Directions for Hating Sin

~Other Speakers A-F: Richard Baxter:

Direct. I. Labour to know God, and to be affected with his attributes, and always to live as in his sight.—No man can know sin perfectly, because no man can know God perfectly. You can no further know what sin is than you know what God is, whom you sin against; for the formal malignity of sin is relative, as it is against the will and attributes of God. The godly have some knowledge of the malignity of sin, because they have some knowledge of God that is wronged by it. The wicked have no practical, prevalent knowledge of the malignity of sin, because they have no such knowledge of God. They that fear God will fear sinning; they that in their hearts are bold irreverently with God, will, in heart and life, be bold with sin: the atheist, who thinks there is no God thinks there is no sin against him. Nothing in world will tell us so plainly and powerfully of the evil of sin, as the knowledge of the greatness, wisdom goodness, holiness, authority, justice, truth, &c. of God. The sense of his presence, therefore, will revive our sense of sin's malignity.
Direct. II. Consider well of the office, the bloodshed, and the holy life of Christ.—His office is to expiate sin, and to destroy it. His blood was shed for it: his life condemned it. Love Christ, and you will hate that which caused his death. Love him, and you will love to be made like him, and hate that which is so contrary to Christ. These two great lights will show the odiousness of darkness.

Direct. III. Think well both how holy the office and work of the Holy Ghost is, and how great a mercy it is to us.—Shall God himself, the heavenly light, come down into a sinful heart, to illuminate and purify it? And yet shall I keep my darkness and defilement, in opposition to such wonderful mercy? Though all sin against the Holy Ghost be not the unpardonable blasphemy, yet all is aggravated hereby.

Direct. IV. Know and consider the wonderful love and mercy of God, and think what he has done for you; and you will hate sin, and be ashamed of it. It is an aggravation which makes sin odious even to common reason and ingenuity, that we should offend a God of infinite goodness, who has filled up our lives with mercy. It will grieve you if you have wronged an extraordinary friend: his love and kindness will come into your thoughts, and make you angry with your own unkindness. Here look over the catalogue of God's mercies to you, for soul and body. And here observe that Satan, in hiding the love of God from you, and tempting you under the pretence of humility to deny his greatest, special mercy, seeks to destroy your repentance and humiliation, also, by hiding the greatest aggravation of your sin.

Direct. V. Think what the soul of man is made for, and should be used to, even to love, obey, and glorify our Maker; and then you will see what sin is, which disables and perverts it.—How excellent, and high, and holy a work are we created for and called to! And should we defile the temple of God? And serve the devil in filthiness and folly, when we should receive, and serve, and magnify our Creator?

Direct. VI. Think well what pure and sweet delights a holy soul may enjoy from God, in his holy service; and then you will see what sin is, which robs him of these delights, and prefers fleshly lusts before them.—O how happily might we perform every duty, and how fruitfully might we serve our Lord, and what delight should we find in his love and acceptation, and the foresight of everlasting blessedness, if it were not for sin; which brings down the soul from the doors of heaven, to wallow with swine in a beloved dunghill!

Direct. VII. Bethink you what a life it is which you must live for ever, if you live in heaven; and what a life the holy ones there now live; and then think whether sin, which is so contrary to it, be not a vile and hateful thing.—Either you would live in heaven, or not. If not, you are not those I speak to. If you would, you know that there is no sinning; no worldly mind, no pride, no passion, no fleshly lust or pleasures there. Oh, did you but see and hear one hour, how those blessed spirits are taken up in loving and magnifying the glorious God in purity and holiness, and how far they are from sin, it would make you loathe sin ever after, and look on sinners as on men in bedlam wallowing naked in their dung. Especially, to think that you hope yourselves to live for ever like those holy spirits; and therefore sin does ill beseem you.

Direct. VIII. Look but to the state and torment of the damned, and think well of the difference betwixt angels and devils, and you may know what sin is.—Angels are pure; devils are polluted: holiness and sin do make the difference. Sin dwells in hell, and holiness in heaven. Remember that every temptation is from the devil, to make you like himself; as every holy motion is from Christ, to mike you like himself. Remember when you sin, that you are learning and imitating of the devil, and are so far like him, John 8:44. And the end of all is, that you may feel his pains. If hell-fire be not good, then sin is not good.

