



The Assurance of Heaven and Salvation

EZEKIEL HOPKINS



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**The Assurance of Heaven and
Salvation,
A Powerful Motive to Serve God
with Fear**

by Ezekiel Hopkins

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WHEREFORE WE RECEIVING A KINGDOM WHICH CANNOT BE MOVED, LET US HAVE GRACE, WHEREBY WE MAY SERVE GOD ACCEPTABLY, WITH REVERENCE AND GODLY FEAR: FOR OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE. HEB. 12:28, 29.

INTRODUCTION

THIS text contains in it a Doctrine, a Use, and a Motive.

The Doctrine is, We have received a kingdom which cannot be moved.

The Use or Inference from thence is this: Therefore, let us serve God.

And the Motive, to enforce this exhortation, is in these words, for our God is a consuming fire.

First. In the first part, which is the Thesis or Position, We have received a kingdom which cannot be moved, we must know, there is a Twofold Kingdom: a Kingdom of Grace, set up in the heart of a saint, where Christ alone reigns as sole monarch and sovereign; and a Kingdom of Glory, prepared for us in the highest heavens, where we shall reign as kings with Christ for ever.

If we take it in the former sense, for the Kingdom of Grace, so the Apostle saith, we have a kingdom, that is, we have it already in possession. Christ hath established his dominion over every believer: and, though he sits personally upon his throne in heaven; yet he rules in us by the vicegerency and deputation of his Spirit that received commission from him, and also by the law of his Word enacted by it.

If we understand it in the latter sense, for the Kingdom of Glory, which seems most congruous to the design of the Apostle, so, also, we have a kingdom, and that in a Fourfold sense.

By Grace, giving us the earnest of it.

By Faith, realizing it.

By Hope, embracing it. And,

By the Promises, assuring of it.

First. We have a Kingdom of Glory, in the Earnest and First-Fruits of it.

The comforts and graces of the Spirit are very often, in Scripture, called the earnest of our inheritance: so you have it in 2 Cor. 1:22. and in Eph. 1:14. An earnest, you know, is always part of the bargain: so God, to assure us that he is in earnest when he promiseth heaven and glory to us, hath already given us part of it in the graces of his Spirit. Grace and glory are one and the same thing, in a different print, in a smaller and a greater letter: here, we have heaven in seminal inchoation; hereafter, we shall have it in consummate perfection: glory lies couched and compacted in grace, as the beauty of a flower lies couched and eclipsed in the seed: therefore the Psalmist saith, Psalm 97:11. That Light is sown for the righteous: that is, the light of joy and of a future life are in the graces of God's children as in their seed, and they shall certainly bud and sprout forth into perfect happiness.

Secondly. We have a Kingdom of Glory, because Faith realizeth things future, and giveth an existence and being to things that are not.

This is that grace, to which nothing is past nor nothing future. It contracts all things into present time, and makes all actually existent. It draws things, that are at a great distance from it, near to itself: and

thus the Galatians' faith represented the death of Christ so visibly to them, that the Apostle told them, he was crucified among them: Gal. 3:1. It dives down into the gulf of future times, and fetcheth up things that as yet are not. It is much at one to a strong faith, to have heaven, or to believe it: this grace makes heaven as really present, as if it were already in possession: and therefore it is called, in Heb. 11:1. the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for: it is the very being of things hoped for; the being of those things, that as yet have no being.

Thirdly. We have a Kingdom of Glory, as in the view of faith, so also in the embraces of Hope.

And therefore hope is called, the anchor of the soul.... that entereth into that within the veil: Heb. 6:19. that is, into heaven: it lays hold on all that glory, that is there laid up and kept in reversion for us. Hope is, in itself, a solid and substantial possession; for it stirs up the same affections, it excites the same joy, delight, and complacency, as fruition itself doth. It is the taster of all our comforts: and, if they be but temporal, it not only tastes them, but sometimes quite devours them; and leaves us in suspense, whether it be not better to be expectants than enjoyers. Heavenly hope gives the same real contentment and satisfaction: it antedates our glory; and puts us into the possession of our inheritance, whilst we are yet in our nonage: only it doth not spend and devour its object, beforehand, as earthly hope doth.

Fourthly. We have a Kingdom of Glory, because God hath assured to us the possession of it by his immutable word of Promise.

And therefore it is called eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised: Tit. 1:2. God's word is as good security, as actual possession. It is this word, that gives us right and title to it; and this right we may well call ours. Hence we have it, and it is observable, Mark 16:16. He, that believeth.... shall be saved: here is assurance of salvation, for the future. But, in John 3:18. it is, He, that believeth

not, is condemned already. He, that believeth, shall be saved: He, that believeth not, is condemned already. Unbelievers are no more actually condemned, than believers are actually saved: only, what God promiseth, or what God threateneth, it is all one whether he saith it is done or it shall be done; for damnation is as sure to the one, and salvation as certain to the other, as if they were already in their final estate. So, then, we have a kingdom: that is, God, who cannot lie, hath promised it; and his promise is as much as actual possession itself.

This kingdom is described to us, in the text, to be immoveable: We have a kingdom, which cannot be moved. It is not like the kingdoms of the earth, that are all subject to earthquakes and commotions; but we have a kingdom, which cannot be moved. And, if we understand this of the Kingdom of Grace in the hearts of believers, then the sense is, it can never be so moved as to be utterly removed: though it be shaken and battered, yet the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal on it, The Lord knoweth who are his; as the Apostle speaks, 2 Tim. 2:19: indeed, as all earthquakes are caused by some vapours included in the bowels of the earth, so is there enough in us to cause shakings and earthquakes: there are those corrupt and sinful steams of lusts, that are still working and heaving in our breasts; that, were not God's truth, wisdom, and power all engaged to keep and preserve us, we should be soon moved from our standing and overthrown. If we understand by it the Kingdom of Glory, that is certainly immoveable: We have a kingdom, which cannot be moved: there, we shall be free from the temptations of Satan, from the infirmities and corruptions of the flesh, from the mutability and fickleness of our own wills; and shall have a blessed necessity imposed upon us, to be for ever holy, and to be for ever happy.

So much for the thesis, We have a kingdom that cannot be moved.

Secondly. From the thesis, the Apostle proceeds to draw a Practical Inference: wherein we may observe, both what he exhorts us unto, and how we ought to do it.

The matter of the duty, to which he exhorts us, is, Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God.

The manner how we ought to serve God is set down in one word, and that is acceptably: Let us.... serve God acceptably: which that we may do, he directs us to the means; and that is, in all our serving of God let us address ourselves to him, with reverence and godly fear: let us serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.

I shall only, as I pass along, take a taste of this part of the text, before I fix upon what I principally intend. The word here translated reverence signifies shamefacedness or bashfulness; such, as is commendable in inferiors, while they are in the presence of their superiors. And it implies in it two things: first, consciousness of our own vileness and unworthiness: secondly, an, overawing sense of another's excellency. For modesty, or reverence, consists in these two things; in low and debasing thoughts of ourselves, and in a high esteem of others. This the Apostle exhorts us to in the text, by the word reverence. Whence observe this: That a due sense of our own vileness and of God's glorious majesty, is an excellent qualification in all our services to make them acceptable. Let us serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.

Thirdly. You have, in the text, the Motive, whereby the Apostle enforceth this exhortation: For our God is a consuming fire.

These words are cited out of Deut. 4:24. where Moses, to bring the Israelites from idolatry, represents God to them as a jealous God and a consuming fire. And here the Apostle makes use of them, to compose men into a holy awe and reverence of God in serving him.

Whence observe,

First. That an irreverent and fearless worship of the True God, provokes him and deserves his consuming wrath, as well as the idolatrous worship of a false god.

Moses makes use of the same words, to deter the Israelites from idolatry and worshipping a false god, as the Apostle makes use of, to excite us to a reverence and worshipping of the True God.

Secondly. Whereas it is said, that our God is a consuming fire; observe, That our peculiar interest in God is no encouragement to cast off our most awful fear of God.

Our God is a consuming fire: though he hath laid down his enmity against us, yet he hath not laid down his sovereignty and majesty over us. Indeed these two expressions, our God, and a consuming fire, at first blush and glance seem to look strangely and wistly one upon another: but the Holy Ghost hath excellently tempered them. He is our God: this corrects that despairing fear, that otherwise would seize upon us, from the consideration of God as a consuming fire. And he is a consuming fire also: this corrects that presumptuous irreverence, that else the consideration of our interest in God might possibly embolden us unto.

I. You see now, from the explication of these words, what an excellent copious portion of Scripture I have unfolded unto you, wherein indeed is contained the true art and method of serving God acceptably. It is the fear of God, that quickens us to serve him: and this fear of God is pressed upon us and wrought in us, by two strong principles: we have a kingdom: and, what is strange too for those that have a kingdom of God, our God is a consuming fire, and therefore let us fear him.

Now this is such a principle, that carnal men are not apt to apprehend. They say, "If we have a kingdom, that cannot be moved, why then should we fear? And, if God be such a consuming fire, why should we ever expect that kingdom, since we are but as stubble?" But our Apostle hath well conjoined them together: and, from that conjunction, I shall raise and prosecute this one PROPOSITION.

Full Assurance and the Fear of God

THAT, EVEN THOSE, WHO STAND HIGHEST IN THE LOVE AND FAVOUR OF GOD, AND HAVE THE FULLEST ASSURANCE THEREOF, AND OF THEIR INTEREST IN HIM AS THEIR GOD, OUGHT, NOTWITHSTANDING, TO FEAR HIM AS A SIN-REVENGING GOD AND A CONSUMING FIRE.

