

ON THE
FEAR OF GOD.

JOB XXVIII. 28.

And unto man he said, behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.

IF you look back to the twelfth verse, you shall find an inquiry made after wisdom; and in the following verses, there is a description of the wisdom of God's providence, whereby he doth marshal and rank the innumerable sorts of creatures that are in the world. This wisdom of providence directs us to the wisdom of the law: this world being the school of rational spirits, every part of it, every creature, reads unto us a lecture of divinity. But the question is, what is that voice, that is conveyed to us by all these things; the answer is, "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." If you look into this great volume, the book of the creatures, which is written within and without, written within with invisible essences, the angels, &c. written without with corporeal substances, all the visible objects of nature; and if you would know what is God's design in all these, it is this, that man should learn to fear him, that being the chiefest wisdom, and to depart from evil, that being the most eminent understanding. This is the connexion of the words. In that part, which at the present, I in-

tend to prosecute and treat of, you may observe first the subject, The fear of the Lord. Secondly, The predicate, that is wisdom.

The doctrine which I shall insist on is this, the fear of God is eminently wisdom.

I. Now in the opening of the first head, the fear of God, we will consider,

- i. The nature of God's fear.
- ii. The objects upon which it is terminated.
- iii. Distinguish it from that degenerate fear that is in wicked men.
- iv. Show you the products and effects of it.
- v. Speak concerning those seeming contrary graces to which it is united, as faith, love, hope and joy, &c.
- vi. Answer some questions, how far, and in what manner the threatenings of the word should work upon the fear of a converted person.
- vii. And then exhort you to this fear of God.



CHAP. I.

The nature of the fear of God.

I. **H** E A D of discourse, The fear of God.

i. The nature of it. The fear of God in scripture is sometimes taken more generally, and so it imports the whole circle of divine duties, and of religious worship. Thus it is said, Eccl. 12. 13. "fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." And the reason why fear is thus taken, is partly because the fear of God hath an influx upon all the duties of godliness, it being, (if I may so speak) the *præpositus* that guides and orders them, and therefore it may well be

put for the whole service that we owe to our Creator; and partly, because the fear of God is an eminent piece of godliness, one of the prime parts of God's service. As an artificer receives his title from that work about which he is most conversant. Upon this account it is, you shall find in scripture, sometimes a godly man is described by his fear. Job was a man "fearing God;" and so "blessed is the man that feareth God," which is the description of a gracious person.

2. This fear of God is taken in a more restrained and limited sense, and so the fear of God imports, that sanctified affection and sanctifying grace, whereby the soul doth solemnly and reverently reflect upon God's perfections, and from thence is moved in all things to promote God's honour.



CHAP. II.

The objects of the fear of God.

ii. **N**OW this fear will be further opened to you, if you consider its objects, which are the perfections of God; and those I shall present to you in this order.

1. The majesty of God, which appears in the works of nature and providence. There is a beam of God's glorious essence, which shines forth in all the parts of the creation, that should draw forth our fear. The firmament over our heads is so great a body, that the earth is but a prick or a point, if compared with it; yet that vast heaven, nay the heaven of heavens, cannot contain God. This discovery of his majesty, and of his immensity, should draw forth our fear, "who would not fear thee thou King of nations?" When you look down and consider that vast collection of waters that is in the sea; and that God by one word, doth bound the raging seas, that he swathes them with a

girdle of sand, as a nurse doth a little infant; this should fill the soul with a religious awe. The thunder is God's voice, whereby he summons the world to dread and reverence him; nay (as little as you think of it) the very clouds, which are the water-pots of heaven, when they descend upon the earth, should move our fear: for God saith by the prophet, "will you not fear me, that send the former and the latter rain?" Jer. 5. 24. All the works of the creation should draw forth this grace. And certainly he that shall but consider with himself that expression of scripture, that "man is but a worm, and the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers," &c. and make a comparison between God and himself; between God's majesty, and man's meanness, if then he doth not fear God, he acteth below his duty.

2. The purity of God is the object of our fear. This (which is revealed in its glory in heaven) causeth the holy angels, and glorified saints, to pay the tribute of reverence to God for ever, Isa. 6. 1, 2, 3. There you shall find the prophet's vision of the Lord sitting upon a throne high, and his train lifted up, filling the temple. The seraphims stood about him, and they cried out and said, "holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." They had a sight and view of God's holiness; and what is the effect of it? "They had six wings, with twain they covered their faces," as being unworthy to behold the glory of God's holiness; and "with twain they covered their feet," as being unworthy to be beheld by that holy God; and "with two they did fly." Rev. 15. 4. "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy?" He that doth not fear God's majesty, I told you he acts below his duty; but he that doth not fear God's purity, doth not consider his sins. Because we have narrow thoughts of God's holiness, therefore we fear him so little. If our understandings were clarified so far, as to see the immaculateness of his purity, we should then fear him more. When the Lord Jesus Christ made a small discovery of his divinity, in a miracle, Peter presently falls down, and cries out, "Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man." Luke 5. 8. Purity and majesty conjoined, strike a sinner into consternation.

3. Another object of our fear is God's all seeing eye, Psal. 16. 8. "I have set the Lord always before me," how? I have set

him before me as my inspector, as my guide, as my pattern, and this doth raise and excite fear towards God. There is a pure and a piercing eye that looks upon our most retired actions. There is nothing that is a more powerful motive to a man to walk as a christian than this, a certain persuasion that God's eye is always open upon him. There is no person that is any thing in religion, till the fear of God be written upon all his actions. We read Deut. 23. 14. God commanded the Israelites, that "there should be no unclean thing in the camp, for the Lord walked in the midst of the camp." Oh when you do but apprehend this, that the eye of God is always upon you, and make this the object of your fear, the influx of it will be powerful for the regulating of your lives. Sometimes in scripture, the fear of God is opposed to forgetfulness of him.

4. The power of God is also an object of our fear, for this makes him a dreadful adversary, Psal. 90. 11. "who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." It is impossible for the most trembling conscience to enlarge its apprehensions, and its fears answerable to the power of God's anger. You know that a trembling conscience is able to fancy to itself the most direful torments; the pouring out of hot oil into the tenderest parts of the body; whatever torments either the power or the art of man can do: but our apprehensions are finite and limited, and when you have raised them to the utmost extent, they cannot reach any degree as it were of God's power. The power of the creatures is a limited power; for as they have a limited benignity, and can do us good but in part, so likewise they have but a limited malignity to do us hurt but in part; as you know there are some things that can clothe us, but not feed us; some things can heal us, but not defend us from injuries: so on the contrary, fire may burn us, but it cannot drown us; a serpent may sting us, but not tear us. But now the power of God's anger is such, that it doth eminently contain in it all sorts, all degrees of torment; as the light of the sun doth eminently contain in it all the torches and candles in the world, and therefore who would not fear, as the treasures of his wrath, so the power of it. "Fear him," saith Christ, "who is able to cast soul and body into hell." And by the way, know the great reason why men do so much fear the great ones of the earth, and so little fear the God of heaven is

this, because we fancy to ourselves a large power in a mortal creature, and have dark apprehensions of the infinite power of the immortal God. The sinful compliance which abounds so much in the world, proceeds from this, because men fear the anger of the creature, but they presume on the mercy of God, and fear the justice (as they call it) of man, but they hope in the goodness of God.

5. The justice of God is another object of our fear. This attribute excites his power, awakens his wrath, and causeth them to sparkle forth against sinners. Now this is the ground of our fear, as we are guilty creatures. All those attributes which I have already mentioned, produce fear in us in respect of the contrary qualities that are in us, as the majesty of God causeth our fear in respect of our meanness, his purity in respect of our vileness, his power in respect of our weakness, and so his justice in respect of our guilt, for we are guilty creatures. The love that we exercise upon God, respects him as a Father; but the fear that we fix upon God is referred to him as a Judge; and if we do but seriously take a view of God's justice as it is represented in the word, it is impossible but that the most presumptuous spirit would be filled with trembling and horror at the apprehension of it; that justice that will take notice of the number and of the quality of all our sins; that justice that will spare no person be he never so great, nor slight any person be he never so mean; that justice that shall award and decide our everlasting state, who would not fear it? Alas, the justice of man be it never so severe, can but dispose of a few days, or a few years of our time; but the justice of God doth award us for ever to glory, or to misery.

6. The mercy of God and his goodness are the objects of our fear. Take this as a rule, the affections of a man are best discovered by his reflection on mercy. The presuming sinner will argue from it thus; there is mercy in God, therefore I may encourage myself in my evil ways, and I may offend him; but the gracious soul argues thus, there is mercy with God, therefore I will fear him. Now if you ask me how can a person fear God's mercy, I answer (1.) An ingenuous soul fears to displease it. (2.) He fears to lose it.

(1.) He fears to displease it. *Timor castus, timor filii, timor gratus.* It is a chaste, a filial and a grateful fear, whereby the

soul is very tender of displeasing the mercy of God. It is that fear which a child bears to a parent, which a wife bears to her husband, which one friend bears to another, he would not displease him. Oh remember there is a dread in God's smiles, and his majesty is to be feared when it is most serene.

(2.) The soul fears the loss of that mercy. For as a gracious spirit prizeth the mercy of God more than life, so it fears the loss of it more than death, Psal. 63. 3. "thy loving-kindness is better than life;" and thus St. Austin describes fear, it is *fuga animæ, ne perdat quod diligit*, the flight of the mind, lest one lose what he enjoys. If you have tasted how good the Lord is, there will be a fear lest you should hazard the smallest degree of the manifestation of it.

CHAP. III.

The difference between servile and filial fear.

iii. **I** proceed next to distinguish between servile and filial fear; between that fear that is degenerate and slavish, and that which is ingenuous and filial. The Latins distinguish these two sorts of fears by two words, the one is called *metus*, the other is called *timor*; *metus* is the fear which respects an object, that may be injurious to me. *Timor* being derived from a word which signifies honour, imports a reverence of another, because of his excellencies. One of these is that fear which is slavish, and the other genuine and filial: now there are several distinctions which I shall present to you of those two fears, that so you may be able to judge whether you are a partaker of this grace or no: you know there are many noxious weeds which are very like to garden herbs; but although they be like in appearance, yet the operations of them are very different. So there is a similitude

between this fear of God, and that slavish fear which is in a carnal spirit ; yet they are vastly different in their effects.

1. The fear that is slavish, is a forced act, but that which is ingenuous is voluntary. A slavish fear proceeds from a judicial impression, stamped upon the conscience ; and so he that lies under it makes it his design to break the chains, and get himself at liberty ; but this son-like fear is the desire of a saint, Nehem. 1. 11. " we desire to fear thy name," it is the treasure of a saint, Isa. 33. 6. " the fear of the Lord is his treasure." It is that to which he devotes himself, Psal. 119. 33. " thy servant who is devoted to thy fear." The fear of a wicked man is a judicial impression ; for when the spirit of bondage strikes upon the conscience, then it is filled with fears and terrors. But now the fear of a gracious person, proceeds from himself, he takes the threatenings of God and endeavours to awe his own soul therewith, 2 Cor. 5. 10. " knowing the terrors of the Lord we persuade men ;" and this is the reason why a carnal spirit, (one that hath this slavish fear in him,) his great design is to break the fetters of conscience, to loose those ties, he would fain get out of that troublesome state. But now a gracious spirit always cherisheth this fear of God : he labours to know God more, that he may fear him more. And this is the reason likewise that this slavish fear is in such a soul only at some times, there are sometimes violent impressions of conscience, some zealous pangs which move the soul ; and these persons are just like the marble pillars that will sweat in moist weather, but retain their hardness still : whereas a gracious fear is not a violent passion, but a serious constitution of spirit. Oh such a man fears God always, and this (by the way) is one difference between the grace of love, and the grace of fear ; love is that grace, that when we exercise it, the soul spends itself in violent ejaculations towards God. Therefore in its raptures it cannot be always in us ; although there is a love burning in the soul always, yet not a love flaming always, that cannot be : but now the fear of God is a grace, which you must exercise every moment so far as it is possible.

