bijb. Naemb. edition 1632, fol. 881, Col. 2, concerning the name Sodom, ex Philippo Melancthone. Also Bernh. Bredenk. in Tract, super Siddim. Also H. Buntung, Itinerarium sacro scripturoe, edition 1642, lib. I, pag. 62, col. 2, etc.

O that Satan would show himself, as he really is, and that the world, too, might come forth without disguise or mask; then certainly no one possessing reason would allow himself to be deceived by them. For in Satan nothing would be seen but deadly snares, traps and murdering daggers for the soul, poisoned arrows wherewith to destroy everything good in man, through unbelief, apostasy from God, impenitent obduracy, and despair; which are followed by a train made up of the fears of hell and horrors of damnation. In the world men would perceive nothing but vanity, mingled with much vexation, sorrow, grief and misery, and this in such abundance, that if as many tears could be wept over it, as there is water in all the sea and all the rivers, yet the weight of the true sorrow that springs from them it could not be adequately expressed, for they draw after them not only temporal but also everlasting miseries.

But, O how lamentable! all this is hid under a beautiful appearance. Satan appears to be a prince or king, and the world a noble princess or queen. The servants and servantmaids who follow them as pages and maids of honor, appear as cavaliers and ladies, reveling in joy and delight; though, as regards the soul, they are poor and deformed; yea, meaner than beggars, and without the true joy which delights the upright soul in God.\*

There is, therefore, great danger of being deceived. O, ye upright children of God, be on your guard.\*\* Let your simplicity be coupled with prudence. Your faith as well as your life are the objects aimed at. If Satan gain the mastery over you, your precious faith which has been commended to your keeping as dearly as your soul, is ruined. If ye are overcome by the world, it will soon put an end to your Christian and virtuous life, without which latter the best of faith is of no avail. Care, therefore, my dear friends, equally well for both, for the one is as important as the other. Faith

\*" It is a very lamentable fact that the things fraught with danger are not as they appear, and appear not as they really are. Is not the fish caught with a bait, in which is concealed the hook? Are not the birds ensnared in the net, in which berries or grains of corn are scattered for them to eat? Certainly. Is it to be wondered then, that blind, carnal and worldly-minded men are deceived and led into perdition by the wiles of Satan and the alluring lusts of a deceitful world?

\* Meanwhile the prudent knight and valiant champion of Christ must be on his guard and constantly in arms, that he may neither by the one nor by the other be diverted from his noble watch over his soul, which has been entrusted to him, and thus be led away and cast, either in soul or body, or according to both, into the direful abyss of perdition.

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without the corresponding life, or the life without the faith, can, will, and may not avail before God. They are like two witnesses, who must agree, and of whom the one cannot stand or be received without the other.

Knowing, then, that we must care for both, there remains nothing for us but to do it, however, this work must certainly no

It only be begun, but also finished, according to the example of the steadfast martyrs of God; with which finishing, whether it be brought about in a natural or a violent manner, according as liberty or persecution brings about we must comfort ourselves, since it is certain that the crown is not to be found in the beginning or in the middle, but at the end.\*

But as necessary as it is to finish well, so necessary it is also to begin well, and, having begun, to go on well; for without a good beginning and a good progress it is impossible to attain to a good end.

We speak to you, then, most beloved in the Lord, who have begun with us; received the same faith with us; and with us as a token of this have been baptized.

Surely, we have made a vow to the Lord, which we cannot recall, as David sings, "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High." Ps. 50:14.

We have, through faith, received Christ, the Son of God, as our Prophet, Priest, King, Shepherd, Friend, and Bridegroom; and in this we must go on and grow stronger. This, Paul teaches us, saying, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught," etc. Col. 2:6, 7. Hereby we have come from the darkness of ignorance to the true light of knowledge; which we are commanded to keep in perpetual remembrance. In this direction tend the words, "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;" etc. Heb. 10

32. In short, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Phil. 3:16. "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Jude 20, 21. "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." Verses 24 and 25. Isa. 40:30, 31; Phil. 4:13.