In prosecuting this Proposition, I shall shew how consistent the Grace of Fear is with other Graces of the Spirit: that it is no impediment to

Full Assurance

Love of God

A Spirit of Adoption

Holy Rejoicing, nor

Holy Boldness.*

i. In shewing you that the grace of Fear is NO IMPEDIMENT TO FULL ASSURANCE, I shall consider,

What Fear of God it is, that a believer ought always to overawe his heart with.

Upon what Grounds and Considerations he is thus to do. What there is in a reconciled God, that may be a ground and motive to overawe our hearts with a fear of his majesty.

1. What Fear of God it is, that a believer ought to overawe his heart with.

Fear, in general, is described to be a passion or an affection of the mind, arising from the apprehension of some great evil with

difficulty avoidable.

And, as it is observed by some, it usually carries in it Three things.

A doubtfulness or uncertainty of the event, what it may prove: and this is always a torment to the mind.

A terror, that ariseth from the greatness of the evil apprehended and feared.

A careful flight and aversion of it.

(1) There is, in Fear, a doubtfulness and uncertainty of the event.

And this is a torment, when a man is racked in suspense and doubt what to expect; whether or no the vengeance of God will not fall heavy upon him; whether or no he be not fuel on which this consuming fire will for ever prey. Now this is not that fear, which the Apostle, in this text, exhorts us to serve God withal: no, to serve God with reverence and godly fear, is not to serve him with a doubtful, anxious, and solicitous fear of what the event may prove: nay, such a fear as this, is inconsistent with actual assurance; and those, who are perplexed with it, cannot say we have a kingdom, nor cannot fear their God as a consuming fire. There may be a genuine, awful fear of God as a consuming fire; where there is not the least doubt remaining concerning our final state; where the soul is fully assured, that God will be to him not a fire to consume him, but a sun to cherish him for ever. I will give you one or two remarkable scriptures to this purpose. In Heb. 4:1. Let us fear, says the Apostle, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it: here the Apostle quickens them to the exercise of holiness, from the fear of falling short of heaven: yea, though they had assurance by God's promise of it; lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, yet you should fall short of it. And so the Apostle triumphs in his assurance, 2 Cor. 5:1. We know that.... we have a house.... eternal in the heavens: and yet, in verse 11. he quickens himself to the discharge of his ministerial office, from

the fear of God's wrath; knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men: though he was assured of glory, yet he quickens himself to the discharge of his ministerial function, by the fear of God's wrath. So that it is evident there may be a fear of God's wrath exciting unto duty; where yet there is a full assurance, beyond all doubting and hesitation, of escaping wrath. So that this is not that fear, that the Apostle excites them who have assurance unto.

(2) There is a fear of terror; a shivering in the soul, upon the apprehension of the greatness of the evil feared, but avoided too: and this is consistent with full assurance.

Thus the terror of past dangers sometimes causeth as much terror, as if we were again to encounter with them. So, when believers look back upon that wrath and fiery indignation, that they have narrowly escaped; upon that lake of brimstone, that boils and burns behind them, wherein thousands of others are for ever swallowed up; this cannot but affect them with a holy horror and fear of God's wrath against sinners, though they have full assurance of his love.

(3) There is also, in Fear, a flight and aversion from the evil feared: and this, also, is consistent with full assurance.

Noah had full assurance, from the promise of God, for his preservation from the deluge; and yet it is said, that Noah, being moved with fear, built him an ark. Full assurance to escape evil is far from hindering, as some calumniate it, the use of means to prevent that evil: yea, the assurance, that we have to escape hell and wrath, is of the greatest and most effectual influence, to make us careful to use those means whereby we may escape it. See this in 2 Cor. 7:1. Having these promises.... let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God: so, in Tit. 2:11, 12, 13. The grace of God, that bringeth salvation.... teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.... Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of.... our Lord Jesus Christ: so, in 1

John 3:3. Every one, that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as God is pure.

Thus you see what fear it is, that the Apostle exhorts believers to, who have a kingdom: not a fear of perplexing doubtfulness, but such as is consistent with their full assurance: that is, so to fear the wrath of God, as to have our hearts affected with terror at the greatness and insupportableness of that wrath, though they have escaped it; and to fear so, as to avoid all sin, and all that exposeth to that wrath. In these two senses, they, that are assured that God is their God, ought to fear him as a consuming fire.

2. Let us now see upon what Grounds and Considerations a believer, who is assured of God's love and favour to him, ought yet to fear him.

As a Consuming Fire.

[1] The consideration of that mighty and dreadful power, that God puts forth in the punishing and afflicting of the damned, may strike fear into the hearts of those, that are fully assured of God's love and favour to them.

Such a fear as this, the holy angels themselves have: though they are secured by Christ in that blessed state and condition that they enjoy; yet, to see God stripping and making bare his arm, to lay on weighty strokes of everlasting vengeance upon their fellow angels that are fallen, makes them to tremble and stand astonished at the almighty power of God: and this keeps them at a due distance, in their thoughts and apprehensions of his dreadful majesty. And should it not much more make us to tremble with an awful respect of the power of God, to consider how he crusheth and breaks the damned in hell, by his own almighty arm stretched out, in the full power of his wrath, to their everlasting destruction? It is from this power of God, that Christ himself enforceth the fear of God: Mat. 10:28. Fear him, which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell: though God

should assure you, that he would never destroy you in hell; yet, because he is able to do it, therefore you should fear him.

[2] This fear may arise in the hearts of the children of God, who are most assured of his love, from the consideration of the wrath and dreadful severity of God, as well as of his power.

If a father corrects his slave in his wrath, this will cause fear and dread in the son, though he knows that wrath shall never fall upon him: so, a child of God, who is assured of the tender love and favour of God to himself, yet, when he sadly considers that wrath and indignation that is in God against the damned; when he sees his Heavenly Father angry, though it be not against him; this must needs strike a reverential fear and awe into his soul. Now this reverential fear will remain for ever: The fear of the Lord endureth for ever. Yea, when the children of God shall be made for ever happy in heaven, yet this fear shall be then increased, and not at all diminished: the more they see of the power of the wrath and severity of God executed upon the damned, the more they fear and reverence this powerful, this sin-revenging God. And this kind of fear is no prejudice to their full assurance and joy, nor shall it be prejudicial to their complete and perfect happiness in heaven.

[3] The consideration of the desert of sin, should cause a holy fear of God, even in those, that are fully assured of his love.

When a child of God looks upon sin, and sees what wrath and torment he hath deserved by it, though he be assured by the testimony of the Spirit of God that he is pardoned; yet it cannot but fright him to consider, that he should deserve so great condemnation: as a malefactor, though he be pardoned, yet if he be present at the execution of his fellow offenders, must needs be struck with fear and horror, that he should be guilty of the same crimes, for which they are to suffer such sharp and cruel punishments. What the thief on the cross said unto his fellow thief, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? the same may I say to

believers: Do not you fear God, seeing you deserve, at least to be in the same condemnation with those wretches, that lie howling in hell?

[4] Another ground of fear is, that it is in itself possible, that all this wrath should be your portion for ever; even your's, who are most assured of glory.

And is not this just cause of fear; if not of expectation, yet at least of terror? Indeed, as God hath been graciously pleased to bind himself in a covenant of grace and mercy to you, so it is impossible that this wrath should fall upon you: but, yet, such a supposition as this is enough to cause fear in the most assured heart; to think, that, if God had not engaged himself by promise to deliver him from that wrath, what then would have been his condition to all eternity? Would not such thoughts as these make you tremble? Suppose a man were fast chained to the top of some high rock, hanging over a bottomless gulf; though he knew and was assured that he should not fall into it, being immoveably fastened there, yet, when he looks down that deep and dangerous precipice, and sees the gulf foaming and raging under him, will not a cold fear thrill through his heart to think, "O! if I were not here fastened by a strong chain to this immoveable rock, what would become of me?" even so, Believers, you, that are most assured to escape hell, this is your condition: you are fastened to the Rock of Ages by the unchangeable promise of God, that will ever hold you fast; but yet, every time you look down into the bottomless gulf that is under you, where thousands are swallowed up to all eternity, doth not such a thought as this fright you, "O! if I were not fastened to this immoveable rock; if God had not made an everlasting covenant with me, ordered in all things and sure; I should also have been swallowed up with the rest of the world, and have gone down quick into hell?" Alas! we are all of us, held over the lake of fire and brimstone in the hands of God: some, he holds in the left-hand of his common providence; and others, he holds in the right-hand of his special grace: those, whom he holds only in the hands of his providence, he lets fall and drop, one after another, into hell, where they are swallowed up and lost eternally: those, that he holds in the

hands of his grace, it is true it is impossible upon that supposition that even they should fall into, hell; yet, when they think, "O! if we were not upheld!" yea, how possible it was that they should not have been upheld; this apprehension must needs strike them with fear and terror: though not with a perplexing doubtfulness, concerning the safety of their condition; yet with a doubtful apprehension of the possibility of what would have been their condition, if God had held them over hell only, by the hand of his common providence.

[5] Though you are assured that you shall escape this eternal death, yet it will be a narrow escape: and that may cause fear.

It will be an escape with very much labour and difficulty. Though you are held in the hands of God, yet he leads you along to heaven by the gates of hell: and this is sufficient to cause fear. Our way to heaven is so strait, the rubs in it so many, our falls by them so frequent, our enemies so potent: that, though our assurance may make us not to fear but that, in the end, we shall escape hell; yet it will be high presumption for us, not to fear how we may escape it. The Apostle brings in the salvation of the elect themselves with a scarcely: 1 Pet. 4:18. If the righteous scarcely be saved. Now this scarcely doth not imply that there is any uncertainty in the end, but only the great difficulty in the means of obtaining it. So, then, the end is certain; that is, a believer's salvation from hell: and that is just cause of rejoicing. But the means are very difficult and laborious: and that is just cause of fear.