2. That fear that is degenerate and servile, doth merely arise from guilt. Guilt first brought fear into the world ; when Adam was convicted of his disobedience, then he feared and hid himself. See an eminent example of this, Acts 24. 25. When the

apostle Paul was called before the governor Felix, you shall find the prisoner at the bar, by the help and advantage of conscience, made the governor to tremble. "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled." But now a gracious soul, his fear doth not arise merely from guilt, but it is a fear of reverence in reference to God's perfections, it ariseth from the knowledge of God's excellency, it shall continue in heaven itself, when we are confirmed in glory; when there will not remain the least degree of guilt, then shall we most fear God. As I have read a story of a person of most eminent holiness when he was a dying, he was filled with great tremblings and fears of God; there comes one to him and speaks to him, I wonder (saith he) that you who know God do so fear him? 'If I did know him more, I should fear him more;' that was his dying answer. In heaven the fear of God shall be perfected; therefore it doth not merely arise from guilt. When God is pleased to dart a fire into the bones of a man, to cast stings into his conscience, then a carnal man fears; when his heart is scorched with the estimations of those lusts wherein formerly he delighted himself (as a fish sometimes is boiled in that very water that formerly it sported itself in) then doth a carnal spirit fear. But now a gracious man when there is peace within, when there is a blessed serenity in the conscience, then he fears the Lord; therefore it is said, "the churches walked in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost," Acts 9. 13. there you see an union between fear and joy.

3. This degenerate and servile fear respects the dismal effects of sin, but not its evil nature. They in whom this is *non metuunt peccare, sed metuunt ardere*, they do not fear to sin, but they fear to burn; or if they fear sin, it is merely in reference to burning. The one is *timor pænæ*, the other is *timor offensæ*, the one fixeth itself on the punishment, the other regards the offence; the one is awakened by the apprehension of those judgments to which a man is exposed, the other regards the evil which a man hath done. A child may fear to take up a burning coal, that doth not fear to take up a black coal, which will soil and pollute it. A carnal wretch fears to meddle with that sin that will create terrors in his conscience, but is not afraid to meddle with that sin which will defile him. The wise man speaking concerning this gracious fear, calls it, "the fear of the

commandment," Prov. 13. 13. "but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded." I deny not but servile fear may give a check to our sins; but this doth not proceed from any hatred of sin, but from fear of hell. To illustrate this by a similitude, a dog although his ravenous nature do prompt him to take hold of the meat, yet when the staff is over his head he dares not touch it. A wicked man while terrors of conscience are upon him, though he loves his sin, yet he dares not venture upon it. What epicure is there that is such a slave to his appetite, that when he is under a fit of the stone, will venture on those meats that he knows will increase his paroxysm, and make his pains more dolorous? and yet he may love the meat very well: so it is here, such a person that hath this slavish fear, although he loves his sin, yet he may possibly be kept from it for fear of hell, but this fear is terminated only upon the punishment.

4. Another difference between these fears is drawn from the continuance of them; this servile fear usually being a sudden passion, but the ingenuous fear is a serious constitution of spirit. I shall apply to this purpose that which Aristotle speaks concerning the colours of men; there are some colours which proceed from complexion, there are others which proceed from some sudden passion. Suppose the question be, what complexion a man is of; if he be pale through fear, or red for anger, we cannot say that man is of a pale or red complexion, because that is a sudden thing: it is just so here, one that is a carnal wretch, sometimes when there are sharp pangs of conscience upon him, he may fear to sin; but this fear remains no longer than the paroxysm of the burning ague, it may be not so long, for some few hours only; but the gracious spirit always maintains this fear in him, "blessed is the man that feareth always;" the one is but a sudden passion, the other is the complexion of the soul.

5. They vastly differ in their excitations to that which is good, and that in two respects. (1.) In respect of the extent of that good, to which carnal fear doth excite a man. (2.) In respect of the manner of performance.

(1.) In respect of the extent of that good. He that is a slave, and fears God servilely, his fear prompts him but to such a degree of good as he judgeth to be absolutely necessary for his own peace; such a person will give God but gold-weight; he

will not perform those duties to which natural conscience by some spear or goad doth not excite him. But the fear that is ingenuous and filial, excites the soul to a more liberal degree of service; therefore it is said, 2 Cor. 7. 1. "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." So Phil. 2. 12. "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Now reduce this to your particular state, and make an inquiry, whether the fear that you bear towards God, doth only excite you to some duties which the very light of natural conscience discovers and commands; or whether or no, doth it engage your hearts to all the duties of holiness?

(2.) In respect of the manner of performance. This is the usual temper of servile fear, it excites a man to the bare act of the duty, without regard to those qualities which should attend that act and that duty. Thus he that is a slave and fears God merely for his wrath, possibly he will pray and hear the word; but his prayers are but a little motion of the lips, they are spiritless devotions. He prays like a parrot, without a correspondency of his affections to that which he prays; and what is the reason of it? Because natural conscience is quiet for the act done. Whereas an ingenuous fear, causeth the soul, in prayer, to labour that it may be in a flame, and endeavour to raise the affections to the highest pitch and degree. He that fears as a slave, though he makes God the object of his duty, he doth not make him the end of his duty. And therefore saith the Lord, "when you fasted, did you fast unto me?" Zech. 7. 5. But this is the end of their duties, to quiet conscience, that all might be peaceable within. But ingenuous fear excites the soul to perform duties in such a manner, as may be acceptable to the Father of spirits.

6. These fears differ in their restraints from evil, and that likewise in a double respect. (1.) In respect of the nature of those evils from whence they are restrained. (2.) In respect of the manner of their flight from them.

(1.) In respect of the nature of those evils from which they are restrained. Servile fear checks the soul from those black sins which stare in the face of a natural conscience, those sins which are of the first magnitude, and of a crimson dye, which do *vastare conscientiam*, waste the conscience, these sins slavish fear will keep a man from; but for other sins, which (although

they do not leave so great a blot upon the name, yet they may leave a very great stain upon the soul) they do not regard. To give you an instance; a natural man that lies under this slavish fear, fears to kill a man, but not to hate or bear a spleen against a man; and yet this is murder in a degree. Such a man fears actually to defile himself with a woman; but he cherisheth speculative wantonness, and gazeth on the image of the lust, it may be whole days in his fancy; and yet this is the adultery of the heart, but this he doth not regard: but where there is an ingenuous fear, this causeth a person not only to fly sin, but the appearance of it, to fly the smallest sin as well as the greatest; for as there is the same reason of the roundness of a ball, as there is of a globe, so there is the same reason he should fly the smallest sin as the greatest. Thus an ingenuous child fears not only visible disobedience, but declines the very colour of it. A chaste wife doth not only fear to break the marriage knot, but flies every sign of disloyalty, and will not bring upon herself the least suspicion of her chastity; so that in respect of the nature of the evils declined, there is a vast difference.

(2.) In respect of the manner of their flight: for that fear which is degenerate and servile, although it may withdraw the soul from the action, it doth not crucify the affection to sin; but now a gracious spirit doth not only forbear sin, but abhor it; he doth not only leave it, but loath it. In the one the faculties are bridled up, in the other the will is healed; the one doth *abscondere* hide his sin, and keeps himself from outward acts; but the other doth *abscindere*, he cuts off sin by the roots.

7. Servile fear drives a man from God; but filial fear unites a man to God. He that is a slave, his great care is how he may hide himself from God; but he that is a son his great care is, that God do not hide himself from him. A slave is afraid to find God, a son is afraid lest he should lose him. St. Austin doth admirably explain this by the different fear the harlot hath of her husband, from that which the wife hath, who is loyal and virtuous. The harlot saith he, *illa timet ne veniat*, she fears lest her husband should come home; but the virtuous wife *illa timet ne deserat*, she fears lest he should depart. The harlot fears lest her husband should chastise her, but the virtuous wife lest he should forsake her. Thus it is here, he that is a slave all his design is this, how he may hide himself from God; but a

gracious soul doth less fear God's blows, than his absence, he can better brook his strokes than the withdrawing of his countenance.

8. Servile fear is an earnest of hell; filial fear is the beginning of heaven. Servile fear is the fruit of the covenant of works, and therefore the beginning of sorrow. Filial fear is the product of the covenant of grace; for saith the Lord, "my fear I will plant and put in their hearts," and so it is the initials of glory. Servile fear is one of the black train of affections that shall accompany sinners to another world; all the bright part of their affections shall leave them, their joy, their hope, and their delight; but their fear, sorrow, despair and horror, shall accompany them for ever: but now the fear of God which is son-like and ingenuous, that doth endure for ever, that shall be completed in glory. There are some graces in a saint that are relative graces, that respect the present state, as repentance and the justifying faith of a saint; but the fear of God, that is the eternal homage and tribute which the creature must pay to him, and therefore it shall continue for ever.



CHAP. IV.

The effects and products of filial fear.

iv. **I**T was next propounded to show what are the effects and products of filial fear; they are these,

1. The fear of God produceth a flight from sin: this is so essential to the fear of God, that it makes up its description, the fear of God is to depart from evil. In the 19th Psalm ver. 9. you have an expression there, "the fear of the Lord is clean;" it is clean *formaliter*, it is clean in itself; it is clean *effective*, as it makes us clean; that person that thus fears the Lord will

not ordinarily neglect the least duty, nor commit the least sin for the greatest good. The fear of God is *animæ vigil & custos*, it is the sentinel and guard of the soul, which is very vigilant that no temptation may enter in, nor no corruption may pass out.

2. Another effect or product of this fear of God, is a careful search after the perfect knowledge of God's will, that so a man may not offend him, (and this proceeds from the former) Psal. 86. 11. "teach me thy way, O Lord, and I will walk in thy truth, unite my heart to fear thy name." Here you see the conjunction of these two requests. A man that is a stranger to this fear, makes it his design to preserve his conscience from the command of the light of the word. Lazy persons lie upon their beds of ease, and draw their curtains that no beam may dart in upon them; they are afraid of the shining light, lest it should scorch them; they are afraid conscience should know what is the will of God lest it should perform its office of accusing them: but one that fears God ingenuously, he tries what is the acceptable and good will of God. Thus it was with Job, chap. 34. 32. "that which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity I will do no more." This is the temper of a person that fears God; and indeed you may carry this through all relations. This is the fear of a son, who will inquire what is his father's will that he may not displease him. The care of a wife is this, she will inquire what her husband's disposition is, that she may not contradict him: it is a necessary effect of fear to make a person full of inquiries after the will of him whom he endeavours to please.

3. This fear hath a great influence upon our performance of the duties of worship. (1.) It composeth the soul. (2.) It makes it awful in the discharge of them.

(1.) It composeth the soul, Psal. 86. 11. "unite my heart to fear thy name." There is a natural lightness in the spirits of men, and when we come to religious duties our thoughts are like a bird in a cage, it flutters the more because it is inclosed; our thoughts then are full of such a light discurrency as chaff in the wind, or dust in the air; but now the fear of God binds up the soul from flitting. The fear of God brings the soul to a consistency when it awaits upon God in religious duties. He that stops the sun in its flight, and the waves in their course, doth

bind up our thoughts by his fear. This is the grace that unites our thoughts together. And therefore you may try yourselves by this, whether or no when you approach the throne of grace doth the fear of God compose your spirit, doth it cause you to endeavour to get and keep your thoughts upon that, which then is required of you?

(2.) It renders the soul awful and solemn in the presence of God. We read, Heb. 12. 28, 29. "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;" such a person when he comes to any duty, sees him that is invisible, and therefore fears before him. A gracious soul although he be not always fervent as he should be, yet he will be always reverent, (so it always is when grace hath any actings in the soul) for the lowest degree of grace is this, to compose the spirit in the sight of God. Therefore it is said, Eccl. 5. 1. "keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God;" and certainly whosoever this grace doth exercise its power in any degree, one of the first effects of it is this, to make the soul reverent and solemn in the apprehension of God's perfections.

4. Moderation in the enjoyment of lawful things is another product of God's fear, and that upon a double account. (1.) In respect of the strictness of the law. (2.) In regard of the deceitfulness of the heart.

(1.) In respect of the strictness of the law. It is but a narrow path, and we are very ready to swerve from it. As one that walks upon a rope is very careful to poise himself, so that his body may not slip aside; so is one that hath a son-like fear, he knows that there is but a little step between the allowance of God and the desires of our lusts; and therefore he will not do all that he may, lest he do more than he should. Such a person when he tastes the honey, will be careful of his wings, that they be not dipped in the slime of it, that so he may like the bee keep his course and voyage to heaven free. Such a person considers with himself that more perish by meat, than by poison; because we are careful to keep ourselves from poison; but meat is the sustenance of our lives. *In licitis perimus omnes*, we all perish by the abuse of things lawful, or mostly do so.