Direct. IX. Look always on sin as one that is ready to die, and consider how all men judge of it at the last.—What do men in heaven say of it? And what do men in hell say of it? And what do men at death say of it? And what do

converted souls, or awakened consciences, say of it? Is it then followed with delight and fearlessness as it is now? Is it then applauded? Will any of them speak well of it? Nay, all the world speaks evil of sin in the general now, even when they love and commit the several acts. Will you sin when you are dying?

Direct. X. Look always on sin and judgment together.—Remember that you must answer for it before God, and angels, and all the world; and you will the better know it.

Direct. XI. Look now but upon sickness, poverty, shame, despair, death, and rottenness in the grave, and it may a little help you to know what sin is. These are things within your sight or feeling; you need not faith to tell you of them. And by such effects you might have some little knowledge of the cause.

Direct. XII. Look but upon some eminent, holy persons upon earth, and upon the mad, profane, malignant world; and the difference may tell you in part what sin is.—Is there not an amiableness in a holy, blameless person, that lives in love to God and man, and in the joyful hopes of life eternal? Is not a beastly drunkard or whoremonger, and a raging swearer, and a malicious persecutor, a very deformed, loathsome creature? Is not the mad, confused, ignorant, ungodly state of the world a very pitiful sight? What then is the sin that all this consists in?

Though the principal part of the cure is in turning the will to the hatred of sin, and is done by this discovery of its malignity; yet I shall add a few more directions for the executive part, supposing that what is said already has had its effect.
Direct. I. When you have found out your disease and danger, give up yourselves to Christ as the Saviour and Physician of souls, and to the Holy Ghost as your Sanctifier, remembering that he is sufficient and willing to do the work which he has undertaken.—It is not you that are to be saviours and sanctifiers of yourselves (unless as you work under Christ). But he that has undertaken it, takes it for his glory to perform it.

Direct. II. Yet must you be willing and obedient in applying the remedies prescribed you by Christ, and observing his directions in order to your cure. And you must not be tender, and coy, and fine, and say his is too bitter, and that is too sharp; but trust his love, and skill, and care, and take it as he prescribes it, or gives it you, without any more ado. Say not, It is grievous, and I cannot take it: for he commands you nothing but what is safe, and wholesome, and necessary, and if you cannot take it, must try whether you can bear your sickness, and death, and the fire of hell! Are humiliation, confession, restitution, mortification, and holy diligence worse than hell?

Direct. III. See that you take not part with sin, and wrangle not, or strive not against your Physician, or any that would do you good.—Excusing sin, and heading for and extenuating it, and striving against the Spirit and conscience, and wrangling against ministers and godly friends, and hating reproof, are not the means to be cured and sanctified.

Direct. IV. See that malignity in every one of your particular sins, which you can see and say is in sin in general.—It is a gross deceit of yourselves, if you will speak a great deal of the evil of sin, and see none of this malignity in your pride, and your worldliness, and your passion and peevishness, and our malice and uncharitableness, and your lying, backbiting, slandering, or sinning against conscience for worldly commodity or safety. What self-contradiction is it for a man in prayer to aggravate sin, and when he is reproved for it, to justify or excuse it! This is like him that will speak against treason, and the enemies of the king, but because the traitors are his friends and kindred, will protect or hide them, and take their parts.

Direct. V. Keep as far as you can from those temptations which feed and strengthen the, sins which you would overcome.—Lay siege to your sins, and starve them out, by keeping away the food and fuel which is their maintenance and life.

Direct. VI. Live in the exercise of those graces and duties which are contrary to the sins which you are most in danger of.—For grace and duty are contrary to sin, and kill it, and cure us of it, as the fire cures us of cold, or health of sickness.