Briefly, then, to apply it, in one word. Though you are assured, through faith, of the pardon of your sins, yet tremble at the thought of that wrath and hell, that you have escaped. It is observed, that those are the fixed stars, that tremble most. So Christians, who are fixed immoveably in the unchangeable love of God, as stars fixed to the heavens in their orbs: yet they are most of all in trepidation and trembling, when they reflect upon themselves; and think, that, instead of being stars in heaven, they might have been firebrands in hell. Those, to me, are suspicious professors, that make a great blaze

with their joys, in the apprehensions of their right to heaven; but never tremble, under the apprehensions of their deserts of hell.

The Consideration of God, as our God, that may Enforce a Holy Awe and Fear of Him

(2) Having shewed you upon what account God is to be feared as he is a consuming fire, in the next place I shall shew you what there is in the consideration of God, as our God, that may enforce a holy awe and fear of him.

And, indeed, if ever it was necessary to press men to a due fear and awe of God, it is so now: since, on the one hand, the open profaneness of ungodly men, and, on the other hand, the pert sauciness of some notional professors who are apt to think that communion with God consists in a familiar rudeness, do plainly testify to all the world, that there is little fear or reverence of him in their hearts. And now, whilst I am shewing what reason there is, that God's dearest children should fear him as a Reconciled Father, let wicked men, in the mean while, sadly consider with themselves, what great cause then they have to fear him, who is their sworn enemy: if God's smiles are tempered with that majesty, that makes them awful; surely his frowns then must needs carry in them an astonishing terror, that makes them insupportable. We may observe how unexpectedly, sometimes, from the goodness and mercy of God, that is, the sweetest and most natural attractive of love, the Scripture draws an inference to fear God: Ps. 130:4. There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared: not only a sin-revenging, but a sin-pardoning God, is here set before us as the object of our fear: these two sister-graces, fear and love, are nourished in the soul by the same attribute, God's pardoning mercy: the great sinner in the Gospel is said to love much, because much was forgiven her; and, here, much fear, as well as much love, is the result and issue of God's

pardoning grace. And so you have it, in Hos. 3:5. They shall fear the Lord and his goodness. And, in Exod. 15:11. Moses, describing the most glorious attributes of God, tells us, that he is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises: even then, when we are to praise God for his mercy; yet are we to fear him, as being fearful in praises. And therefore Nehemiah, in Neh. 1:5. praying to God, says, O Lord.... the great and the terrible God: wherein? is it in overwhelming kingdoms; in bringing upon them decreed destruction? is it in the fierce execution of his wrath against sinners? no; says he, O Lord.... the terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him. So again, in chap. 9:32. O God ... the mighty and the terrible God, who keepeth covenant and mercy.

Let us now consider what there is in the mercy and favour of God, as he is a Reconciled God unto us and in covenant with us, that may justly render him the object of our fear.

[1] The consideration of that dreadful way and method, that God took to manifest his mercy towards us, is sufficient to affect our hearts with fear, though we stand fully possessed of his favour.

In Gen. 28. when God had made many gracious promises all along that chapter unto Jacob, of blessing him, of keeping him in all his ways, and of multiplying his seed as the dust of the earth, you would think this was no terrible thing: and yet, because God reveals this mercy to him in an awful and amazing manner, a gap is opened in heaven, a bright ladder reaching from earth to heaven; God on the top of it, angels on every round of it: though the message was joyful, yet the strange kind of delivering of the message makes Jacob cry out, How dreadful is this place! it is none other.... than the gate of heaven! the very gate of heaven becomes dreadful, when it is represented in such a majestic manner.

But, the way, that God took for his mercy to arrive at us, is much more dreadful, than any such dream or vision; and, therefore, we should be the more deeply affected with fear and trembling, even

then when God speaks peace and pardon to us: for, if we consider either the Terms upon which he is become ours, or the Way by which he discovereth himself to be ours, both of them are full of dread and terror.

1st. It cannot but strike our hearts with fear, to reflect upon those dreadful Terms, upon which God is contented to be induced to become our God.

His mercy towards us is procured upon terms of infinite justice and severity. Divine vengeance arrests our Surety, and exacts from him the utmost satisfaction. That curse, that would for ever have blasted and withered the souls of all mankind, seizeth upon Christ in all its malignity. That wrath, some few drops of which scalds the damned in hell, was given him to drink off in a full and overflowing cup: He did bear the chastisement of our peace, and by his stripes we are healed. Nor would God, upon lower terms, have consented to a reconciliation betwixt wretched man and himself, than the precious blood of his Only Son. As of old, friendship betwixt two persons was wont to be attested and sealed by a sacrifice, as we find it both among heathen authors and also in Scripture; an instance of which we have of Laban, in Gen. 31:54. where Laban and Jacob, returning to amity, make a ratification of it by a sacrifice: so, the atonement, that God made betwixt us and himself, is solemnized by a sacrifice, even the sacrifice of his Own Son, as of a Lamb without spot or blemish. In this blood, the treaty betwixt God and man stands ratified and confirmed. O dreadful mercy, that clasps and embraces us about with arms dyed red in the blood of Jesus Christ! But, is not this ground enough, to cause a holy fear of God to seize upon every soul, that shall but seriously consider this sad tragedy of pardoning grace? if a king resolve to forgive a malefactor, upon no other terms than a pardon writ with the last drop of the heart-blood of his dearest friend, who is there, that is so hardened, that will not tremble at such a mercy as this is, though it save him? so is the case betwixt God and us: the contents of the pardon are joyful, but it is written all with the blood

of Jesus Christ, reeking warm from his very heart; and who then would not fear even a forgiving God?

2dly. Consider the Way and Method, that God takes with us when he becomes our God; and that is most dreadful, and must needs make the most confirmed heart to shake with fear and trembling.

Indeed God deals not with us in such rigour, as he dealt with Jesus Christ his Son: but yet, usually, when he becomes our God, when he enters upon us as his possession; first, he shakes all the foundations of our hearts, breathes in flames of fire into our very marrow, cramps our consciences and unjoints our souls. Oh, the tempests and storms of wrath, that God pours into a wounded conscience, when it is under searching convictions! Oh, the smart and anguish of a wounded spirit, when God, instead of balm, shall only chafe it with brimstone! And yet this is the common method, that God useth to prepare souls for himself: he seems to arm himself in all his terrors against them, singling them out to the conflict; and, when they give up themselves for lost, lying gasping for hope, scarcely at length are administered some few reviving comforts. It is with these, as it was with the children of Israel upon Sinai: first, they were astonished with a confused noise of thunder, the air full of lightning, the mountains all on a flame, and the earth trembling under them, before they heard that comfortable voice, in Exod. 20:2. I am the Lord thy God: so is it with convinced sinners: God dischargeth his threatenings against them, that speak more dreadfully to them than a voice of thunder: he speaks to them out of the midst of flames, and every word scorseth up their hearts; and, when they stand trembling and despairing, once at length they hear those reviving words, I am the Lord thy God. What hearts are there now, that such a dreadful mercy as this would not overawe? Those discoveries of God's love, that break in upon the soul in the midst of a doleful and gloomy night of despair and despondency, work naturally a sweet kind of terror and a shivering joy.

And that is the First Consideration. The dreadful method, that God takes to procure mercy for us, even by the death of his Son, and to apply mercy to us, even by the terrors of a convinced conscience, is a sufficient ground to affect our hearts with fear, though we stand fully possessed of his favour.

[2] Though God be our God; yet to consider, that it is possible to lose his favour and the sense of it, is enough to affect the heart with a holy fear, even of a Reconciled God.

It is true, God's original and fountain-love can never be dried up: Whom he loves, he loves unto the end: John 13:1. And my loving-kindness will I never utterly take away from him: Ps. 89:33. But, yet, the streams of this fountain-love may be very much obstructed from flowing freely down upon us: though we shall never again be children of wrath, yet we may be children under wrath. Every presumptuous sin, which we commit, raiseth God's displeasure against us: he is angry with us, upon every more notorious and known sin, which we commit: and since, then, we are in danger every day of falling into gross and foul sins, and are kept only by his almighty and free grace from the worst, what cause have we to fear, lest we forfeit his favour and turn his displeasure against us! Yea, again, though we should be preserved from sin and continue in his love, yet we cannot assure ourselves that we shall continue in the sense and comfortable apprehension of it: comfort is most arbitrary, and at God's free dispose; neither hath he engaged himself to bestow it upon any by any absolute promise: though now his lamp shines clearly upon thy tabernacle, and thou rejoicest in his smiles; yet how quickly may he wrap thee up in a dark night of desertion, and turn all thy songs into mourning! Thou, therefore, that art now assured that God is thy God, fear lest ere long thou mayest not think him to be so: certain thou art he is so now; yet, before it be long, possibly, through thy miscarriage, thou mayest not think him to be so: and it is all one, as to comfort or discomfort, whether God be thy God or not, if thou dost not apprehend him to be so, and therefore fear him.

Every Frown from a Reconciled God to Cause Fear

[3] Every frown and stroke toucheth to the quick, that cometh from a Reconciled God and a Loving Father; and, therefore, the rather fear, because he is thy God.

Every little blow from a father strikes deeper and causeth more smart, than greater blows from other persons: others strike the body; but, when a loving father strikes, he wounds the heart. So is it here: the nearness of the relation betwixt God and us, puts an anguish and sting into every correction. As the Psalmist speaks in his own case, Ps. 55:12, 13. It was not an enemy, that reproached me... neither was it he, that hated me ... then could I have borne it ... But it was thou, a friend, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. These are sad accents. And so is it here: the blows of a sin-revenging God may indeed break the back; but the blows of a gracious and reconciled Father break the heart. Fear, therefore, lest, through some miscarriage of thine (and such miscarriages thou art every day guilty of) thou shouldest provoke thy God to lay some heavy stroke upon thee; which will be the more smart, from the aggravation that provoked love puts upon it.