(2.) In respect of the deceitfulness of the heart: we are so

apt to transgress those limits which are prescribed to us. Who is there among us but is apt to abuse the sweetness of grace to looseness, the power of grace to laziness, the assurance of grace to security, and the allowance of grace to licentiousness? And therefore because our hearts are naturally so deceitful, and so prone to transgress, such a person is very moderate in the use of lawful things. When he eats and drinks, this is his rule, he will eat so much as will neither unfit himself for duty, nor dispose himself to sin; so much as may neither distemper nature, nor disturb grace; so much he will venture upon the enjoyment of the creature, as may be a motive and excitement to raise up his soul to God. This is the proper effect of divine fear.

5. This is another product of filial fear; it causeth in the soul upon the least apprehension of God's displeasure a double inquiry, (1.) How we have provoked God? (2.) How we may appease him?

(1.) How we have provoked him? Such a soul hath a very quick eye to discover the Lord's anger; and when the Lord doth withdraw himself from it, this is the inquiry of such a soul, how have I provoked the Lord? Thus we read of Joshua, when his heart was struck with the fear of the Lord, he did by lot make inquiry after the offender, and never ceased till he had fixed upon Achan, that was the cause of God's anger. Thus doth a gracious heart take the candle of the Lord, and make an inquiry what may be the sin that eclipseth the light of his countenance, that shutteth up his bowels, that interposeth and intercepteth the influences of his grace, and the beams of comfort that come from him.

(2.) How he may be appeased? Oh the lamenting, the desires, and the vigorous motions of the soul towards the recovery of God's Spirit! How doth it daily plead for it in the name of Christ! Whereas other persons when a breach is made between God and their souls, as they commit sin without fear, so they lie in it without sense; they can bear the guilt of ten thousands of sins, which stand uncanceled in the presence of God; they do not make it their design to repair the breach that is made between their Creator and themselves; but it is otherwise with a soul that fears the Lord.

6. This fear of God is the best corrective of the fear of man. As the beams of the sun discourage the burning of the fire, so

doth this fear of God correct and abate the fear of the creature. As Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the magicians, so doth the fear of the Lord take the heart off from an immoderate fear of the creature, Luke 12. 4, 5. "Fear not him that can kill the body, &c." This is the ground of all that sinful compliance that is in the world (I mean in reference to fear) viz. Persons fear the anger of a man, but presume on the mercy of God. Now therefore a gracious spirit doth realize to himself what the majesty of God is, what his purity, justice, power are, and from hence he quencheth all the fears of the creatures. And if it should happen at any time, that in some sudden temptation the fear of man should overpower him, yet nevertheless by consideration, he brings himself to his fixed temper; as if you put water and oil in a glass, if you shake the glass the water may get upon the oil; but let the glass stand still, then the oil (as a triumphant conqueror) will recover the supremacy: so here, although in a temptation, the fear of man may overpower him, yet when he compares a mortal creature to an immortal God, then doth the fear of God quench all other fears.

CHAP. V.

The consistency between the fear of God, and faith, hope, love and joy.

v. **I** Will now direct your attention to the consistency that is between the fear of God, and faith, love, hope and joy; and before I show you the particular agreement between these graces, let me premise these three things.

First. Know that there is an absolute necessity of their union in the soul of a gracious person upon this account, because although sin and grace oppose one another, yet grace and grace doth not, they all proceeding from the same root and cause.

which is the Spirit of God. It is the opinion of some, that grace in the soul is but one habit, and according to the variety of acts which it produceth, so it receives several titles; as you know the ocean as it washeth several shores, so it receiveth several names; so they think, that the habit of grace as it believes in God is called faith, as it depends upon him for the performance of some good it is hope, as it feareth him so it is thus entitled; but granting this is not a truth, suppose that every grace is a several habit, yet they all very well agree, and it must be so.

Secondly. There is a conveniency in this agreement of the graces of the Spirit; as thus, one doth contemper and correct the exorbitances which otherwise would be in another, as I shall particularly show you when I come to the particular graces.

Thirdly. There is an actual existence of these graces in the soul; for as they are joined together in scripture, so they are experienced by every believer. These things being premised.

1. I shall begin with the first grace, *Faith*. There is an union between faith and fear in the soul; for that consider, that the fear of God although it doth weaken the security of the flesh, yet it never weakens the certainty of faith. There is a distrustful fear which faith expels, but there is an awful dread which faith cherisheth, and this is that fear which we are speaking of; the fear of God and faith are reciprocal causes of each other, for faith produceth fear, and fear produceth faith, or improves it. First, faith produceth this fear, Heb. 11. 7. "By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark, &c." where it is observable, Noah did believe an hundred years before the flood came, that there would be such a destruction, and he believed that he should be preserved and rescued from that destruction (observe that) and yet Noah feared; so that a believer that doth not only believe the power of the threatener and the truth of the threatening, but believes he shall escape that threatening, yet he fears it; this is Noah's case. If once faith be quenched in the soul there will remain no fear. Indeed faith is the eye that seeth all things in God; as to God all things are present, and there is neither first nor last, so doth the eye of faith see all things, in some sense, as present; and therefore a believing soul looks upon the day of judgment to be as real as if it were this moment, because he

sees it in God, and this causeth him to fear. Whereas take away this faith and the soul is then secure; it being with the objects of our affections in distance of time, as it is with the objects of sense in distance of place. When a thing is far distant from mine eye, I cannot perceive it; so when that which is evil is at a great distance from me, without the eye of faith, I shall never fear it; every evil doth abate so much *de terribili* as it hath *de futuro*. But now faith realizeth these things to the soul, and so produceth fear. This fear doth improve faith. For there is a circle in these causes, as there is a commerce between heaven and earth; the vapours that ascend from the earth cause clouds, and those clouds descend in showers, and so are the causes of vapours; so it is with the graces of the Spirit. Faith produceth fear, and fear causeth the soul more to believe the judgments of God and his threatenings; for when once the mind presages evil and fears it, it will the more strongly believe it. The scripture unites these two graces, Psal. 64. 9, 10. "All men shall fear, &c. the righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and trust in him;" here is an union between these two graces.

2. This fear of the soul is consistent with hope. Fear and hope in the soul of a christian, are like the cork and the lead to a net, the cork keeps it from sinking and the lead keeps it from too much floating; so it is here, fear keeps hope from degenerating into presumption, and hope keeps fear from sinking into despair. If you do abstract fear from hope, the soul will be lazy; and if you do abstract hope from fear, the soul will sink into a despondency. Therefore there must be a fear with hope, and that will appear, if you do consider these three things. (1.) The author of that reward which hope respects. (2.) The tenure of the conveyance of that reward. (3.) The quality of the reward itself. These three show there must be fear with the hope of a christian.

(1.) If you consider the author of that reward, it is the holy God; and therefore wherever there is a hope to receive a crown from his hand, there will be a fear to displease him. I will bring this down to a temporal case, thus. It is a rational thing to imagine that a subject doth hope to rise when he doth fear to displease his prince, for the king is the fountain of honour; and therefore if he doth not fear to displease him, he can never hope

to rise by him. No, it is the loyal subject that fears to displease his sovereign, that expects advancement by him. A christian who doth not fear to displease God, can never hope to be advanced by him.

(2.) If you respect the conveyance of this reward, and that is expressed thus, Heb. 12. 14. "Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." This is the condition upon which the reward is promised, and therefore it is said, 1 John 3. 3. "And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." What hope is that? That is, he that expects to be conformed to Christ in glory, he will imitate Christ in purity.

(3.) Consider the very quality of the reward, and that likewise excites fear. For what is the recompence of our hope but this, the vision of God? Now what saith our Saviour, Mat. 5. 8. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," who is a pure God; since the happiness of a saint is the sight of the pure God, there must be purity of heart to dispose him for it. The air above is so pure that no sin can live there. And therefore wherever there is hope of heaven, there must be a fear of sin, because heaven consists in an absolute freedom from it. Now there must be hope with fear for these two reasons, for 1st. Fear without hope defiles the soul. 2dly. Fear without hope ruins the soul.

1st. It defiles the soul; for it renders our guilt more omnipotent than God's goodness; it makes sin to be as infinite an evil as God is an infinite good. And what is this but to debase God? and thus it stains the soul.

2dly. Fear without hope ruins the soul, and drives a man to a wretched neglect of all the means of recovery, and to a dreadful flight from God. As the frost and cold in winter do so bind up the influences of the earth, that it cannot produce its fruits; so these affections of fear and despair do so bind up the soul that it cannot exercise acts of dependance upon God; and therefore there must be a mixture of these two graces in the soul, that so the repenting sinner when he despairs in himself, may hope in God. When he sees nothing within him, nothing below him to help him, yet he may see something above him, that is, the mercy of God.

3. There is an union in the soul between fear and love. Love

without fear would become secure, and fear without love would become slavish. Love is the dearest companion of this fear; there is nothing more fearful than an ingenuous love, and nothing more loving than a filial fear. These two graces do equally knit the soul to God. Love is that grace which unites the soul to God, and fear keeps the soul from departing from God. "I will put my fear into their hearts that they shall not depart from me." These two graces have the same promises made to them; so you shall find Psalm 145. 19, 20. "He will fulfil the desires of them that fear him, he also will hear their cry and will help them, the Lord preserveth all them that love him." These two graces do embrace and support each other.

Objection. Doth not the scripture tell us, there is no fear in love, 1 John 4. 18. "but perfect love casteth out fear."

Answer. This fear that is here made irreconcilable with love, is not a fear of God's judgments, but a fear of persecution in the world; and so indeed, when our love is perfected it conquers the fears of death. Thus Tertullian of old understood this place, saith he, "What fear can be understood here, but the author of our denial of Christ." *Quem amorem perfectum nisi fugam timoris?* What perfect love must we understand here, but that which puts fear to flight, and that which animates us to a confession of Christ? And there are three reasons which confirm this interpretation.

(1.) The first is drawn from that expression in the 17th verse, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment," which may be interpreted thus; herein is our love made perfect and crowned, that we may have boldness in the day of temporal judgment, when we are arranged before princes for the cause of Christ.

(2.) Consider the parallel that is made between Christ and us, "because as he is, so we are in the world;" what is the meaning of it? That is, as Christ upon earth laid down his life to seal the truth, so while we are in this world upon the call of God's providence, we should lay down our lives for the confession of the truth.

(3.) Because it is said in the 18th verse, "He that feareth is not made perfect in love, and fear hath torment in it," that is, there is a rack, a pain, that is conveyed by the fear of death, as it is said, Heb. 2. 15. "who all their days were under a spirit

of bondage through fear of death." And wherever there is a fear of death there cannot be a perfect love of Christ ; for the person that is a coward is next to an apostate. That person which fears death is ready to apostatize from Christ, when his life is in danger : but when this perfect love of Christ reigns and triumphs it is stronger than death. How formidable soever death is, yet the love of Christ will cause the soul to embrace it ; if this interpretation be either novel to you, or if you think it not so genuine, you may reconcile the text by my doctrine ; for then understand here, a slavish fear of God merely as of a judge, which is inconsistent with love ; but for ought I know the other sense may comport well enough with the meaning of the spirit.

4. Another grace that is united in the soul with this holy fear is *joy*. This is a riddle to a carnal spirit, and yet it is one part of the mystery of godliness which grace teacheth, and which a holy soul is instructed in. Hence it is said in scripture, that "they did rejoice in God's goodness, and yet they feared his goodness." (1.) Our fear qualifies joy. (2.) This joy doth characterize and evidence our fear to be of the right kind.

(1.) This fear of God qualifies our joy. If you abstract fear from joy, joy will become light and wanton ; and if you abstract joy from fear, fear then will become slavish. Hence it is said, Psalm 2. 11. "Rejoice with trembling." There is a sweet temperation of these graces. In heaven God is equally rejoiced in and feared, and while we are here below we should aspire to that heavenly temper. Then doth the soul most kindly rejoice in God, when it is filled with an awful admiration of his goodness ; for this fear doth not contract the heart as grief doth, but enlargeth the heart in God's praises.

(2.) This joy doth characterize our fear, and evidence it to be of a right stamp. So you shall find 112 Psal. 1. "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments."

CHAP. VI.

Answering some questions, how far and in what manner the threatenings of the word should work upon the fear of a converted person.

vi. **T**HERE are some questions which I shall propound concerning this grace, and so shall clear objections as I handle them.

Question 1. How far should the threatenings of the word work upon the fear of a converted person?

