

The Fear Of The Lord

Andrew Murray:

"Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid" Psalm 102:1,7,8.

"So the Church, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, was multiplied" Acts 9:31.

The Scriptures use the word "fear" in a twofold way. In some places it speaks of "fear" as something wrong and sinful, and in the strongest terms it forbids us to "fear."¹ The word occurs in almost one hundred places--"Fear not." In many other places, on the contrary, fear is praised as one of the surest signs of true godliness, acceptable to the Lord, and full of His blessing for us.² The people of God bear the name--those who fear the Lord. The distinction between these two lies in this simple fact--the one is unbelieving fear, the other is believing.

Where fear is found connected with lack of trust in God, there it is sinful and very hurtful.³ The fear, on the other hand, that is coupled with trust and hope in God is, for the spiritual life, entirely indispensable. The fear that man has for what is worldly is condemned. The fear that with childlike confidence and love honours the Father is commanded.⁴ It is the believing fear of the Lord--not as a slave, but as a child--that the Scriptures present as a source of blessing and power. He who fears the Lord will fear nothing else. The fear of the Lord will be the beginning of all wisdom. The fear of the Lord is the sure way to the enjoyment of God's favour and protection.⁵

There are some Christians who, by their upbringing, are led into the reverent fear of the Lord even before they come to faith. This is a very great blessing. Parents can give a child no greater blessing than to bring him up in the fear of the Lord. When those who are thus brought up are brought to faith, they have a great advantage. They are, as it were, prepared to walk in the joy of the Lord. When, on the contrary, others that have not had this preparation come to conversion, they need special teaching and vigilance, in order to pray for and awaken this holy fear.

This fear is composed of many great elements. The principal are the following:

Holy reverence and awe before the glorious majesty of God and before His almighty holiness. These guard against the superficiality that forgets who God is and takes no pains to honour Him as God.

Deep humility that is afraid of itself, and couples deep confidence in God with an entire distrust in itself. Conscious weakness that knows the subtlety of its own heart always dreads doing anything contrary to the will or honour of God. But just because he fears God, such a believer firmly depends on Him for protection. And this same humility inspires him in all his dealings with his fellow men.

Cautiousness or vigilance. With holy forethought, it seeks to know the correct path, to watch against the enemy, and to guard against all frivolity or hastiness in speech, resolve, and conduct.⁸

Holy zeal and courage in watching and striving. The fear of displeasing the Lord by not conducting one's self as His servant in all things encourages faithfulness in that which is least expected. The fear of the Lord takes away all other fear and gives inconceivable courage in the certainty of victory.⁹

And out of this reverent fear is then born joy. "Rejoice with trembling" (Psalm 2:11). The fear of the Lord gives joy its depth and stability. Fear is the root, joy is the fruit. The deeper this fear, the higher the joy. On this account, it is said, "Ye that fear the Lord, praise Him" (Psalm 22:23). "Ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord" (Psalm 135:20).

Young disciples of Christ, hear the voice of your Father. "Fear the Lord, ye His saints." Let reverent fear of the Lord, and dread of all that might displease or grieve Him, fill you. Then you will never have to fear any evil. He who fears the Lord and seeks to do all that pleases Him, for him God will also do all that he desires. The childlike, believing fear of God will lead you into the love and joy of God, while slavish, unbelieving, cowardly fear is utterly cast out.

O God, unite my heart for the reverent fear of Your name. May I always be among those who fear the Lord, and who hope in His mercy. Amen.