And thus you see now, in these Three particulars, what ground there is from the consideration of God as our God, to enforce a holy fear of his divine majesty upon our hearts. He is our God; therefore fear him, because the way that he became ours is most dreadful: he is our God, as yet; fear lest we may not apprehend him so long: he is our God; therefore fear him, because every stroke and frown from a God in covenant comes with an aggravated smart and sting.

Holy Fear Brings A Most Ardent Love of God

ii. Now this Holy Fear, as it is no enemy to Full Assurance, as I have shewed you, so neither, IS IT ANY WAY PREJUDICIAL TO A MOST ARDENT LOVE OF GOD.

Filial love and filial fear are twins: but not such as Jacob and Esau, that strive to supplant one another. The pure flame of divine and heavenly love is like other flames: the higher it mounts, the more it vibrates and trembles.

Indeed St. John tells us, 1 John 4:18. that perfect love casteth out fear. It should seem then, that all fear of God is swallowed up in those hearts, that are once brought into a holy love. But the Apostle doth very well explain himself, in the reason that he gives of this assertion, in the next words: perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment in it.

Hence, therefore, we may distinguish of a Twofold Fear of God.

The one is tormenting; causing unquiet rollings and estuations in the heart, in a sad suspense of what our future and eternal state may prove: and this is slavish. Now this fear perfect love casts out and expels: for where divine love is perfected in the soul, there are no more such suspenses, hesitations, and doubtings, what will become of it to eternity. Now by perfect love may be meant, either that state of perfection, to which we shall attain in glory, where our whole work to all eternity shall be to love and please God; or, else, that perfection, that consists in its sincerity in this life. If we take it for that perfection of love, that shall for ever burn in our hearts when we ourselves shall be made perfect; so, it is certain that it will cast out all tormenting fears: for, certainly, if, in heaven, hope itself shall be abolished, much more shall fear be abolished; for, there, every saint shall have much more than a full assurance, even a full fruition of glory, and they shall know themselves to be for ever confirmed in that blessed state which shall prevent all doubts and fears. If we understand it of that perfection of love, that we may attain to in this life, so also the strong and vigorous actings of love to God cast out all

tormenting fears: it is not possible, that that soul, which actually loves God with a vigorous and most ardent affection, should, at the same time, be racked with distracting fears of hell and damnation; for it is the sense of God's love unto the soul, that draws from it reciprocal love again unto God: We love him, says the Apostle, because he first loved us: that is, as strong as our apprehensions are of God's love to us, so strong will our love be in its returns to God again: water riseth naturally as high as its spring; wherefore, the assurance of God's love, being the spring from whence our love flows, such as is our love, such will be our assurance also: if then our love be strong in its actings, it must needs cast out fear; because it flows from that assurance, with which tormenting fear is utterly inconsistent.

But there is another kind of fear, that is not tormenting: and that is an awful frame of heart, struck with reverential apprehensions of God's infinite majesty, and our own vileness and unworthiness: and this, perfect love doth not cast out; but it perfects this awful, sedate, calm fear of God. The angels and the glorified saints in heaven, whose love is so perfect, that it can neither admit of an increase nor abatement, yet stand in awe and fear of the terrible majesty of the Great God: the same infinite excellencies of the Divine Nature, that attract their love, do also excite their fear. See how the Prophet makes this an argument to fear God: Jer. 10:7. Who would not fear thee, O King of Saints? for, said he, in all the earth there is none like unto thee: one would rather think that God's unparalleled excellencies and perfections should be a motive to love: "Who would not love thee, O King of Saints, since there is none in all the earth like thee?" yea, but filial fear and filial love are of so near a kind and cognation, that they may well be enforced by one and the same argument: Who would not fear thee?... for, in all the earth, there is none like unto thee. This is the excellency of divine love: it is an attractive of love, and it is an excitement unto fear.

Well, then, though we have no chilling fear of a hot and scorching hell; yet let us have an awful, reverential fear of the glorious God,

whose excellencies are such as cannot be matched, nor scarcely imitable by any in heaven or in earth.

The Fear of God Not Contrary to the Spirit of Adoption

iii. The Fear of God is NOT CONTRARY TO THAT FREE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION, WHICH WE RECEIVE IN OUR FIRST CONVERSION.

It may, perhaps, seem to some, that the Apostle opposeth them in Rom. 8:15. Ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear; but... the Spirit of Adoption, whereby you cry Abba, Father.

To this I answer: That, by the Spirit of Bondage here, the Apostle means the legal work of the Holy Ghost in conviction, that is preparatory to conversion: which work, usually, is accompanied with dreadful terrors, apprehending God not as reconciled Father, but as an incensed and severe Judge. Now, says the Apostle, ye have not received this Spirit of Bondage again thus to fear: this is not that fear, that the consideration of God, as your God and Reconciled Father, excited in you: this is not that fear, that the Apostle exhorts Christians unto; but an awful, reverential fear of God, whereby we should stand in awe of his dread majesty, so as to be preserved from whatever may be an offence to his purity. And if, in any night of desertion, it should happen that the hearts of true believers should be overwhelmed with dismal fears, apprehending God as enraged and incensed against them, standing in doubt of the goodness of their spiritual condition; if this seize upon them after they have had the Spirit of Adoption, let them know that this fear is not from a work of the Holy Ghost in them: they have not received the Spirit of Bondage again so to fear: it is not a work of the Holy Ghost to excite in them doubts and fears of their spiritual condition, after they have once had assurance of the goodness thereof; but it ariseth either from some ignorance, or from some sin that they have committed,

that interposeth betwixt them and the clear sight of the discoveries of God's love.

Now for the better understanding of this place, because I judge it pertinent to my present purpose, I shall open it to you somewhat largely in these following particulars.

1. The preparatory work of Conversion is usually carried on in the soul by Legal Fears and Terrors.

I call that a Legal Fear, that is wrought in the soul by the dread-threatenings and denunciations of the Law. The Law, if we take it in its native rigour, without the merciful qualification of Gospel-grace, thundered out nothing but execrations, wrath, and vengeance against every transgressor of it; representing God armed also with his almighty power to destroy them. This is that glass, that shewed them their old sins in most ugly shapes: now they see them stare ghastly upon their consciences, that before allured them: the scene is quite changed, and there are nothing but dreadful apparitions of death and hell fleeting now before them; and God brandishing his flaming sword over them, ready to rive their hearts asunder. They, who lately were secure and fearless, now stand quaking under the fearful expectations of that fiery wrath and indignation, that they neither have hope to escape, nor yet have strength or patience to endure. This is that Legal Fear, which the curse and threatenings of the Law, when set home in their full acrimony, work in the hearts of convinced sinners.

2. This Legal Fear is slavish, and engenders unto bondage.

There is a bondage, under the reigning power of sin; and there is a bondage, under the terrifying power of sin. The former makes a man a slave unto the Devil, and the latter makes a man a slave unto God. And such slaves are all convinced sinners, that have not yet arrived to the free and filial Spirit of Adoption; but are kept under bondage under the wrath of God, and manacled in the fetters of their own

fears. So saith the Apostle: Heb. 2:15. to deliver them, who, through fear of death, and of hell that follows after it, were all their life-time subject to bondage.

3. This Slavish Fear is wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, though it be slavish.

For it is his office, to convince, as well as to comfort; and to cast down by the terrors of the Law, as well as to raise up by the promises of the Gospel: John 16:8. He shall convince the world of sin; and therefore it is said in this place, Rom. 8:15. We have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear; implying, that those terrors, that seize upon the conscience, are the work of the Holy Ghost: we bring ourselves into bondage, under sin; and he brings us into bondage, under fear. If therefore, at any time, thou, who art a secure sinner, art suddenly surprized with fearful and trembling thoughts concerning thy present state of sin and thy future state of wrath, beware thou listen not to any that would persuade thee it is nothing but a fit of melancholy, or a temptation of Satan to drive thee to despair; but know assuredly, that thy conscience is now under the hand of the Holy Ghost himself: he raiseth those tempests of fear in thee; and, as usually it is fatal to divert and hush them, so is it no less than ignorant blasphemy, to impute his works to melancholy, or to the temptations of Satan.

4. When the soul is prepared for the work of grace by the work of conviction, when it is prepared for comfort by the work of humiliation, the same Spirit, that was before a Spirit of Bondage, becomes now a Spirit of Adoption.

That is, the Holy Ghost persuades, and assures us of the love and favour of God; and enables us, through divine light beaming in upon our consciences, to behold him as a gracious and a reconciled Father, whom before we trembled at as a stern and terrible Judge. The same wind, that, in a raging storm, tosseth the sea to and fro in restless heaps, in a calm doth only gently move and fan it with pleasing

purles. So is it here. That Spirit of God, that, in conviction, raiseth a tempest in the conscience, afterwards breathes forth a sweet calm of peace and comfort upon it: the same Spirit, that, before, was a Spirit of Bondage, when the soul is sufficiently thereby prepared for grace, becomes a Spirit of Adoption. This is that Spirit of Adoption, that is here spoken of: and it is called so, because it witnesseth with our spirits, that we are the children of God by adoption. God hath but one Son by eternal generation, and that is Jesus Christ; called, therefore, the only-begotten of the Father, John 1:14. He hath many sons by creation; even all mankind: so Adam is called the son of God: Luke 3:38. He hath many sons also by adoption; even all, that are effectually called according to the purpose of his grace; all, that are sanctified, who are of strangers made heirs of God, and co-heirs with Jesus Christ himself, who is the natural son of God; as it is Rom. 8:17. Now because it is the work of the Holy Ghost to testify to us this our great privilege, that we are enrolled in the family of heaven and become the children of God, therefore he is called the Spirit of Adoption; that is, the Spirit, that witnesseth to us our adoption.