(1.) I answer. Every affection must be exercised upon its proper object; for they were planted by the hand of God in the nature of the reasonable creature, and therefore none of them must be eradicated, but must be regularly exercised. Now as the love of God is the loadstone of my love, so the justice of God is the object of my fear, and therefore these threatenings must work upon the soul.

(2.) That these threatenings must work upon the soul, it appears by this; because they are part of the medium whereby God doth bring the soul to himself, and whereby he doth direct the soul in the way that leads to life. There is an initial fear in the soul which prepares the way for the Spirit of adoption, and sometimes is in the soul before ever the Holy Spirit hath taken up his residence there. As you know the sun before it riseth, darts forth some light into that part of the heavens where it is not present. There is also a fear of God's judgments which hath not only the Spirit for its original, but the Spirit for its companion. This fear of God's threatenings is not only from the Spirit but with the Spirit, and therefore the Spirit of God is called the "Spirit of fear," Isa. 11. 2. Now this fear the Spirit makes use of while we live in this world, to direct us in the way to heaven. Therefore since the terrors of the Lord are part of the Spirit's discipline, certainly a gracious man should fear God's threatenings.

(3.) In the scripture the threatenings of God are frequently propounded to believers, and certainly they should work upon

their fear. The fear of God's judgments is not too servile a passion to be in a child of light. The apostle Paul certainly knew the mind of God and the tenour of the gospel, and yet you shall find his chosen arguments to excite us to serve God are many times drawn from the fear of his judgments. There are two places very remarkable, one in the 12 Heb. and the two last verses, "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." Now observe, that the apostle speaks here to those that had an interest in the "Kingdom which cannot be moved:" and saith the apostle, "Let us have grace," that is, let us exercise grace so as to approach and serve him with "Godly fear;" and why, "for our God is a consuming fire." The other scripture is in Phil. 2. 12. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," where you may observe the apostle doth emphatically speak, not of doing it with faith and love, but with fear and trembling; and this fear and trembling is a posture fit for us till we come to the gate of heaven. To conclude the question, know that our Saviour who was the author of the gospel, preacheth it to his disciples, Luke 12. 5. "Fear him which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him." And therefore those wanton spirits that are all for oily doctrines, that will endure to hear of nothing but the riches of grace, cheat themselves; they flatter themselves into hell with vain hopes of heaven. As I must rejoice in God for his goodness, so I must fear him for his justice; therefore this is clear, the threatening of God must work upon believers.

Question 2. In what manner must the fear of God's judgments work upon believers? I answer in these propositions,

(1.) In the general all our religious acts must be ultimately terminated upon God. Take that as a rule, as his commands must be the principle to sway the conscience, so his glory must be the aim and the design of a christian. God must be the beginning, the middle, the end of all our actions; and therefore when I come to discourse what influence fear must have, carry this with you.

(2.) Although the command of God must be the ground of my obedience, yet the fear of God may be an excitation to it. The command of God is the *ratio formalis* of the obedience of

the creature, the fear of God may be the *ratio motiva*. Take all rewards and punishments and abstract them from the command of God, yet the command of God obligeth us; but add these and they will more powerfully enforce it. A cipher is nothing in itself, but add it to a sum and it increaseth the sum: rewards and punishments being added to the command to enforce it.

(3.) The fear of God should work upon us in this manner, to be a bridle to check and restrain us from sin. For you shall find this to be the method of the gospel, where God persuades us to duties he propounds reward; when he dissuades us from sin he presents and urgeth judgments; therefore in this manner should fear work upon the soul, Rom. 8. 13. "For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die," there is a check from sin; "but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live," there is an encouragement to duty.

(4.) This fear of God's judgments, or of the threatenings of God, its chiefest season is then, when some present temptation presseth upon us, when conscience and the affections are divided, when conscience doth withdraw a man from sin, and when his carnal affections draw him forth to it, then should the fear of God come in. It is a holy design for a christian to counterbalance the pleasures of sin with the terrors of it, and thus to cure the poison of the viper by the flesh of the viper. Thus that admirable saint and martyr bishop Hooper, when he came to die one endeavoured to dehort him from death by this, O Sir, consider, that 'Life is sweet, and death is bitter;' presently he replied, 'Life to come is more sweet, and death to come is more bitter,' and so went to the stake and patiently endured the fire. Thus as a christian may sometimes outweigh the pleasures of sin by the consideration of the reward of God, so sometimes he may quench the pleasures of sin by the consideration of the terrors of God. We read of our Lord Jesus, that he did outweigh the shame of the cross by the glory of his exaltation, Heb. 12. 2. He was not ashamed of the cross, because of the glory that was set before him. So a christian may thus consider with himself, that communion with God exceeds all the gratifications of the senses; that there is more pleasure in one minute's enjoyment of his love than in all the carnal dreggy delights of the world for ever: and on the other side, he may make use of this fear.

(5.) I conceive this, that the fear of God's threatenings doth more ingenuously work when it respects the loss of heaven than the casting into hell. For an ingenuous son doth not so much fear to be cast into a house of correction, as he fears disinheriting; so a gracious spirit doth more fear the loss of God's countenance, than all the bodily pains that can be inflicted upon him; this is a fear that is more ingenuous and filial.

(6.) The fear of God's judgments should so far, and in this manner work upon every christian, as to render his pardon the more welcome, and to make the grace and love of God to shine forth with a brighter lustre. Oh such a person as fears the power and the terror of God's wrath, how will he esteem Christ as the crown of his glory, as the spring of his joy, and as his riches! Oh such a person will break forth with the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory in any thing but in the cross of Christ." There is no person that ever prizeth a sanctuary or an asylum at such a high rate, as he that is pursued by the avenger of blood; and no person will ever set a value upon the righteousness of Christ, and upon the mercy of God till he doth fear that wrath that is endless and remediless.



CHAP. VII.

An exhortation to the fear of God.

vii. **LET** me press upon you this eminent grace, a grace that in this respect hath a special prerogative and singularity that attends it, whereas many other graces of the christian life are but respective graces, they only concern some persons, some conditions, and some states of life; but the fear of God, shall I call it a single grace or rather an universal grace, that respects all persons in all states, and at all times. It is not a greater absurdity

for a carpenter to be without his rule, than for a christian to be without the fear of God. This is that grace which is the director of all other graces, and therefore let us fear him. But especially upon this account, fear the Lord because it is the best preservative against sin; the love of God is that which constrains us to service, the fear of God is that which checks and restrains us from disobedience. This will preserve the soul in the midst of snares; lay but this fear aside and you will fall in plain ground. Thus we read of Lot, by the fear of God he was preserved in the midst of defiled Sodom; but when he laid that aside he sinned upon the mount. Therefore as you desire to keep yourselves spotless, so let the fear of God reign in you. Remember our whole lives are a continued temptation, we walk in the midst of snares. O consider, that although the enemy be without us, yet the traitor is within us, I mean our deceitful hearts; and therefore fear God with a fear of reverence, and fear your hearts with a fear of jealousy: if this grace do but take its regency in the soul, the devil may surround us, but he cannot surprise us. It is then with the temptations of satan as it is with casting fire upon a marble pavement, which can do no hurt; but if you cast in but one spark into gunpowder it causeth a conflagration: if the fear of God guards the heart, the temptations of the devil are but like casting fire upon marble, there is no danger; but remove this bridle once, and every temptation is like a spark in gunpowder. The world without us prevails over us because of the world within us, and it is only the fear of God that keeps the soul always upon its watch and guard. And consider, it is as a duty which you are obliged to now under the gospel. There are various attributes in God, and as his justice doth not devour his mercy, so his mercy doth not violate his justice; and there must be proportionable affections in us to the attributes in God. As he is the God of mercy, so I should love and fear him too; but as he is a just God, so our fear is properly terminated upon him. Remember this, if every grace of the soul should languish, yet the fear of God last of all remains; that is the bond of the new covenant, "I will put my fear into their hearts that they shall not depart from me;" this is that grace that is of most universal use and influence in the christian's life; and therefore let us exercise this duty, this affection, that so we may be truly wise, we may be wise for ourselves, and wise towards God.

CHAP. VIII.

What heavenly wisdom is.

II. **GENERAL** head of discourse—That the fear of the Lord is *eminently wisdom*. Having opened the subject the “Fear of the Lord,” the next thing to be opened is the predicate, ‘that is wisdom.’ It is recorded, Prov. 1 7. that it is the ‘beginning of wisdom,’ as it is so in point of order, so in point of excellency, this is the root, the fulness, and the perfection of wisdom.

This fear of the Lord is that which will entitle a man wise for ever. Now for the more clear discovery of this I will

i. Consider in the general what this heavenly wisdom is.

ii. Upon what account it is that the fear of the Lord is wisdom, the most eminent wisdom, and without which fear, seraphical angelical wisdom is nothing.

i. For the first of these, consider there is a double wisdom, as Aristotle distinguisheth it.

1. There is that which he calls a wisdom universal.

2. A particular wisdom.

Now the particular wisdom is this, when we see a person excellent in an art, we say that man is wise as to that profession. The universal wisdom and that which is in perfection is this, when there is a knowledge of those principles and means which have a tendency to a man’s absolute happiness. Now this is the wisdom that here I shall treat of; and before I show you the connexion of God’s fear with it, or how the fear of God is this wisdom, we will consider

(1.) Wisdom in its causes.

(2.) Wisdom in its objects.

(3.) Wisdom in its acts.

(4.) Wisdom in its scope and aim.

(1.) The cause of this heavenly wisdom. This wisdom is a divine ray or emanation which flows from the Father of lights. “There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.” Job 32. 8. Man hath the facul-

ty, but God must enlighten that faculty. A dial is capable to show us the hour of the day, but the sun must first shine upon it: so the understanding of man is capable of wisdom, but God must shine upon it, so that in reference to its cause and original it is heavenly.

(2.) Consider the objects of this wisdom, and those principally are two. 1st. God, and 2dly. A man's self. These are the two poles upon which heavenly wisdom turns itself.

1st. God as he is glorious in himself and good to us, so he is the object of spiritual wisdom. It is not the knowledge of the nature of diamonds or pearls that can enrich us, but the knowledge of the wise God makes us wise; this wisdom as it comes from God, so it returns to him, as those rivers that proceed from the sea do empty themselves into it.

2dly. There must be the knowledge of a man's self, and that in two respects.

1. In respect of his capacity.

2. In respect of his immortality.

First, In respect of his capacity. There is an unlimitedness in the desires of a reasonable soul; our desires are not confined to those degrees of goodness which are scattered in the variety of earthly things, but reach forth towards the whole latitude of good, they can never rest nor acquiesce till they come to the comprehensiveness that is in God, and this is wisdom to know this capacity; for it is the greatest folly in the world for a man to measure his capacity, in respect of his senses.

Secondly. The knowledge of the immortality of the soul, so that all mortal and perishable creatures are no more able to make the soul happy, than the light of a candle to give day to the world.

(3.) What are the acts of this wisdom? They are principally three. 1st. Deliberation. 2dly. Election. 3dly. Application.

1st. The first is deliberation. A consulting with ourselves how we may advance ourselves to the fountain of goodness, how we may be really and eternally happy, how we may secure our souls, which are our jewel, with the loss of which the whole world would be but a specious beggary: and this act of deliberation, considering how we may make ourselves happy, is the peculiar excellency of a man; this is that which distinguisheth him from the inferior order of creatures.

2. Election or a choice of those means which have an intrinsic respect to the obtaining of that happiness, is another act of wisdom. Hence it is said, Prov. 2. 10. "When wisdom entereth into thine heart," (observe the expression) bare knowledge enters into the head, or it enters into the tongue, but wisdom enters into the heart; it makes a man to choose those things which may promote his real happiness.

3. Another act of this heavenly wisdom is an application of our light to practice. When we honour our knowledge by conformable acts, it is a fruit of spiritual wisdom; and this is the great difference between mental knowledge and prudential judgment. Mental knowledge is terminated in the bare speculation of an object; but that which is practical judgment goes forth into the conversation. Hence it is said, Prov. 12. "I wisdom dwell with prudence." What is prudence, but the reduction of our knowledge to the various occurrences of our lives? Divine wisdom always ends in a good conversation; it is better known by the life, than by discourse. Naked knowledge is like the light of the moon, men sleep by it; but this heavenly wisdom is like the light of the sun, men work by it; and therefore it is said, Jam. 3. 13. "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom."