Direct. VII. Hearken not to weakening unbelief and distrust, and cast not away the comforts of God, which are your cordials and strength.—It is not a frightful, dejected, despairing frame of mind, that is fittest to resist sin; but it is the encouraging sense of the love of God, and thankful sense of grace received (with a cautious fear).

Direct. VIII. Be always suspicious of carnal self-love, and watch against it.—For that is the burrow or fortress of sin, and the common patron of it; ready to draw you to it, and ready to justify it. We are very prone to be partial

in our own cause; as the case of Judah with Tamar, and David when Nathan reproved him in a parable, show. our own passions, our own pride, our own censures, or backbitings, or injurious dealings, our own neglects of duty, seem small, excusable, if not justifiable things to us; whereas we could easily see the faultiness of all these in another, especially in an enemy: when yet we should be best acquainted with ourselves, and we should most love ourselves, and therefore hate our own sins most.

Direct. IX. Bestow your first and chiefest labour to kill sin at the root; to cleanse the heart, which is the fountain; for out of the heart come the evils of the life.—Know which are the master-roots; and bend your greatest care and industry to mortify those: and they are especially these that follow; 1. Ignorance. 2. Unbelief. 3. Inconsiderateness. 4. Selfishness and pride. 5. Fleshliness, in pleasing a brutish appetite, lust, or fantasy. 6. Senseless hard-heartedness and sleepiness in sin.

Direct. X. Account the world and all its pleasures, wealth, and honours, no better than indeed they are, and then Satan will find no bait to catch you. Esteem all as dung with Paul, Philippians 3:8; and no man will sin and sell his soul, for that which he accounts but as dung.

Direct. XI. Keep up above in a heavenly conversation, and then your souls will be always in the light, and as in the sight of God, and taken up with those businesses and delights which put them out of relish with the baits of sin.

Direct. XII. Let christian watchfulness be your daily work; and cherish a preserving, though not a distracting and discouraging fear.

Direct. XIII. Take heed of the first approaches and beginnings of sin. Oh how great a matter does a little of this fire kindle! And if you fall, rise quickly by sound repentance, whatever it may cost you.

Direct. XIV. Make God's word your only rule and labour diligently to understand it.

Direct. XV. And in doubtful cases, do not easily depart from the unanimous judgment of the generality of the most wise and godly of all ages.

Direct. XVI. In doubtful cases be not passionate or rash, but proceed deliberately, and prove things well, before you fasten on them.

Direct. XVII. Be acquainted with your bodily temperature, and what sin it most inclines you to, and what sin also your calling or living situation leave you most open to, that there your watch may be the stricter.

Direct. XVIII. Keep in a life of holy order, such as God has appointed you to walk in. For there is no preservation for stragglers that keep not rank and file, but forsake the order which God commands them.—And this order lies principally in these points: 1. That you keep in union with the universal church. Separate not from Christ's body upon any pretence whatever. With the church as regenerate, hold spiritual communion, in faith, love, and holiness with the church as congregate and visible, hold outward communion, in profession and worship. 2. If you are not teachers, live under your particular, faithful pastors, as obedient disciples of Christ. 3. Let the most godly, if possible, be your familiars. 4. Be laborious in an outward calling.

Direct. XIX. Turn all God's providences, whether of prosperity or adversity, against your sins.—If he gives you health and wealth, remember he thereby obliges you to obedience, and calls for special service from you. If he afflict you, remember that it is sin that he is offended at, and searches after; and therefore take it as his medicine, and see that you hinder not, but help on its work, that it may purge away your sin.

Direct. XX. Wait patiently on Christ till he has finished the cure, which will not be till this trying life be finished.—Persevere in attendance on his Spirit and means; for he will come in season, and will not tarry. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning, and he shall come unto us as the rain: as the latter and former rain upon the earth," Hosea 6:3. Though you have oft said, "There is no healing," Jeremiah 14:19; "He will heal your backslidings, and love you freely," Hosea 14:4. "Unto you that fear his name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise, with healing in his wings," Malachi 4:2: " and blessed are all they that wait for him," Isa. 30:18.

Thus I have given such directions as may help for humiliation under sin, or hatred of it, and deliverance from it.