5. To whom the Spirit hath once been a Spirit of Adoption, it never more becomes to them a Spirit of Bondage and Fear.

That is, it never again proclaims war, after it hath spoken peace: it never represents God as an enraged enemy, after it hath represented him as a Reconciled Father. It is true, the Spirit of God always keeps up his convincing office in the soul of the most assured saint: it convinceth him of sin, and of wrath due to him for sin. There is a twofold conviction: there is a conviction of the evil of particular actions, and there is a conviction of the evil of our state and condition: now, though, upon particular miscarriages of God's children, the Holy Ghost secretly smiteth their consciences, shewing them the guilt and evil of their sins, thereby bringing them to repentance and a godly sorrow; yet the Holy Ghost never again testifieth to them, that they are in a graceless, unregenerate, and sinful estate and condition, and in a state of wrath and condemnation: it brings them to a deep humiliation, by convincing

them of the evil of their actions; but it never brings them into legal terrors, by convincing them of a sinful state. Neither, indeed, can it be so: for the Spirit of God is a Spirit of Truth; and, to witness that we are yet children of wrath, who are indeed the adopted children of God, this were a false testimony, and therefore utterly abhorred by the Spirit of God, who is a Spirit of Truth. Doth the same fountain send forth sweet water and bitter? Doth there proceed from one and the same mouth, blessings and curses? Certainly, the same Spirit, that hath once pronounced us to be in the love and favour of God, never after pronounceth us to be cursed, and under the wrath of God.

But you will say, "Have not the best of God's children sometimes concluded themselves to be reprobated and cast away? Have they not lain under sad and fearful apprehensions of God's wrath? Have not some of them, who formerly walked in the light of God's countenance and flourished in their assurance, yet afterwards been so dejected, that they would not entertain any comfort, or hopes of mercy and salvation?"

To this I answer: It is true, it may indeed so happen, that those saints, whose joys and comforts are at one time fresh and verdant, at another time wither and drop off; so that they look upon themselves as rotten trees, destinated to make fuel for hell. Whence proceeds this? It is not from the Spirit of God: but, as carnal men are apt to mistake the first work of conviction for melancholy or for temptation, so this really proceeds from one of these two causes. When the children of God, after full assurance, come again not only to entertain doubts of their condition, but also to despair of themselves, looking on themselves as persons that God hath singled out to destruction; this proceeds not from the Holy Ghost, but from melancholy or temptation. Sometimes, natural Melancholy obstructs the sense of divine comfort: as it is in clear water, when it is still and transparent the sun shines to the very bottom, but if you stir the mud, presently it grows so thick that no light can pierce into it; so is it with the children of God, though their apprehensions of God's love be as clear and transparent sometimes as the very air that the angels

and glorified saints breathe in, in heaven, yet, if once the muddy humour of melancholy stirs, they become dark, so that no light or ray of comfort can break in to the deserted soul. And then, sometimes, the Devil causeth these tragedies by his Temptations, that so, if it were possible, he might drive them to despair: he hates their graces, he envies their comforts; and therefore he would persuade them that all their former joys were but delusions, proud dreams and presumptuous fancies, and that they are still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity; and, by such suggestions as these, when he cannot hinder the work of grace, he strives what he can to hinder the sense of comfort. If, therefore, those, that have once rejoiced under the comfortable persuasions of God's love to them, the Holy Ghost witnessing himself to them to be a Spirit of Adoption by being in them a Spirit of Sanctification, now find themselves under the bondage of legal fears and terrors and slavish dejections, looking upon themselves as under the revenging wrath of God and as persons devoted to destruction; let them know, that such fears proceed not from the convictions of the Spirit of God, who hath been a Spirit of Adoption, but from the delusions of Satan: for those, that once receive the Spirit of Adoption, never receive the Spirit of Bondage again to fear; that is, to fear with a slavish, tormenting fear.

A Filial Fear of God a Clear Evidence of our Son-ship

6. A Reverential, Filial Fear of God, may and ought to possess our souls, while the Spirit of God, who is a Spirit of Adoption, is, by the clearest evidences, actually witnessing our son-ship to us.

Let men boast what they will of their high gospel-attainments, yes certainly they have not the genuine disposition of God's children, whose love to him is not mingled with fear, and whose fear of him is not increased by their love. Love! it is the gage and measure of all our affections: and, according to the proportion of our love to God, such

will be our fear; that is, the more we love God, the more we shall fear his displeasure and the loss of his favour. It is in vain for us to pretend love to God as our Father, unless we fear him also as our Lord and Master. Christ was his only-begotten Son, and certainly had much more clear assurance of the love and favour of God, than any adopted sons can possibly have; yet the Scripture ascribes a holy, awful, reverential fear of God even unto him: Heb. 5:7. When he had offered up prayers.... with strong cries and tears.... and was heard in that he feared: it may be rendered, he was heard because of his godly fear. So, in Isa. 11:2. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.... the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; speaking of Christ. If therefore he feared God, who was himself to be feared as God, equal to him and his Eternal Son, how much more ought we to fear the Great God, who are, as it were, but upstarts in the family of heaven! we, wretched and forlorn outcasts, that were but lately raked out of the dunghill; and, by mere pity, taken up into the bosom of God, and nurtured as his children!

And, thus, you see that the fear of God is not in the least contrary to the free Spirit of Adoption.

iv. An Awful Fear of God is NO IMPEDIMENT TO A HOLY REJOICING.

Indeed slavish fear damps all true joy. Those, that fear and expect the revengings of God, cannot have any true joy. They may have a kind of mad jollity, that spends itself in noise and tumults: they may roar out songs of mirth, only to drown the loud roarings of their own consciences. Such as these are like your new liquor, that works over into foam and froth, when the bottom is thick and troubled: so, in this false joy, the countenance runs over with laughter, when yet the heart is brimful of the wrath of God. Of such the Wise Man speaks, Prov. 14:13. Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful.

But a Filial Fear of God puts no check at all upon our holy rejoicing in him. Spiritual joy is not of that flashy nature; but it is a sober and

a severe grace: it is joy, mixed with fear. And, because of the mixture of these two together, the fear of God with joy in the Lord, therefore we find these two are promiscuously ascribed each to other. So, in Isa. 60:5. Their hearts shall fear and be enlarged: you know it is the property of joy to extend and enlarge the heart: fear contracts and draws it together; but, here, fear is said to dilate the heart, to denote to us, that a Christian's fear is always conjoined and mingled together with his joy. And so, on the other hand, it is said, Ps. 2:11. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling: fear, with trembling, is more proper and natural; but, because of the mixture of these two graces in the heart of a Christian, therefore the Holy Ghost thus expresseth it, Rejoice with trembling; for great joys, as well as great fears, cause a kind of trembling and fluttering in the heart: as it was with the two women, whom the angels assured of Christ's resurrection, Matt. 28:8. They departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; so is it with those Christians, who, by the eye of faith looking upon the death and into the sepulchre of Jesus Christ, are assured that he is risen for their justification, cannot but have their hearts filled with a quaking and a fearful joy. Even a Christian's strong praises are breathed out with a shaking and a trembling voice.

So that godly fear is no impediment to a holy and a severe rejoicing in God as our Saviour.

v. Godly Fear LAYS NO CHECK UPON OUR HOLY FREEDOM AND BOLDNESS WITH GOD.

God hath established a throne of grace, whereon he sits; and unto which he invites his people to approach, with a becoming confidence: Heb. 4:16. Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace. As that emperor counted his clemency disparaged when any delivered a petition to him with a shaking hand, as though he doubted of his favour: so God loves, when we make our addresses to him, that we should do it with full assurance of faith; nothing doubting of acceptance with him, and of an answer from him. He, that asks

timorously, only begs a denial from God. But, yet, that this boldness may not degenerate into rudeness and irreverence, he requires that our freedom with him be tempered with an awful fear of him: we must come in all humility and prostration of soul, with broken hearts and bended knees, to touch that golden sceptre that he holds forth to us.

Thus you see, in these Five things, how consistent the grace of fear is with other graces of the Spirit. It is no impediment either to a full Assurance, to Love, to a Spirit of Adoption, to a Holy Rejoicing, or to a Holy Boldness.

Now because I have made frequent mention of Filial and Slavish Fear, that you may the better understand what each of these means, I shall briefly give you the difference betwixt them.

They differ, in their Concomitants, and in their Effects.

Slavish Fear hath always Two dreadful Concomitants

FIRST. Slavish Fear hath always Two dreadful Concomitants: and they are Despair, and Hatred or Enmity against God.

First. In Slavish Fear, there is always some degree of Despair.

This slavish fear is joined with dreadful expectations of wrath. A slave, that hath committed a fault, expects no other than to be punished for it without mercy: so those, that lie under this slavish fear, apprehend and account of God no otherwise than the slothful servant; as a severe lord and a cruel tyrant, that will exact punishment from them to the utmost of their deserts: they expect no other, but that certainly God's wrath will kindle upon them and burn them eternally; and this makes them live, as the Apostle speaks in Heb. 10:27. In certain fearful expectations of wrath and indignation

which shall devour them as adversaries. This kind of horrid fear, I doubt not, is common to most wicked men: and, though they brave it out, and most of them speak high matters of their hopes of heaven and salvation; yet, at the same time, their own hearts and consciences tell them sad and misgiving stories of hell and everlasting wrath.

But a true and filial fear of God looks at the wrath of God, with dread and terror; but not with expectation. There is the difference. Slavish Fear looks upon the wrath of God; and expects it: Filial Fear looks upon it as due; but not with expectations that it should be inflicted upon it.

Secondly. Slavish Fear is always accompanied with some degree of Enmity and Hatred against God.