(4.) The aim and scope, and design of spiritual wisdom is, to enable a person to glorify God and to enjoy him; to glorify God that so God may be honoured by us, and to enjoy God that we may be honoured by him. Thus you have the draught and scheme of that wisdom that is heavenly.

CHAP. IX.

How the fear of God is wisdom.

ii. **WHICH** brings me nearer to the text. In what respects is the fear of God this heavenly wisdom? And that I shall answer in these four particulars.

The fear of God is the best wisdom, because

1. It manageth the highest business.
2. It advanceth the supreme interest.
3. It avoideth the most destructive dangers.
4. (In order to all these) It improves the best seasons.

1. The fear of God is wisdom, because it manageth the highest business. Wisdom is not conversant about toys, but in the guiding of the soul to its eternal rest; in that is wisdom expressed and exercised. We look upon a man that spends his time in picking of straws, and then in sticking them upon his clothes, as a madman; what is the reason of it? Because these acts are below reason. So that man that spends his time and strength in reference to the world only, is a spiritual fool: what is the reason of it? Because these actions are below a christian; and the one is as much spiritual folly as the other is natural frenzy. Aristotle tells us, that wisdom is the knowledge of the most honourable truths, and of those that are of the greatest concernment: now the fear of God is conversant about these, and that appears principally in this particular; this fear conforms our greatest actions to that which is the greatest rule of wisdom, and that is the law of God; which is a draught of his will. Now the will of God as it is the rule of goodness, so it is the rule of wisdom; and this grace of divine fear squares all our great actions according to the rule of the word of God. This is that grace which deals with invisible sins, and those that are not known to the eye of the world; this is that grace which balanceth all our affections and corrects their excess. All temptations are usually grounded in love of pleasures, profits, or honours. Now it is this fear that crucifies the affections, is the mother of obedience

and devotion; and therefore certainly because it manageth all our highest works, and conforms them to that rule that is perfect wisdom: this fear of God is most eminently wisdom, upon this account. There is no such fool in the world as the careless christian, for that person is heedless in his main business; and however this fear of God may be inconvenient to our worldly affairs; however it may be troublesome to the flesh (for the world accounts it but a fond scrupulosity, and the flesh accounts it but a weak folly) yet know thus much (for I speak in answer to that objection) it is true wisdom for a man to be esteemed a fool in the world. 1 Cor. 3. 18. "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise." This fear by thus conforming our greatest acts to the rule of wisdom, certainly is wisdom eminently; when the fear of God doth draw the line, a man's steps must be very straight.

2. This fear of God doth advance the supreme interest of the soul, and therefore it must be the best wisdom. And here

First. Negatively, take all the blessings of the world these are not the highest interest of the soul; the pursuit of earthly things is more worth than the gain of them: that person that wastes himself in the gain of worldly advantages, doth (if I may so speak) dig for iron with a mattock of gold. Such a person is like some foolish children, which with a great deal of toil and sweat run after a butterfly, and when they have got it, what is the reward? A worm between their fingers; alas, a great estate many times proves poison. But I am sure it is never bread, it can never give satisfaction; therefore it is not wisdom principally, or only to follow that. Consider, how many men of basest spirits and lowest parts, have wrought themselves into worldly estates. He that looks for happiness in this world, it is as if a man should look for treasure in a coalpit, he is not likely to find it there; therefore in the next place positively.

Secondly. The fear of God promotes that which is the supreme interest of the soul. The soul is more noble than the body, and therefore that which makes the soul happy must be our supreme interest. Seneca hath written a whole epistle upon this subject, 'What is true wisdom?' And after he hath removed all natural enjoyments and excellencies, he doth resolve true wisdom to consist in this; this is his expression, then a man is truly wise when he doth *ad bonum revertere suum*, return to

his own good. Now what is the good of the creature? I answer, there is a double good or perfection, which belongs to every creature. (1.) The absolute good and perfection wherein it was created, and that is the perfection of its beauty. (2.) There is a respective perfection and good for which it was created, and that is the perfection of its use. And therefore if you would know what is the supreme interest of the soul? In one word it is this, when a soul doth arrive to the image of God, which is the perfection of its beauty, and to communion with God, which is the perfection of its use.

(1.) When a soul arrives to the image of God, which is the perfection of its beauty. Thus we read, that man was created after God's image in righteousness and true holiness: now this grace of all others, hath the most powerful influx upon the conversation of a saint, and therefore is most necessary to repair the ruins and decays of God's image.

(2.) As for the enjoyment of God and communion with him, this grace likewise of all others hath the most excellent power to bring us to that. The fear of God is that grace which makes God our friend, and therefore it promotes our highest interest. Suppose a man were to live for ever in the world, I should then esteem it a piece of wisdom for him to make the great ones of the world his friends. But alas we must appear before God as our judge, and therefore to ensure God and get his image, and enjoy his favour, is the highest and best wisdom. Yet let me add this by the way, that the person that fears God drives on a double interest, Prov. 16. 7. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him." Take this therefore as a rule, that a religious constancy will sooner gain men to be your friends than a base compliance; therefore he that fears God best promotes that interest too. But however, suppose he doth not, the attaining of God's image and his favour are the supreme interest of the soul. The fear of God will bring to the soul both perfection and satisfaction, and therefore it is the best wisdom.

3. The fear of God enables the soul to avoid the most destructive dangers. All the wisdom of the world is exercised upon one of these two points, either to obtain some good that a man desires, or to decline some evil that a man fears. Now the fear of God as it enables a man to attain to that which is an in-

finite good, so to avoid that which is an infinite evil. By how much the more excellent and more difficult the good is that we would obtain, and how much the more perilous and imminent an evil is that he would avoid, by so much greater is the wisdom that doth obtain the one, and avoid the other. Now the wisdom of God's fear teacheth us to obtain the highest good, and to avoid the worst and highest evil. What is the greatest danger in the world? It is not the loss of external goods; for alas these things are of a perishing nature, riches take wings and fly away, honour depends upon the fancy of another, pleasure dies in the very enjoyment of it; therefore the loss of these things cannot be the greatest danger. Nor can the enduring of the most sharp afflictions in this life be the greatest evil: for consider how many of those that have been dear in God's affections have lain under the greatest corrections; nay, they have triumphed over them; therefore that is not the greatest danger. But the loss of the soul, that precious jewel, that is more worth than the world, is the greatest loss, and to endure the terrors of God in conscience is the greatest misery. Now the fear of God doth enable the soul to decline this loss, and to escape these terrors, therefore it must be the greatest wisdom.

4. (In order to all these things) the fear of God doth improve the best seasons. We esteem it a great piece of wisdom in the world, for a person to improve his time. There is no person but hath his particular season and his time. Now the fear of God teacheth us to improve that season and time for our eternal good, and that upon a double account.

(1.) In regard of the gales of the spirit's motions, which are very transient. For we cannot command the clock of mercy, to strike when we please, therefore a man should improve every season: for it is said, Phil. 2. 12. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," it follows, verse 13. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." It is the fear of the Lord which excites a man to blow up every spark into a flame, and cherish every motion of the spirit, for he knows not how long this breath of the spirit will remain. Such a person doth improve opportunities. Now opportunity is *αἰὼς καὶς*, the flower of time. As a flower may wither and decay, yet the stalk remain; so a man may lose his opportunity, and yet enjoy time. The day of God's patience is

longer than the day of his grace ; there are many persons that live under ordinances, but find them altogether lifeless and powerless as to their souls ; for they have lost their opportunity, and God withdraws his Spirit, and strives no more with them. Now the fear of God enables the soul to improve every season, lest his Spirit should withdraw itself. The fear of God doth impress this truth upon the soul, that as the purchasing of our salvation depends upon the satisfaction of Christ, so the obtaining of that salvation depends upon the improvement of the day of grace, 2 Cor. 6. 2. " Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

(2.) This fear of God causeth the soul to improve the season that it enjoys, in respect of the brittleness and frailty of life, our time being certainly short and uncertainly continued. He that is the sovereign Lord of our persons, is the disposer of our time. Death doth not follow the course of nature, but the order of God's decree ; therefore it cuts off some in their sins before they come to the flower. Now the fear of God impresseth upon the soul these apprehensions, I cannot command the motions of the Spirit, I cannot lengthen out the thread of life ; therefore I will improve the present season. This is that grace which causeth the soul to consider, because eternity depends upon my time, it is most precious, and therefore I will improve it. As a piece of parchment which in itself is not worth a shilling, may be worth ten thousand pounds, in respect of what it conveys ; so this short life which thou enjoyest, which in itself is of little worth, yet eternity depends upon it, therefore it is most valuable. The sum is this, do but put these three questions to yourselves, whether or no it is not the highest reason in the world for a man to manage all his acts in the fear of God, who is his judge ; to design all his acts for the glory of God, who is his Creator ; to conform all his ways according to the will of God, who is his great master ; if you would but resolve these things by the judgment of renewed reason, certain I am, you would esteem the fear of God to be the best wisdom. If Solomon could tell us, that he is wise that wins other men's souls, how much more is he wise that saves his own ? Now it is the fear of God which is the instrument of our salvation ; therefore let that be your principle to govern and order your whole lives, let this be your great engine, and the spring of all your actions to have the fear of God

as your director and governor. Certain I am, when at the last day we shall appear before him who is the wisdom of the Father, then shall only those who have followed this course be justified by him. There is good reason therefore that a wicked man, should be esteemed the greatest fool, and the holy man, the only wise person.

CHAP. X.

Opening the several false wisdoms of the world.

NOW I come to the use of the whole. This doctrine gives a check to the false wisdoms of the world: you may as in a glass see the extreme difference of those principles of wisdom in the management of all affairs which the world lays down, and those principles of spiritual wisdom which are laid down in the word. He is a wise man in the world's account that can spin a web of vanity, who can drive on his carnal designs to the best advantage; but the worldly wise man is a fool in religion, Jer. 8. 9. "Lo they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?" That soul that trembles at God's word, hath more true wisdom than all the sophies of the world. For the opening of this more fully to you, I will discuss it in this method; I will consider

1. What are the designs and ends of worldly wise men.
2. What are those means which they use to achieve those ends.
3. I will show you that that which they account wisdom in the management of those means, for the attainment of those ends, is perfect folly.

1. For the first of these, the ends of carnal men in the general, are worldly happiness, that which the world can afford them.

This is ever (by the corrupt judgment of man) formed as his happiness, and into this all the motions of his soul are ultimately resolved : there is, since the fall, not only a maim in the sensual appetite, but in the intellectual and highest power of the soul. All the acts of an unsanctified understanding are foolish ; and this is the first ground of the world's folly, an act of the understanding whereby they look upon something as their end, and as their happiness, which is not so. The scripture doth diversify it into three things, into pleasures, profits, and honours, for thus much the world affords. Now the means whereby the world designs to attain these ends proportionably are three, 1 John 2. 16. " for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," &c. " is of the world." The world doth design to purchase these three ends by these three means ; the pleasures of the world by the lust of the flesh ; the profits of the world by the lust of the eyes, and the honours of the world by the pride of life. These are the means it useth for the attainment of these ends. Now there is a worldly wisdom which is employed in the using those means to that end, and this wisdom is likewise divided into three heads, James 3. 15. " that wisdom which descendeth not from above, is earthly, sensual, devilish."

(1.) It is an earthly wisdom because it is exercised upon earthly objects, for earthly ends : this respects the gain of the world.

(2.) It is called a sensual wisdom because it aims at the satisfaction of our flesh ; the bent of nature runs that way, for the gratifying of our senses, which are common between us and beasts, and thus it doth aim at pleasures.