We would now commend you, beloved brethren and sisters, to the Lord and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. Our work which has been done for your benefit, is now finished in this respect; that you

\*" O that this would be considered, as it should! may make good use of it, is our friendly desire Remember us always in your prayers, until we depart this life; Phil. 1:23, that God may be gracious unto us now and in eternity. We hope, on our part, to do the same for you. O that God would grant, that we all, without one missing, might behold one another, face to face, in the kingdom of God! I Cor. 13:12.

Meantime we rejoice in the salvation of the Lord; for it sometimes seems to us, as if Heaven had come down upon earth; or that we were ascending from earth to heaven. II Cor. 12:1-12 etc; or that we, who are still among men, held communion with God and His holy angels; or that eternal heavenly joy and glory were offered to us; nay, that we had a foretaste of those things which mortal eye hath never seen, nor ear heard, nor heart experienced, in this life.\*

We walk no longer upon earth. with our thoughts; nevertheless, we are still encompassed by a cloud of earth, a body of clay, a heavy load of the soul. O, that we were free from it, and that our soul, liberated from this load, might return to God in heaven, her true origin! like a freed dove which has been confined in a strange place, returns to her nest and abode. But we must wait for this until the time which God has appointed, comes.

Let us be patient together, then, most beloved in the Lord, till the day come, which, if we remain faithful unto the end, will assuredly bring us that which we here wait for in hope. Then the tears, which we, sighing and longing for the highest salvation of God, have wept here, shall surely be wiped away from our eyes; then shall we no longer see through a glass, darkly, but face to face; then shall the heavenly be shown us no longer in thought or in spirit, but it shall be given us, and we be made participants of it, by experience alone, in truth and in deed. O great and precious subject! we can go no further: our reason cannot comprehend it; our earthly tongue cannot express it!

Yours very affectionally in the Lord,  
TH. J. VAN BRAGHT.

Dort, July the 25th, 1659.

\* When Israel under Pharaoh, in Egypt, had to burn brick, and to perform other hard labor, for the king, they remembered God, yea, cried unto the Almighty, so that God was moved to compassion Ex. chap. 1, 2, 3, etc.; but when God had delivered them, and brought them into a goodly land where it went well with them according to the body, they forsook the Lord, and became wanton. Dent. 32:15. This difference is found to exist also between the times of oppression and the times of freedom.

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**Re: MARTYRS MIRROR of the DEFENSELESS CHRISTIANS - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2011/2/22 11:13**

This is from the preface of this excellent volume. It is a very large hardcover covering all the church history of martyrs but focusing specifically on the anabaptist martyrs during the time and after the reformation.

There is a great need for people to start reading this volume and not just Foxes book of Martyrs though great that is also ! This large volume is just \$34.99 at christian book: [http://www.christianbook.com/martyrs-mirror-thieleman-van-braght/9780836113907/pd/611390X?item\\_code=WW&netp\\_id=107075&event=ESRCN&view=details](http://www.christianbook.com/martyrs-mirror-thieleman-van-braght/9780836113907/pd/611390X?item_code=WW&netp_id=107075&event=ESRCN&view=details)

**Re: MARTYRS MIRROR of the DEFENSELESS CHRISTIANS, on: 2011/2/22 12:16**

Amen! This was once a Sticky on Devotional Thoughts. Amen.

Thank you UntoBabes - GOD Bless you for seeing the need of the hour. Bless all.

**Re: - posted by UntoBabes (), on: 2011/12/13 16:38**

Amen,

This is a great read since history has a tendency to repeat itself.

**Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2011/12/13 16:55**

Amen. History is quickly repeating itself. Martyrdom and suffering will be the first clear sign of the end of the age. We must expect this and be awake unto righteousness and sleeping not.

We must read resources such as this to ready our spiritual minds for the grace needed for these coming times.

It will be upon us.