It is natural for us to hate those, that we fear with a slavish fear. He, that thinks God will certainly punish him, must out of self-love needs be provoked to hate God. Hence is it, that the soul, that lies under the terrors of the Law, wisheth that there was no such thing as hell and eternal damnation; nay, that there was no God to inflict this upon it. This proceeds from this slavish fear of God.

But a reverent fear of God is joined with a holy love; as children who love their parents, but yet stand in awe of them.

So much for the Concomitants of this fear.

Slavish Fear hath always Two dreadful Concomitants

SECONDLY. For their Effects.

And that, both as to Sin, and as to Duty.

First. As to Sin.

First. Slavish Fear dreads nothing but Hell and Punishment; but Godly Fear dreads Sin itself. The one fears only to burn: the other fears to sin. As Austin saith well, "He fears hell only, who fears not to sin, but fears to burn; but he fears to sin, who hates sin as he would hate hell."

Secondly. Slavish Fear usually restrains only from external, and those also the more gross and notorious acts of sin: but Holy Fear overawes the heart from Inward and Secret Sins; yea, from the least sins whatsoever.

Secondly. And then, as for Duty also, in Two things briefly.

First. A Slavish Fear of God makes men to consult how they may fly from God: as Adam, when he had brought guilt upon his conscience by his fall, hid himself from God in the garden. Guilt loves not the presence of its judge.

But Godly Fear is still exciting the soul to approach near to God in duty. And therefore David saith, Ps. 5:7. In thy fear will I worship towards thy holy temple. The fear of God encourageth the soul in the performance of duty.

Secondly. Slavish Fear contents itself with external performances: just so much as will serve the turn, to satisfy the demands of conscience.

But Holy Fear sanctifies the Lord in duty, as well as satisfies conscience. And therefore you have it, in Isa. 8:13. Sanctify the Lord of Hosts in your hearts, and let him be your fear, and.... your dread.

Thus much, briefly, for the difference betwixt Filial and Slavish Fear.

Application

II. I come now to the APPLICATION.

USE i. And the First Use shall be by way of corollary. IF THE CONSIDERATION OF GOD AS A CONSUMING FIRE OUGHT TO AFFECT THE MOST ASSURED CHRISTIAN WITH A HOLY FEAR AND DREAD OF GOD, HOW MUCH MORE THEN MAY IT SHRINK AND SHRIVEL UP THE HEARTS OF UNGODLY SINNERS!

If it make God's own children tremble, to look into hell, and to see those heaps of miserable wretches that are there burning for ever, shall it not much more make you tremble, who are liable every moment to be bound in bundles, and to be cast in to burn among them? When a city is on fire, it is terrible, to see it rage, afar off; to see it spew up smoke and flames, though at a distance; and he, that is not affected with it, is inhuman: but he is more than stupid, that doth not tremble to see it devour whole streets before it, ruining all till it approach near his own dwelling. Sirs, this consuming fire hath already seized upon millions of others, and burnt them down into the lowest hell. Do not you hear Dives, in the Gospel, cry "Fire, Fire?" The greatest part of the world is already burnt down: and, if their case makes not your hearts to shake and tremble, yet methinks your own should. This fire is catching and kindling upon your souls; and, the next moment, may make you brands in hell. But, alas! what hope is there to affright men that are fast asleep? Such a dead security hath seized upon the hearts of most, that it is almost impossible to rouze them; and there is but little hope, but that they will be burnt in this their sleep.

Yet, if it may be possible to awaken you, consider,

1. That it is only God's wrath against sinners, that makes him terrible to his saints.

They are afraid of that fiery indignation, that burned, against the wicked: and shall not the wicked then much more be afraid, that

must themselves feel it? Our God, says the Apostle, is a consuming fire: but to whom is he such a consuming fire? not to those, certainly, whose God he is: He shall burn up all the wicked of the earth as stubble. That God doth not always style himself a gracious God and a reconciled Father, but sometimes puts on dreadful titles, his children owe it to the wicked: against them alone it is, that he arrays himself with all his terrors. As a father may affright his children, by putting on those arms, that he useth only against his enemies; so God daunts his own children, by appearing in his dread power, his severe justice and consuming wrath: but how much more may it appal his enemies, upon whom he intends to execute all this in the utmost rigour and extremity!

2. Another Consideration, that may make the most secure sinner to tremble, is this: That God himself will be the immediate inflicter of their punishments.

They shall be consumed by fire, and offered up as a burnt-sacrifice to the wrath and justice of God; and that fire, that shall for ever burn them, is God himself: God is a consuming fire. I do not deny, but that there is another material fire, prepared and blown up in hell for the punishment of the damned; but, certainly, their most subtle and exquisite torture shall be from God himself, who is this consuming fire. This wrath of God, which shall for ever burn and enflame the souls of the damned, is called fiery indignation, Heb. 10:27. That fire, that destroyed Nadab and Abihu, was but a type of this; and the antitype infinitely transcends the type: the dreadfulness of their temporal death by fire was but a faint resemblance of the death of the soul. What fire must that be, of which that extraordinary fire, that fell down from heaven itself, was but a mere shadow? As the fire, that came down upon Elijah's sacrifice, did lick up the water that was poured into the trenches; so this fiery indignation of God shall, in hell, melt down the damned, as it were, and then lick up their very spirits and souls. It is said, Ps. 104:4 that God maketh his angels a flaming fire: it is the nearest representation that is given of the angelical nature, that abounds both in subtlety and force: He maketh

his angels a flaming fire. Now when Christ saith, Go into those flames of fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels; why the devils themselves are flames of fire: and what fire can be more piercing than themselves, who have power over fire? Yet there is a greater fire than they: God is a consuming fire; a fire, so infinitely scorching, as will burn and torment even fire itself. It would be unspeakable, terrible wrath in God, if he should make use of his creatures for the punishment of the damned: who could bear it, if God should only keep a man living for ever in the midst of a furnace, though but of a gross, earthly fire and flames? or, if God should bind a man hand and foot; and cast him into a deep pit full of toads, adders, and scorpions; and there let him lie for ever? God knows all the several stings, that are in his creatures; and he can take out of them the most sharp and piercing ingredients; the sharpness of the sword, the inflammations of poisons, the scorchings of fire, the anguish of pains, the faintness of diseases; and, of all these, can make a most tormenting composition: and, if he should make use of this composition, what intolerable anguish would this cause! If, then, creatures can cause such torture, oh! what a dreadful thing is it to fall into the hands of God himself! when God conveys his wrath by creatures, it must needs lose infinitely in the very conveyance of it: it is but as if a giant should strike one with a straw or a feather: so, when God takes up one creature to strike another with, that blow can be but weak; and, yet, how terrible are those weak blows to us! What will it be then, when God shall immediately crush us by the unrebated force of his own almighty arm? You, therefore, that persevere in sin, and in security too, consider who you have to deal with; not with creatures, but with God himself: and do you not fear that uncreated fire, that can wrap you up in the flames of his essential wrath, and burn you for ever? Can thy heart endure, or can thy hands be strong, says God, in the day that I shall deal with thee? The very weakness of God is stronger than men. God can look a man to death: the breath of a man's nostrils is a soft and quiet thing; and yet the very breath of God's nostrils can blast the soul, and burn it to a very cinder. Oh! then tremble to think, what wrath his heavy hand can inflict upon thee: that hand, that spreadeth out the heavens, and in the hollow of

which he holds the great waters of the sea; that hand of God, in which his great strength lies; oh! what wrath will it inflict upon thee, when it falls upon thee in the full power of his might!

3. This Consuming Fire, after it hath once seized upon the soul, is for ever unquenchable.

Indeed thou mayest hinder it from kindling upon thy soul. As when a house is on fire, they use to spout water upon the walls of the neighbouring houses, to keep the flames from catching hold of them; so you may, by sprinkling the blood of Jesus Christ, and by moistening yourselves with the tears of true repentance, prevent this consuming fire from preying upon you: but, if once it kindles, it will there burn everlastingly. It is not like your sublunary fires: these spend the matter they feed on; and, be they of never so great force, they must at length themselves starve for want of fuel: yea, the sooner they consume, the sooner are they themselves consumed; as, in straw, and other light combustible matter. But God is such a fire, as consumes without diminishing; and his power is such a power, as destroys the soul, and yet perpetuates it. He is such a wise and intelligent fire, as consumes the damned, and yet repairs them; and, by tormenting, still nourishes them for future torments. As Minutius speaks: the same breath of God, that destroys the soul, still keeps it alive, that it may be eternal fuel for itself. Hence is it, that hell-fire is described to be such, as shall never be quenched: Mark 9:44. And why? but because the breath of the Lord, like a fiery stream, is still kindling of it. How in the midst of this devouring fire must the damned dwell, without any period, either to their being or to their torment! and, when they have lain there millions and millions of years, still is it but a beginning of their sorrows, and they are as far from a release and discharge as they were at the first. Think with yourselves, how long and how tedious a little time seems to you when you are in pain: you complain then, that time hath leaden feet, and wish that the days and hours would roll away faster. Oh! what will it be then, when you shall lie in hell; when the intolerableness of pain shall make every hour seem an age, and every year seem a long

eternity itself, and yet you must lie an eternity of those years there? This makes their torments doubly everlasting. Methinks, the dreadful thoughts of this eternally consuming fire, should make the stoutest heart to quake; or, at least, to cause a cold fit of fear, before this burning and scorching torment begins.

4. God is such a Consuming Fire, as will prey upon the soul, that tender and spiritual part of man.

The more gross the subject is, the more dull are the pains that it suffers; but, where the subject is spiritual, there the anguish must needs be extreme. The sharpest torments, that the body is capable of, are but dull, in comparison of what the soul can feel: when God himself shall lash the soul, that more refined part, all comparisons fall short of expressing the anguish of it: to shoot poisoned darts inflamed into a man's marrow, to rip up his bowels with a sword red hot, is as nothing to this. Think what it is to have a drop of boiling, scalding oil, or melting lead fall into your eye, and make it boil and burn till at last it falls out of your head; such torments, yea infinitely more than this, is it to have the wrath of God fall upon your souls. The body is a kind of fence to the soul: it damps and deadens the smart, as a blow upon a clothed man is not so painful as upon one that is stark naked: now if the soul sometimes feels such smart and pain through the body, what shall it feel when God shall pour his wrath upon it stark naked?