(3.) It is called a devilish wisdom upon this account, because pride which is the instrument whereby it would advance itself to glory, doth not only proceed from the devil as its author, but is in the devil as in its subject. There are some sins which make men the devil's slaves, but there are other sins which make men the devil's sons. Men are slaves to the devil when they commit such sins which the devil is not capable of, as all those sins which are merely acted by the body : but men are the devil's sons when they commit such sins which the devil is capable of, as pride, malice, and such other spiritual sins ; for these render a man as like the devil as an incorporated soul can be like an incorporeal

spirit. Thus in general I have laid down the scheme and draught of that which I will open particularly to you : for the

1st of these, The ends and designs of those persons that are wise according to the world. In the general know thus much, there is no greater mistake in the world, than when a man mistakes his end : this I lay down as a principle which will carry me through all the discourse. For as it is direct folly for a man to propound to himself no end in his actions (this is as if a man should strike a ball into the open air, there will be no return of it to him again) so it is the next degree of madness and folly for a man to mistake his end ; and the reason of it is this, the last end of a man is happiness, and the best that he can design for himself. Now can there be a greater mistake than about our happiness ? Pleasures, honours, and profits, the devil makes use of as his engines to destroy and undermine us ; therefore that man is lost, the very first step that he takes, who makes these things his end. According to this method did the devil manage his first temptation ; for so you shall find, Gen. 3. 6. “ when the woman saw that the tree was good for food (there is the lust of the flesh) and that it was pleasant to the eyes (there is the lust of the eyes) and a tree to be desired to make one wise ” (there is the pride of life) then she was taken and foiled. And satan found this temptation was so successful, that he hath formed all his snares ever since according to this first model ; therefore, when a man shall once propound these things to be his end, it is folly, the devil hath outwitted him. Let us consider the more particular reasons why the propounding of these things as our end is the folly of a rational creature ; for the opening of that I must lay down this previous proposition. The soul of man is his better part : the soul is the angel, and therefore that must only be propounded as my end which can bring that to perfection and satisfaction, because therein consists the happiness of the creature. Now consider the soul under these three notions.

1. Consider the soul in reference to its nature, and so it is immaterial.
2. Consider the soul in reference to its capacity, and so it is infinite (in some sense.)
3. Consider the soul in reference to its continuance and duration, and so it is eternal.

Now by the opening of these you will see what madness it is for a reasonable creature to propound any worldly thing to himself as his end. Consider,

First, The nature of the soul, which is immaterial: and therefore it can neither receive perfection nor satisfaction from the world. Whatsoever doth convey either of these things, must have some commensurateness, some suitableness to the nature of the soul: to give you an instance, consider the bodily senses, whenever they receive delight, it springs from the proportion that is between the object and the senses. The eye when it receives pleasure, it is because there is a suitableness between the visive faculty, and the colour of the thing seen. Natural reason receives delight from considering the contexture and concatenation that is between natural productions and their causes, here is a commensurateness between them; but now the upper part of the soul cannot receive any perfection or satisfaction, but from God, because there is nothing suitable to its nature besides him. As it was breathed from God, and inspired by him into the body, so it can only be perfected in him.

Secondly. If you consider the capacity of the soul, and that (in some degree) is infinite. The soul of man is capable of the image of God, of righteousness and holiness to renew him; it is capable of the peace of God to delight him; it is capable of the wrath of God, which is infinitely above the fears of man. Now can the world satisfy this soul which is capable of these things? We use to say, that a well or the brain of a man is empty, when the one wants water and the other wants wit, although the one be full of air and the other full of vapours; the reason of it is this, because wherever there is a want of that which should be of any thing, we say that it is empty. If the whole world were put into the heart of man, yet the heart would be empty without God, because it wants that of which it is capable, and which it should have. There must always be a conformity between the ingredients and the receptivity of the subject that takes them in. Is it not a folly then to make the world your end? A man may as soon fill a vessel with virtue, or learning, as fill the soul with the world.

Thirdly. Consider the continuance of the soul. It is of an immortal duration; it shall continue as long as God is merciful to save, as long as God is just to punish. Then certainly the

propounding the world as our aim or design is a great folly ; for these are all lying delights and perishing vanities. Would you not esteem that man a very fool who should make a journey for a year, and provide victuals but for one day ? Thus foolish is he who makes a journey for eternity with the things of mortality. All the things here below may be compared to the diurnal river (that I have read of) which runs in the day, but is dry in the night ; the reason they give of it is this, because it springs from the melting of snow, which lies on the top of the mountains. Now the beams of the sun dissolving that snow in the day, there is a current and stream, but the snow being congealed in the night, then is the channel dry. So it is with the world, all the things here below run in the day for the time (possibly) of life, or of prosperity ; but when the night of death comes, then those rivers are dry ; and therefore certainly it cannot but be the greatest folly and madness for a person to make these things his end. It is a rule the heathen gives, it is a note of folly for a man to make an ill bargain ; I know not what worse bargain can be made, than for a man to exchange his soul for the world, therefore he is the greatest fool that doth so. But on the other side, consider that God is an object that is able to bring both perfection and satisfaction to the soul ; he is able to bring perfection, because in him there is a transcendency of all good ; he is able to bring satisfaction, because once God being enjoyed there is no fear of the loss of him. He brings perfection to the soul in its chiefest faculties ; to the understanding he brings in perfection as he is the first and the highest in *generi veri*, as he is the first truth ; to the will he brings perfection, as he is the last and chiefest in *genere boni*, as he is the chiefest good. Thus the understanding is perfected in its knowledge, and the will is perfected in its love ; therefore for the soul to make sure of him, (as it doth by the fear of God) to make God its friend, certainly it is the best wisdom. The sum is this, in God there is a fulness of perfection, and a perpetuity of fruition, and therefore the soul once attaining him is made really and perfectly happy ; whereas all the things of the world fall short as to the conveyance of these two.

CHAP. XI.

The folly of worldly wise men in particular, in pursuing the pleasures, profits and honours of the world.

2. **CONSIDER** these things in particular ; we will take them asunder, and so show you how every carnal man is the greatest fool, by pursuing worldly things.

1st. Consider pleasures. This is one end for which many persons do rack their understandings and employ their knowledge ; and the souls of very many serve them for no other use but to be (if I may so speak) as cooks to provide sauces for their bodies. Certainly this must needs be a very great folly ; for do you think the candle of the Lord was enlightened in a man merely to search after earthly satisfactions ? Do you think the understanding (which is the excellency of the reasonable creature) was given merely to be conversant about these things, which are common between us and beasts ? (for sensual pleasures are the happiness of a beast) it cannot be. The folly therefore of pursuing of this, will appear to you in two things.

(1.) Suppose you could squeeze all the pleasures of the world into one draught, yet they will deceive your expectations, and therefore it is a folly to search after them. Take all the pleasures of the world, and they cannot satisfy your empty senses, much less are they able to fill the expanded desires of your souls. All the glory of the world cannot satisfy the desires of one eye, much less can it fill the desires and vacuities of the heart. Worldly pleasures are a sum in our desires, they are but a cipher in our enjoyment ; they are Junos in the pursuit, but they are clouds in the embracement. All the pleasures of the world are but an earnest of grief, if not of ruin : take them all and bring them to a person that lies under a troubled conscience, how suddenly are they extinguished ? They are no more able to give ease to a wounded spirit, than a drop of wine is able to sweeten a large vessel of water ; and therefore certainly it must be a folly

to make these your end and happiness, because they deceive your expectations. Whereas the pleasures which the soul obtains from communion with God, they do not cloy us but they satisfy us; the things of the world cannot satisfy our senses, but the peace of God passeth all understanding; and therefore there is a vast difference between them, and consequently that wisdom is more excellent that pursues the one, than that which pursues the other. Those pleasures which come from religious exercises are generous, and more co-natural to spirits, they do not degrade the reasonable creature, they do not sink a man beneath his species as bodily pleasures do. As that heat which is conveyed to the body by exercise, is far more natural and wholesome than that which is conveyed by fire; so those pleasures which the soul that fears God obtains by religious duties, are far more excellent than those dreggy delights which are conveyed by the things of this world.

(2.) As pleasures do deceive our expectations, so they draw forth our corruptions, and consequently render us miserable; and therefore the pursuit of them is the greatest folly. There is nothing more dangerous in the world than sin mingled with pleasure; it is like poison in sweet wine, which suddenly destroys, which presently strikes to the brain and heart, and so conveys death more speedily. And therefore that person who now makes it his design to taste the pleasures of sin, or rather to wallow in them; to drink them in as a fish doth water, as Tertullian speaks, *post pauca libidinum momenta evaporata*, after a few moments of lust which are evaporated, what will remain in the soul? The body will fail the lust, the lust will fail the satisfaction, and all will fail the man; and then what is become of his pleasure? What remains of it but the worm and the fire? And is it not a folly then? Oh do but consider, do you think the images of these pleasures which are enjoyed in this world are able to refresh the soul of a damned person? No. They are all extinguished there, they will rather increase the torment.

2dly. Consider the profits of this world being made our end, whether they can make us happy, or consequently whether a man is wise in pursuing of them. As the scripture tells us, that "laughter is madness," so it tells us, that "riches are vanity;" and therefore the pursuit of them cannot purchase to a man the title of a wise man, Prov. 21. 26. "the getting of riches by a

lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death." All the riches of the world are not able to convey that happiness upon which wisdom is exercised, in respect of those considerations which were before laid down. Certainly you would say, that if a man should lie under a paroxysm of the gout or stone, that this man would esteem it a very foolish thing in another, to tell him that a piece of gold would heal him. There is no suitableness between that and his disease; it is just so here, there is a vast unsuitableness between the soul and earthly treasures. Besides, impress this upon yourselves; when the soul shall take its farewell of the world, it can carry none of these things with it; and this renders it to be a most egregious folly to pursue them. Would you not account that man a very fool that when he comes to an inn, should spend all his time there to furnish and adorn a room with curious hangings, when he must stay but for a night, and leave it the next day? Oh consider, what is our life! Is it not a vapour? Is it not a bubble? Is it not sometimes shorter than a night? And shall we spend our time and our thoughts, which are the noblest offspring of our souls, about the pursuit of that which is like the hanging of a room for a night? Is not this folly and madness?

3dly. To come to the honours of the world. And as the scripture tells us, that "laughter is madness," and "riches are vanity;" so it tells us, that "honour is but a fancy." What is the glory of the world? It is a phantasm, a shadow, a mere reflection, that which hath no reality in it. There is a notable expression in Psalm 62. 9. "surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie." They are the greater lie of the two upon this account, because greatness promiseth something, and performs nothing: and therefore for a person to make this his aim, certainly it must be an argument of the greatest folly. Do but a little realize to yourselves this, when the wise men of the world, those that are wise in their generation, shall appear before God, when they shall reflect upon all earthly objects, and consider the vanity and the vexation of them, how will they befool themselves? What furious reflections will the soul make upon itself, when it shall consider for that which is not, the treasures of the world, for a mere fancy, for that which is madness in itself; I have hazarded and lost the enjoyment of an infinite good for ever. To conclude, there is no fool like the

sinning fool, who ventures his soul at every turn, and to obtain the world runs blindfold into endless ruin.



CHAP. XII.

That all human knowledge is not sufficient to make a man wise.

FROM hence we may learn, that those persons which please themselves only with human knowledge, are not wise in scripture account. If it were possible for a man to unravel nature from the cedar to the hyssop, if he had such a judgment as to penetrate into all natural conclusions, and to resolve all effects into their proper causes; yet if this man be without the fear of God (as Jerom said concerning worldly-wise men in the general, *sapientur in infernum descendunt*) he doth but wisely go to hell. Now that I may show you, that all human knowledge without the fear of God cannot render a man truly wise; consider it in these three respects.

1. In respect of its insufficiency to repair the ruins of the fall, or to perfect that which is amiss. Experienced Solomon tells us, that "that which is crooked cannot be made straight;" Eccles. 13. 7. I shall apply it thus, there is an impossibility in natural knowledge to rectify the spirit of man, which is fallen from its primitive rectitude, or to restore the image of God to the soul, which is so much distorted by reason of sin. Rom. 1. 21. The apostle speaking concerning the wisest heathens, "because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened," 22. v. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools," all this is spoken of the wisest heathens. Seneca in a letter of his, where he makes an inquiry after wisdom, resolves it to be this, 'for a man to have his soul

pure, and an imitator of God.' Now this human knowledge cannot attain unto ; so that in respect of its insufficiency, it cannot make us happy.

2. If you consider its malignancy against the truths of God, either against the sublimity of the gospel, or against the simplicity of it ; it will appear, that it cannot render a man wise.

(1.) If you consider that malignancy that there is in human knowledge against the sublimity of the gospel. Those truths which reason cannot comprehend, it will not embrace. Hence we find, that the Socinians reject several of the fundamentals of christianity, because they are above the flight of our reason. We read of the philosophers, Acts 17. 32. that "they mocked at the resurrection:" and we read of Julian, that he did upbraid christians as persons that were captives to a blind belief. Such kind of truths carnal reason in its elevations opposeth.