5. The longer thou livest in thy sins impenitently, the more dost thou prepare thy soul to be fit fuel for this Consuming Fire to devour.

This is but like the oiling of a barrel of pitch, which of itself was apt enough before to burn. Those, whom the wrath of God snatches away in the beginning of their days, are made fuel for that consuming fire: and, if it be done so to the green tree, what will be done to the dry and rotten tree? Thou, that hast stood many years rotting in the world, when God shall come and cut thee down and cast thee into unquenchable fire, how soon wilt thou kindle and how dreadfully

wilt thou burn, having no sap left in thee to allay and mitigate those flames! Certainly, would but the most hardened sinner, here present, call his thoughts aside awhile, and seriously bethink himself what he hath been doing ever since he came into the world, this must needs make him fear and tremble; to consider, that, all this time, he hath, by his sinning, been treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, heaping up coals, yea burning coals, upon his own head. Every time you sin, what do you else but cast in another faggot to that pile of much wood, prepared to burn you for ever? Oh, that these dreadful and amazing considerations might, at length, rouze and awaken your hearts to fear this consuming fire; and to tremble at that wrath, that is now kindling in God's breast against you, and which will, if you repent not, ere long kindle upon you!

Objections

"But," you will say, "to fear God, only because he is a Consuming Fire, merely because of his wrath and fiery indignation, is but, at best, a Slavish Fear: it is but to fear him as the devils do, for they believe and tremble; and of what use and benefit will such a fear as this be?"

Answ. 1. It is true, to fear God merely upon the account of wrath is but a Slavish Fear; but, yet, it is far better to fear God slavishly, than to perish securely.

That will come with redoubled terror, which comes unexpectedly. How intolerable will hell be to those, especially, that never fear it till they feel it! When sinners shall see themselves surrounded with flames of fire, before ever they thought themselves in any danger; when they shall awake with the flames of hell flashing and flaming about them; what screechings and yellings will this cause! This is to perish, as a fool perisheth; to go on securely in sin, till unexpectedly a

dart suddenly strikes through his liver. Whatever the event be, yet it becomes the reason of a man to be affected with fear, proportionable to the evil that he lies obnoxious to. Therefore, whether this slavish fear ends in torment or not, yet it is more rational to fear what we are exposed to it, than to be secure and go down into torments, and never to fear them till we feel them.

Answ. 2. This fear, though a Slavish Fear, is of great efficacy to deter men from the Outward Acts of more gross and scandalous sins.

He, that puts hell betwixt him and his sins, will scarce be so daring as to venture through a lake of fire and brimstone to commit them. God thought he had set a sufficient guard upon the Tree of Life, when he placed cherubims and a flaming sword to keep men from it. But, to keep men from sin, he hath placed a guard far more dreadful than angels or a flaming sword: he hath placed himself, a consuming fire, to deter men from sin; and they, certainly, that have any fear or dread of God upon their hearts, will judge it too hot a work to break through this fire to their lusts. The thoughts of hell and those everlasting torments due to sin, have doubtless been often used with good success to repel Satan's temptations.

Answ. 3. Where the Fear of Wrath doth prevail to restrain men from sin, this is a good effect; for it doth lessen and mitigate that wrath, that they fear.

On those, that add iniquity to iniquity, without fear, God will heap plague upon plague, without measure. He proportions men's punishments to their sins; and those, that fear most, shall feel least. That fear of theirs, which keep them from the gross acts of sins that others boldly rush into, shall likewise keep them from the sorest torments that others shall for ever suffer.

Answ. 4. This Slavish Fear is isagogical: that is, it is preparatory to and inductive of a Filial and Holy Fear of God.

We usually fear God, first, as a Revenging Judge; before we come to fear him with a reverential, filial fear, as a Reconciled Father. As the poet of old fabulously fancied, that the giants heaped mountain upon mountain, that they might scale heaven: this is true in Christianity: the way to climb heaven, is, by laying one mountain upon another, even Mount Sion upon Mount Sinai. Those, commonly, prove the most stable and stayed Christians, that have been most harassed by legal terrors, before they enjoyed the sense of comfort: for the structure of grace in the heart is quite contrary to other buildings: it stands firmest, when it is laid upon a shaking and trembling foundation: it is a seed, that never thrives so well, as where the heart is most broken up, and wherein the wrath of God hath made long and deep furrows.

To conclude this, methinks what hath already been spoken should fill the heart of every carnal wretch with fear: methinks this should make him cry out, with those sinners in Sion, Isa. 33:14. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? Can the Drunkard hear these things, and yet put his intemperate cups to his mouth with a steady hand? Can the Swearer hear these things, and yet his tongue move steady in his mouth, and not tremble when he raps out oaths? Certainly, how secure and confident soever men may now be; yet there is a time coming, when the wrath of God shall melt down their hearts like wax, in the midst of their bowels. Death is a thundering preacher; and it will make you fear the dreadful representations of that fiery indignation, that shortly it will display before your eyes in all its terrors. Oh! when your eyes shall swim in the night and in the dark, and it cannot be long first, when you shall meet with those dreadful shapes and visions of a flaming hell and a more flaming God, it will be too late then to fear; and, alas! it will be too late then to hope: God will then laugh at your calamity; and mock at you, when this unseasonable fear cometh. Be persuaded, therefore, to entertain a fear of God, at last; though but a slavish fear: this is the preparation, that the Holy Ghost works in the heart, in order to a filial and a holy fear of God.

USE ii. Another Use, that we may make of this point, is this: IF GOD BE A CONSUMING FIRE, HOW HIGHLY DOTHT IT CONCERN US TO LOOK OUT FOR A SCREEN, THAT MAY FENCE US FROM THOSE EVERLASTING BURNINGS!

We are stubble and fuel, fully prepared: our sins have made us so; and, for us to stand it out against God, is no other than for dried stubble to challenge the devouring fire.

Now God, that he might not break forth upon us and destroy us, hath himself prepared a screen to hide and shelter us from this flaming wrath; and that is Christ, the Mediator. We have a lively type of this in Aaron: Numb. 16:48. when the rebellious Israelites mutinied against Moses, God did suddenly break forth upon them, and slew almost fifteen thousand of them dead upon the place: as fire runs on a train of powder, so did this wrath of God pass swiftly from one to another, till Aaron interposed and stopped it: there stood that mighty priest, as a bulwark betwixt the living and the dead, and intercepted the rest from this destroying wrath; and, though it overwhelmed so many thousands, yet it could not bear down his powerful intercession: he alone was the fence and safeguard of a perishing people. Christ, upon the cross, maintains the same station; interposing betwixt the living and the dead: the wrath of God consumes all before it, that is not under the protection of that screen: there, it stops; and, though it seized fiercely upon him too, yet it never burnt through him to reach those that fled for security to that refuge set before them. In a general conflagration, even chaff and stubble may be secure, under the covert of an adamant wall: though all the wicked of the world shall burn together, and all believers be in themselves as combustible matter as they; yet Christ interposeth as a wall of adamant betwixt stubble and stubble, and, when the wrath of God hath consumed the one, he stands and keeps off the impressions of it from the other. Indeed, there is a wall, that stands betwixt God and every wicked man; but it is a wall of partition, as the Apostle calls it, Eph. 2:14. it is a wall, that separates them from the love and favour of God, and hides his face from them:

a partition of dry and rotten boards may keep off the light and kindly influences of the sun; but it is no fence against the rage of fire, but rather increases and augments it: so, wicked men are separated from the love and favour of God by their sins; Isa 59:2. Your iniquities have separated between you and your God; yea, and they keep off his cherishing influences, but they contribute to his fiery wrath. Now Christ is a wall of defence, that separates his from the wrath and indignation of God. A wall of crystal is a safe defence against the force of fire, yet is it no obstruction to the warm beams and cherishing light of the sun: such a crystal wall is Christ, that keeps off God's fiery indignation from us, but yet conveys to us the cherishing and reviving influences of his love.

Let me now persuade and prevail with you to betake yourselves to this shelter. The same storm of fire and brimstone, that destroyed Sodom, hovers over all the wicked of the world; and we are as Lot, still lingering behind: let me therefore hasten you, as the angel did him, to your Zoar; to get under the protection of Christ, whither the fiery indignation of God cannot pursue you. In the former instance, when the Israelites saw so many of their fellows slain by an unperceived stroke, what running and crowding was there, think you, to get behind the priest! we are all in the same danger, but we have a more prevalent High Priest: there are thousands dying and perishing under the wrath of God; and shall not we then, with fear and trembling, press close behind our High Priest, that by him we may be hid from this consuming fire?

USE iii. The next Use shall be, TO EXHORT YOU TO A HOLY FEAR AND REVERENCE OF THIS GREAT AND TERRIBLE GOD.

I lately gave you several considerations, enough to daunt the boldest sinners, and to bring them at least to a slavish fear: be persuaded now to advance it a degree higher, and to overawe your hearts with a holy, filial fear of God. It is the same exhortation, that Solomon gives us, Prov. 23:17. Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long. This is a true Christian's frame; when, in all the affairs and actions of our

lives, in what company soever we are, or whatever we are doing, the fear of God is still upon us; when, in all our converse in the world, this fear of God doth still fill and possess our hearts.

I shall only give you a few particulars, and leave them to your serious consideration.

1. This Holy Fear of God will keep you from, a Vain and Frothy Spirit.

The heart of man is the great receptacle of thoughts. The most part of them are light and feathery: they fly up and down as thick, and to as little purpose, as moats in a sun-beam. It is strange to observe, what a giddy thing the mind of man is: as an empty vessel rolls to and fro, and is tossed up and down by every wave, never sailing steadily; so is the vain mind of man driven by every foolish and impertinent thought, till the fear of God, that is, the ballast of the soul, poise it and make its course steady and even. Certainly, if any thing be of force to compose the heart into a sober, serious frame, it is the consideration of God's great and dreadful majesty; the fear of which will fill us with noble and substantial thoughts, how we may escape his wrath, and how we may secure to ourselves eternal happiness. These are important thoughts; and they ought to be our great and only care: that so we may approve ourselves to God; and be, at the Last Day, found of him in well-doing. Before the heart is ballasted with this fear of God, it runs after every vagrant thought, that comes cross us or fleets before us; as children run after every feather, that the wind drives: but the fear of God fixes this fleetiness, and brings the heart to a holy consistency and solidity in its thoughts. It is this fear that uniteth the heart: and therefore David prays, Ps. 86:11. Unite my heart unto thee, that I may fear thy name.

2. The Fear of God is an excellent Preservative against all Sin.

Slavish fear may keep wicked men from committing gross and flagitious crimes: but this holy fear overawes the heart from secret and hidden sins; yea, from the sins of the heart, that none can see,

but only God and a man's own conscience: and therefore it is said, Ps. 19:9. The fear of the Lord is clean; that is, it keeps the soul clean from the defilement of sin. There are defilements of two sorts: defilements of the flesh, when men wallow in gross and sensual sins; and defilements also of the spirit, and such are they that reside in the heart, and break not forth into outward act. From both these the fear of God cleanseth us: so, in 2 Cor. 7:1. Let us cleanse ourselves, says the Apostle, from all filthiness both of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. And, indeed, wherever the fear of God is implanted, it will overawe us, as well from offending God in our thoughts as in our actions; and make us, that we shall be as afraid of sinning against him by unbelief and impenitency, as by murder and blasphemy.

3. This holy Fear of God is a most sovereign Preservative against Hypocrisy.

What is hypocrisy, but a mocking of God to his face? It is a design to put a solemn cheat upon God. Certainly, where the fear of God overawes the heart, we shall not dare to abuse his holy and reverend name, as hypocrites do, in their making mention of him. When we speak of him with our lips, but never think of him with our hearts, this is to abuse the holy and reverend name of God; and it is a sure argument that they stand in no dread of God, whose hearts meditate vanity with eyes and hands lifted up to heaven. Will any dare, in the presence of a prince, while they pretend reverence to him, to use antic gestures? Would not this justly be interpreted a contempt of him? why all the religious gestures of hypocrites are but antic; and, while they move their lips in prayer without the corresponding motion of the heart, they do but make mouths at God; and how can they fear him, that are thus audacious to scoff at him? Yea, the Scripture sets it down as a remarkable matter, when hypocrites begin to fear God: Isa. 33:13, 14. Hear ye... and acknowledge my might, says God: why? The sinners in Zion are afraid: fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. It is much easier to terrify and daunt profligate sinners, than gross hypocrites; because hypocrites, by

often dallying with God, wear off all sense and dread of God, and arrive at length to a plain contempt and scorn of him. If therefore you would, in every duty, approve your hearts in sincerity unto God, nourish in you this holy fear of his majesty. This fear is that, which makes a Christian single-hearted. And, as the Apostle commands servants, Col. 3:22. to obey their masters not as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: so, where this holy fear of God possesseth the soul, it will cause all our obedience to be performed in the singleness and integrity of our hearts; not so much to be seen of men, as to be accepted of God. It is a remarkable place, in Josh. 24:14. Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity: the fear of God is of a mighty influence to sincerity, in all our services and performances that we render unto God: it is that, which will make the heart sincere in them: fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity.

4. This Holy Fear will put us upon all Endeavours to please God, and to gain favour with him.

This is the most natural effect of fear, to engage us to procure their love, whose power we dread. The Devil knew no such way to get himself worship and adoration, as by terrifying the old heathen. And, still, he useth the same artifice in those parts of the world, where his kingdom yet remains: he appears in dreadful shapes, and terrifies them, on purpose that he may extort from them a blind, superstitious worship. So, where the soul is affected with a holy fear of God, it will engage it to please him, and to avoid whatever may kindle his anger: and therefore says the Apostle, 2 Cor. 5:9, 10. We labour, that... we may be accepted of him: and why so? Yes, says he, for we must be judged by him: the fear of being judged by God, at the tribunal of Christ, at the Last Day, engaged the Apostle to labour to please God and to be accepted by him.

5. The Fear of God is an excellent Corrective of the base and degenerate Fear of Men.

Our Saviour says, Luke 12:4, 5. Be not afraid of them, that can kill the body; and, after that, have no more that they can do. But.... fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him. It is well observed by a learned author, that men may be considered, as they bear upon them some resemblance and impress of the Divine Majesty; as they are invested with authority and power, and constituted magistrates and rulers over us: this resemblance is so great, that the Scripture sytles them gods; I have said ye are Gods; and, so, we are to fear them with a fear of reverence and obedience, and to obey them in that which is lawful. And they may be considered also as standing in opposition to God; abusing their power by commanding things that are unlawful, and by persecution endeavouring to terrify men from the ways and service of God: and, so, they may be feared with a fear of flight and eschewal: When ye are persecuted in one city, flee ye into another: Mat. 10:23. we may so fear them, as to labour to avoid their rage, and to consult our own safety. But the fear, that is here forbidden, is, Fear not them, that can kill the body: that is, with a distrustful, perverting fear; such a fear, as causeth men, for the securing of their temporal life, to desert the profession and practice of godliness: with such a fear, fear not men. He will not, that truly fears God, thus fear men: no; the fear of God lays a check upon this sinful fear of men: he, that truly fears God, will not immoderately fear men; for it is the property of holy fear to represent the displeasure of God, as an infinitely greater evil than the loss of estate, liberty, nay of life itself, or whatever the rage and power of man can either inflict or threaten: and this makes them choose affliction, rather than sin. See this fearless spirit in those three heroic champions, Dan. 3:16. who, though they saw a burning, fiery furnace before them, into which they were threatened to be cast; yet all the terrors of it did not fright them to an idolatrous worship: with what a holy contempt and slighting did they answer king Nebuchadnezar! We are not careful, say they, to answer thee in this matter: and whence proceeded this undaunted courage, but only because they were more afraid of God, who is a consuming fire, than they were of a fiery furnace? A man, that truly fears God, reputes with himself, that to gain the favour of men with the displeasure of

God, to redeem a temporal life by an eternal death, is the foolishest bargain that can be made: he knows the rage of man is under the restraint of God, and that a hair of his head shall not fall to the ground without his Heavenly Father's knowledge and permission; and, if God doth suffer wicked men to inflict the utmost that their rage and spite can prompt them unto, yet it reacheth only the earthly part, the dull part of man, the body: they may persecute, torment, and kill us; but yet they cannot hurt us: one momentary gripe of hell's torments is infinitely more intolerable, than all the cruelties that men can possibly invent or inflict: one frown from an angry God hath more dread and terror in it, than all the rage and threatenings of the most barbarous and cruel tyrants. And that Christian, that makes such an account as this, can never certainly so fear torment or death, as to be drawn to sin against God, whose displeasure he more fears than he fears either torment or death.

Now, to shut up this whole subject, I shall only mention a few particulars to you, whereby you may take a brief view of what there is in the Nature of God, that may justly affect us with a Holy Fear and Awe of him.

First. The consideration of God's glorious Majesty may strike us into a Holy Dread and Terror.

And, therefore, says Job* 37:22. With God is terrible majesty. This is that, which daunts the holy angels in heaven: they cover their faces with their wings; as not being able to bear the piercing rays of that glory, wherewith he is clothed. An earthly prince, when he is set forth in the royalty and grandeur of his state, casts an awe upon those that approach near him: and how much more ought we to fear the great and glorious Majesty of Heaven, who is always clad with light as with a garment! that light, which no mortal eye can approach, being always surrounded with an innumerable host of glittering attendants, each of which maintains more pomp and state than the greatest potentate on earth.

Secondly. God's Almighty Power should cause us to fear before him.

He is the uncontrollable sovereign of all the world; to whose beck all things in heaven and in earth, yea and in hell too, are subject. And, therefore, says Job* 25:2. Dominion and fear are with him: not that God hath any fear, or stands in fear; but the dominion and sovereignty of God causeth fear: it strikes the heart with an awful fear, when we consider that dominion and fear are with God. That power and authority of God, by which he exerciseth his dominion, causeth a fear of him.

Thirdly. The severe and impartial Justice of God, whereby he renders to every one according to his works, should kindle in us a Holy Fear of God.

So the Apostle, 2 Cor. 5:10, 11. We must receive, says he, according to what we have done in the body. Whence he infers, that, knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. It is terrible to receive from God's justice, according to what we have done in the body.

Fourthly. The consideration of God's Omnipresence and Omniscience, may cause in us a Holy Fear of him.

His eye is always upon us: his presence is always with us, wherever we are; and he sees and observes whatever we do. And, therefore, let us fear him: his eye is awful.

Fifthly. The consideration of our absolute Dependence upon God, should cause us to stand in Fear of him: lest, by provoking him, who maintains our souls in life; in whom we live, and move, and have our beings; in whose hands are our breath, our life, and all our ways; he should turn his hand upon us, and deprive us of all those mercies and comforts that now he heaps upon us.

So much, for this time and text.

MONERGISM BOOKS

The Assurance of Heaven and Salvation, by Ezekiel Hopkins
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ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions April 2021. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068