(2.) And the simplicity of the gospel human knowledge is opposite and repugnant to, and is malignant against it. Thus we read, that the doctrine of Christ was esteemed foolishness by the wise men of the world, because it was not conveyed to them in the blandishments of rhetoric, and because the very matter of the gospel was such, as their pride and lust would not stoop unto. Experience tells us, that the gospel is above natural, and against corrupt reason. Now since human knowledge (when it is alone without the fear of God) is thus malignant, since it puts sin into armour (as I may so speak) certainly this can never render a man truly wise.

(3.) Consider its vicinity to corruption ; when it is in its lustre, it then draws near to its period ; that death that doth attend a person, will bury all his learning in the same grave with him. Intellectual differences shall shortly cease, and then moral differences shall take place ; one moment shall equal the learned and the unlearned, the knowing and ignorant person, they shall at last stand upon equal ground, but then good and bad men shall be differenced for ever. Now since death so suddenly approacheth, certainly this cannot be that which maketh us wise.

CHAP. XIII.

The naked theory, or speculation of divine truths, not sufficient to make a man wise. Sinful craft is folly.

FROM hence I shall draw this conclusion also, that the naked theory, or speculation of divine truths, is not sufficient to make a man wise. If knowledge be only confined to the brain, if it be a naked illumination, if there be only a model of divine truths in thy head, without the fear of God, thou mayest have a curious knowledge, but thou wantest a saving knowledge. Now that I may show this the more clearly to you, I will lay down this rule, and so measure the bare knowledge of divine things by it; all knowledge of what nature soever, is to be valued according to the end for which it is. Now the knowledge of divine things hath a double end, the glory of God and the rest of the soul and its salvation; the bare knowledge of divine things without an answerable practice, is defective in these two ends, where it is separated from the fear of God; and this I shall evince and evidence to you.

1. For the glory of God, our Saviour hath told us, that his Father is such an husbandman, as esteems himself glorified in the fruits of our obedience. That person that is able to draw a map of the divinity to us, that can deduce one attribute from another in the divine essence; this man unless he doth practise what he knows, he glorifies God no more than a painter doth him whose picture he draws: God is not glorified in lifeless painted words, but in our works, when we bear his image and are conformed to his law; when we are renewed in our minds; as towardly children reflect a glory upon their parents, by expressing their persons and imitating their virtues; so doth a soul that fears God. The devils that are intelligent essences, know more by the subtilty of their natures than any man in this life, yet are far distant from glorifying of God. And in this respect, the smallest degree of practical knowledge is infinitely more va-

luable than the greatest measure of that which is merely terminated in speculation. Take a christian that trembles at God's word, that looks heaven-ward, this man doth understand more or better of divine truths, than the most subtle schoolmen, than the greatest Rabbins in the world. To give it you by instance, as a husbandman who knows what part of his ground is fit for meadow, what part is fit for pasture, and what part is fit for corn; although this man doth not know how to survey his ground, or how to draw an exact platform of it, yet he shall bring more advantage from this ground to the owner of it, than the most skilful mathematician that is able to survey it exactly, according to the rules of art, but wants knowledge in the tillage and manuring of it: so that christian which reduceth his knowledge to practice by a holy life, reflects a greater glory upon God, than the most exact and skilful person in the points of divinity without the fear of God; therefore certainly the naked illumination of divine truths cannot make a man wise.

2. This cannot save the soul and bring it to its rest. Bare knowledge can never reach to heaven; it must be accompanied with the fear of God, and with other graces, 2 Pet. 1. 8. "for if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful," &c. That knowledge is barren that is without solid and saving grace. Take a man that is able to delineate to you a system of divinity, that hath in his head the most sublime notions; yet if this man hath not the fear of God, that knowledge is no more able to satisfy his soul, than the picture of a great feast is able to satisfy the appetite of one that is almost starved with hunger; this can never render a man happy. We read of Dives when he was in hell, he had a heaven and a blessedness in his eye, but they did him no good; so it is here. It is just with such a person as with an ignorant physician, though possibly he may know the shape and the colour of an herb as it is set down in an herbal, yet he neither knows its virtue nor its operation, nor how to prepare it for a medicine: so many persons among us, who know in general what the truths of religion are; as to their practice, as to the virtue and operation of them, they are utterly strangers. Psal. 95. 10. there is a notable expression, "it is a people that do err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways." A strange expression, that the Israelites should not know the ways of God,

who had received instructions miraculously from heaven ; the meaning of it I conceive to be this, this people do err in their hearts, and they have not my ways (in their hearts) they had such a knowledge of God's ways, as a man hath of a country by a map, but they had not the experimental knowledge of God's ways. Now you know a person that is to walk into a strange country, it is far better for him to have a beaten path, and the directions of an ordinary traveller, than to have the most accurate geographical description of it, and he shall sooner come to his journey's end ; so that person that desires to attain everlasting rest, let him walk in the steps of those before him that have attained the place, and let him experience those truths they have practised in the fear of God, and so he shall attain it. So that in respect of the glory of God, and the rest of the soul, it is not the bare knowledge of divine truths that can make us wise : but let me annex

3. A third thing, which is this ; the bare knowledge of divine truths is so far from attaining this double end, that where it is disjoined from the fear of God, it aggravates the ruin of a person ; and therefore this can never render a man wise. This knowledge will light a man to a brighter damnation. There are many persons that are right in their opinions, but have vile affections ; and the knowledge of these persons will increase their sorrow ; they are like the Ethiopians that have a bright eye in a dark body, so they have much knowledge while they walk in the ways of sin : but in conclusion, this knowledge of theirs will be like a talent of gold to a man that is in the sea, it will drown him the sooner, and sink him the deeper ; so it is here, their knowledge of divine things will sink them deeper in the wrath of God, an ignorant wretch shall have a cooler hell than these sublimated christians that are without the fear of the Lord. The sum is this, put it thus to yourselves ; what a folly is it for men to be disputing of religion and heaven, while others that are less knowing surprise it, like that person that was gazing on the moon till he fell into a pit, or as a lark that flies up into heaven for a time, but at last falls into the net of the fowler. Thus it is with many men.

This consideration, that the fear of God is wisdom, shows unto us the falseness of that sinful craft which is so much used in the world ; when men design by the slight of brain to over-

reach their neighbours, and this they esteem their glory. There are many among us that live according to that hell-bred proverb, that 'plain dealing is a jewel, but he that useth it shall die a beggar;' I confess, if this proverb were true, it is a wonder, since we have so many dishonest men among us, that so many die beggars: but know thus much, that that person that employs his understanding to deceive his neighbour, that person which doth affect the glory of acuteness in the ways of sin, doth but the more conform himself to the devil, who is a spirit of great knowledge, but of greater wickedness. Happy are those souls that do not enter into sin's secrets; I will only say thus much to these persons, those that now employ their parts in the ways of sin, God will hereafter employ his wisdom to contrive a punishment for them; and when the infinite wisdom of God shall contrive a punishment, and the infinite power of God inflict it, there will be a proportionable recompence for all their guilt. So much to discover those several sorts and degrees of false wisdoms that are in the world.



CHAP. XIV.

An exhortation to beware of those sins which quench the grace of God's fear, by way of defect.

LET us from hence;—be persuaded to beware of those sins which quench this grace of God's fear;—excited to the cherishing of this grace in our hearts. Beware of those sins which quench this grace, and those fall under a double consideration, either; those sins which by way of defect quench this grace; or those sins which by way of excess, do likewise exterminate this grace out of the soul.

i. Those sins which by way of *defect* quench this grace, and here I would mention, *hardness of heart*, Prov. 28. 14. "happy is the man that feareth always : but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief;" there is the opposition that is made between them. This hardness of heart

1. Is either *natural*, that which is an hereditary disease: all men have a heart of stone. This every one brings into the world with him; and it is a wonder of grace, if every one doth not carry it out of the world with them.

2. *Voluntary*, acquired by frequent acts of sin; men first wound their consciences, and then they sear them by repeated acts of sin. As you know that ice which at first is so tremulous and feeble that it will not bear a pebble, yet by a few days freezing will bear a cart; so it is here,

3. This hardness is *penal*, inflicted by God himself, not by the infusion of sin, but by the suspension of grace; and this is contrary to the fear of God, by way of defect. The scriptures represent this hardness to us by three similitudes; first, sometimes by an iron sinew in the neck, and so it connotes an inflexibility to God's commands; sometimes by the hardness of an adamant, and so it implies an impenetrableness to the motions of God's Spirit; sometimes by a brawn upon the heart, by a fatness, and so it imports an insensibility of God's threatenings. Now there are two parts of it wherein it opposeth God's fear;—security, which is a privation of God's fear;—presumption, when there is an accession of boldness.

Security, is one branch of hardness of heart; this is a privation of God's fear. I mean by security, this, when a sinner can sleep out all God's thunder; when all the threatenings of the word are to a soul as colours to a blind man: for who is so blind as he that will not see? When they are as a tale to a deaf man; and who is so deaf as he that will not hear? When a person is like that secure emperor, who when he was in the midst of his enemies, yet he proclaimed *altum silentium belli*, deep silence of war, there must be no discourse of arms: so it is with such a soul, the denouncing of judgments, and the threatenings of the word, and the decision of the great and terrible day, are to such spirits but as a vain fancy, as if there was no existence of these things but in the brain of him that preacheth them. This is that secure wretch who wants the fear of God.

Allow me next to mention *presumption*, when there is not only a mere privation of fear, but an accession of boldness. Presumption is security strained up to the highest pitch, it is security dipped in a scarlet dye. Now there is a three-fold presumption;—It is either in the thought;—Or in the discourse;—Or in the actions of men; and it proportionably opposeth the fear of God.

1. In the *thoughts*. There are *verba mentalia*, whispers of the soul, which are not intelligible by the world. There are presumptuous principles according to which men live, and this in scripture is the voice of the heart, Psalm 50. 21. “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself;” what is the meaning of that? The principle that governs the life of a wicked man is this, that God is like unto himself, he draws such a pattern of God as is conformed to his own fancy, he makes a God all of mercy, and sets up this idol in his soul, and bows down himself to it; he robs one attribute to enrich another; he takes away God’s justice and holiness, that he may enlarge his goodness; this is presumption in thought, such a person doth not fear God.

2. There is a presumption in our *discourses*, and that principally in two things: (1.) When the sinner after his commission of sin justifies it; he is not only an actor of sin, but a defender of it. That man enters into the lists with God that doth defend what he hates; or (2.) when a person is arrived to such a degree of presumption as to boast of his sin. And yet how many are there among us who are thus presumers, that boast how many pliant souls they have drawn to their snares, how many weak brains they have conquered by their cups? These are persons that venture upon a double damnation, first for committing sin, and then for boasting of it. What an irrational thing is it for a man to boast of his sins? It is as if an imprisoned felon should boast of his fetters, as if an infected person should boast of his plague-sores, as if a possessed person should boast of his devil; yet we have a number of those persons amongst us, who are heirs to those prostitutes, the very naming of whom drew tears from St. Paul’s eyes, who ‘glory in their shame.’

3. There are those who are presumptuous sinners in their *actions*. Now of these there are two sorts; (1.) Such as venture upon sins notwithstanding all those flashes of brimstone which

are cast upon their faces; such as run to the forbidden fruit, notwithstanding those angels (I mean the preachers) who stand with flaming swords in their mouths, threatening God's judgments against those that venture upon them. These are the presuming wretches who look upon themselves, or at least-wise demean themselves, as if they were stronger than God, as if they were able with an army of lusts, to oppose God with millions of angels; these want this fear. We read in the scripture concerning some persons, who had brows of brass, and faces harder than a rock, who were impenetrable against all God's threatenings; and we have a generation of such among us, who will tear the blessed name of God, and dismember his Son between their teeth: and notwithstanding all the threatenings of the word, yet they venture upon their lusts as if they were unconcerned in these things; these are they which have conquered conscience, that have frustrated all the methods of grace, and when ministers excite them to use the reason of men and the faith of christians, they turn all into a mock and a jeer. These certainly are eminently void of the fear of God, and in their kind they are worse than the devils themselves; for the "devils tremble" under the apprehension of this truth, that "God will come to judge them," Jam. 2. 19. but these daring wretches venture upon their lusts, notwithstanding all warnings that are given to them. (2.) The presumer in his actions, is he that doth encourage himself in sin, by the patronage of grace; who discourseth thus in his heart, though not with his tongue (notwithstanding those various judgments and threatenings which are made known by the ministers of the gospel) certainly there is mercy with God, and he that made them will save them; certainly the rule of the last day's account is not so strict as ministers would make it, there will be a greater liberty; and thus they venture upon the ways of sin, and spiders as they are, draw poison from the flowers of mercy itself; this is the presuming wretch that wants the fear of God. Now to such persons, let me only by way of antidote and cure, present these few directions.

First. Seriously reflect upon those representations which the scripture makes of God, as a God of immaculate holiness, of impartial justice, of infinite power; and press these upon your souls. As a God of immaculate holiness. In that attribute all other terrible attributes are rooted; it is the holiness of God that

excites his justice, and arms his power: this is that attribute wherein the creature is most defective, and wherein God doth most excel; and therefore this attribute will produce a fear of God. Do but argue with thyself, that God whose holiness is his glory, before whom the stars are not clean, will that God embrace thee with thy lusts? Certainly the holiness of God is more dear to him than the salvation of ten thousand worlds. So consider God's justice, that justice that must award and decide men to their eternal state; that justice, that is so eagle-eyed, as to discover all thy crimes, with their aggravations. Consider his power, he that is able not only to resolve thee into thy first principles of nothing (for it were happy for thee, if that were thy punishment) but he that can cast body and soul into hell-fire. Let these considerations raise the fear of God in thy soul. There is such a passage in scripture, as this, "O earth tremble at the presence of the Lord." Psal. 114. 7. If the earth which is so vast and durable a body, if the earth which is incapable of sin (only being stained with the impurities of men) if this earth should fear and tremble at God's presence, how much more should sinful man, who is lighter than vanity, sinful man, who hath provoked the eyes of God's glory; who hath brought a curse upon the whole creation, what reason hath a man to fear? Know thus much, there is no greater contempt of God in the world, than not to fear him. I do not wonder to see a superior to slight his inferior; but to see a slave not to fear his prince, this is wonderful; so to see a worm of the earth, a little breathing dust, not to fear an infinite God, this is stupendous.

Secondly. Attend upon an awakening ministry. Ministers should be sons of thunder (not of music) to excite the fear of God in the hearts of men. I confess I look upon nothing as more dangerous and deadly, than a general, soft and toothless ministry: but for the ministry that is full of life and spirits, that ministry which is answerable to the heart of God, this is the proper means which is designed by the Lord for the raising of this fear in men.

Thirdly. Exercise faith in God's threatenings. Believe the truth of the threatenings, and the power of the threatener. Do not fancy as if God would lose a dram of his truth for the saving of the world, as if he would recede from the sharpness and seve-

rity of his threatenings. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle" of all the threatenings of the "law of God shall pass away." Know that the law which was first given in fire, shall be at the last required in fire; and then secure and presumptuous sinners shall find all their hopes and all their bravadoes vanish. To conclude, impress this upon your spirits, how infinitely dangerous it is for a person not to fear God until he feels his displeasure? What a sad thing it is for a man, when death is the first symptom of his disease? So how inexpressibly tragical is it when a soul never fears God till he feels him? Then it will be too late to have this passion raised in your hearts. The judgments of God to many persons, are like a sleeping lion, that awakes and destroys at once; and therefore fear him that is able thus to deal with you.



CHAP. XV.

Opening slavish fear in respect of God, or men, or ourselves; which opposeth the fear of God by way of excess.

ii. **I** Now proceed to the next sort of sins, that I shall caution you against, and they are those which oppose the fear of God by way of *excess*. The fear of God stands between these sins, as a temperate diet opposeth either an immoderate repletion, or else an unnecessary and a prejudicial abstinence: for as a moderate diet keeps the body in its strength and activity, whereas an immoderate repletion produceth surfeits, fevers, and other fatal diseases; so on the other side, total abstinence instead of preventing diseases starveth the body: so doth the fear of God, when it is in that temper that the scripture requires, keep the soul active, vigorous, and enlarged in the ways of obedience; but when this fear shall be excessive, then it produceth many deadly

distempers in the soul ; or when this fear is absolutely lost, the soul (if I may so speak) is starved, and loseth its life and strength. Now in the excess there is a two-fold fear, which opposeth the fear of God. First. Slavish fear ; Secondly. Superstitious fear.

First. Let us consider *slavish fear*, which is of three sorts ;—That slavish fear which is merely terminated upon the wrath of God ;—That which respects the power of man ;—That which I may call pusillanimity, that proceeds from the apprehensions of the insuperable difficulties which do attend a religious state.

These are the three sorts of slavish fear, which I shall endeavour to depress ; in respect of God, men, and ourselves.

1. A slavish fear in *respect of God* is this, when the soul is only taken up with the apprehensions of those treasures of wrath which God is able to pour forth upon it. A fear that looks upon God as an irreconcilable enemy, or as an implacable judge ; this fear I would endeavour to eradicate, by presenting these considerations.

(1.) It springs from infidelity, when faith is not exercised upon those representations of God, which the scripture makes known. In the gospel the mercy of God is represented to us as that which is his glory, his delight, his treasure. As his mercy must not violate his justice, so his justice must not devour his mercy. His mercy is an attribute as essential as his righteousness. But now when the soul disbelieves this, then it fears God as a slave fears his master.

(2.) This slavish fear it is accompanied with dishonourable thoughts of God. It is a disparagement to his essence ; such a person represents God to himself under the notion of a tyrant, he draws him with a black coal, and this is no less than blasphemy. For a despondent sinner to think thus with himself, that God will exact perfection from a man answerable to the measure of an angel, or that God will triumph in the mere torments of his creatures, or that he delights in their ruin, it is a sin equal to atheism ; yea, it is in some respects worse than atheism. Atheism is a denial of the Deity ; but for one to entertain such apprehensions of God, it is the reproach of the Deity. I remember what I read of Plutarch (saith he) ‘ I had rather posterity should say there never had been such a man as Plutarch, than to say, there had been one Plutarch that was so cruel, that

he would devour his own children.' I know it is an inexpressible sin for a man to deny a Deity ; on the other side, to grant a Deity, and to entertain such thoughts of him ariseth to the same degree of wickedness. Such a person doth absolutely discharge the gospel, as if there were no chancery or moderation for the lapses and unavoidable infirmities of the best men.

(3.) Wherever this slavish fear is, it doth corrupt all the services which proceed from him in whom it is. For the bane of all the religion in the world is either mercinariness, or slavishness ; when a man serves God merely that he may obtain worldly blessings, or when a man serves God as the heathens served the devil, *ne noceat*, lest he should hurt them. Christians should be led by sanctified affections ; but this fear kills all delight. They come to the duties of religion as bears to a stake, and they go from them as birds out of a snare ; what is the reason of it ? Because they have such apprehensions, and such a slavish fear of God.

(4.) When it riseth to extremity, it produceth hatred against him, both in respect of his essence and attributes. A felon wisheth that there was no judge, no law ; so doth this person that slavishly fears God, he wisheth that God were not omnipotent, that he might not have power to torment him ; that he were not omniscient, that he might not know the evil of his heart and ways. Hatred always strikes at the being of that which is hated ; when fear degenerates into despair, and that despair causeth hatred, that hatred at the last will cause a person to curse the fountain of blessedness : for thus it is in hell.

(5.) This slavish fear renders a sinner completely miserable in this world. All errors about the nature of God are pernicious and dangerous ; but those errors which are accompanied with fear, they are like a wound which hath an inflammation in it, it will bring death more painful and more speedy ; so it is here, those errors concerning the nature of God, which are accompanied with such a fear of his justice, as if there were no reserves of mercy for relenting and reforming sinners ; these beget an hell upon earth, bring a soul into the very suburbs of hell, into the confines of eternal darkness ; and therefore labour against this fear. I do not speak against the fear of God's justice all this while, I would only rectify that fear, not abolish it ; let us so fear God's justice as to hate sin, and yet still so as to love his

mercy and goodness. The sum is this, the fear of God should have for its circumference the reverence of God and all his attributes, for its centre it should have godliness and practical holiness; the limit of our fear should be an awful regard of God's excellencies and perfection, and the end of our fear should be a constant obedience to him; then our fear is angelical when it is kept within its bounds. So much for the first branch, that slavish fear which is terminated upon God's justice.

2. There is a servile fear which respects the *power of man*, when the soul is so possessed with the fears of the power of the creature, that it draws back to destruction, that it dares not own its faith in the face of a tyrant: and to such persons, that they may correct their fear, I shall present three considerations.

(1.) Consider, as the throne endures no rivals, so that fear which is a homage and tribute which we should pay only to the Sovereign Creator of the world, should not be given to the creature. He that doth immoderately fear the creature, dethrones God and deifies man. It is no less than sacrilege to alienate the affections from God; and it is no less than idolatry, to place our affections inordinately upon the creature, Isa. 8. 12, 13. "Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid; sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." As the beams of the sun discourage the fire, and will not suffer it to burn; so will the fear of God swallow up all our fear of the creature; the greater fear will devour the less.

(2.) Consider, this immoderate fear of the creature is the root of apostacy. Such a man will rather save his life than his soul, such a person carries his faith about him at the mercy of every one that threatens to kill him: for this is a maxim, he that is a coward will be an apostate. That man doth not fear God, that dares not die for him; that man that hath not got above the love of life, and above the fear of death, will never be a martyr, he will never hold out for God; therefore such a person is in the very next degree to an apostate.

(3.) Consider the unreasonableness of this fear. To fear the sentence of a man when God is our Judge; to fear the power of man, when God is our defence; to fear death, which is but the entrance into an eternal life; what is this, but as little children,

to fear the vizard more than the man that wears it? Austin speaks excellently concerning this temper, saith he, these persons *Timent carcerem, non timent gehennam; timent cruciatum temporalem, non pœnas ignis æterni; timent modicum mori, non æternum mori*; that is, they fear the prison, but they fear not hell; they fear temporal torments, but they fear not the flames of unquenchable fire; they fear the first, but not the second death; and is not this an unreasonable thing? There is one scripture which I shall desire to press upon such persons, Rev. 21. 8. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Here the fearful are placed in front of those which shall be cast into the lake, which burns with fire and brimstone for ever. This is the second sort of slavish fear, which I would depress.

3. Another sort of slavish fear which should be eradicated, is this, that fear which some persons take up from the *apprehension of insuperable difficulties that attend a religious state*; like the Israelites that would not venture upon the paradise of Canaan, because it was defended by giants. So there are many persons among us, that if you could look into their hearts you would find this principle; they consider the weakness of their natures, the slipperiness of their places, and the instability of their wills; the rage of their affections, and the frequency of temptations, and from thence they thus argue, I shall never be able to conquer all these; therefore since I shall not be able to attain the prize, I will venture no charges; and since I cannot finish a religious course, I will not begin it; and thus they waste and melt away their days in discouraging fears or worldly business. Sometimes possibly they will make a trial, but they find if they are resolute one day, they are staggering the next; if they are strong one day they are weak another, and at best like Peter, when he was walking upon the water, he slipped with one foot and sunk with the other: therefore they are of the temper of those in the prophet Jeremiah, "they said there was no hope, and therefore they will follow their own ways;" Jer. 2. 25. I shall never conquer these lusts, never be able to perform these duties, therefore I will sit still, and go no further. To such persons I would offer these three considerations.

(1.) Do you not believe that there are degrees of torments in hell? And therefore, supposing this granted, that you cannot attain to that perfection which God requires, will you therefore loosen the reins to all wickedness? A cooler hell is a kind of heaven; there are some lashed with scorpions, others whipped but with rods, I speak as to the degrees of torment.

(2.) Was ever the Spirit of God defective to those that sincerely endeavoured? Hath not God promised to give his Spirit to those that ask it?

(3.) Is not divine grace strong enough to conquer the power of hell, and the deceitfulness of our hearts? Is not the efficacy of the divine nature sufficient to repel temptations, and to resist corruptions? Consider, will a small candle when it is enlightened scatter all the darkness that is about us; and will not a beam of grace in the soul scatter and triumph over temptations and corruptions? Sure I am that sin is not an infinite evil in itself; but grace hath an infinite power, there is an omnipotency goes along with it. And therefore it is very great madness for a person to say thus, I will not endeavour against my corruptions, because I fear I shall never get the victory over them; it is just as if a man in the midst of a great storm, for fear of it should leap into the sea, this you know were madness: so for a man, because he fears he cannot by his own power and strength, get victory over his corruptions; therefore he will leave himself to the swing of them. Suppose a man when he is half a mile distant from his enemy, should draw his sword and brandish and flourish it in the air, as if he would wound him by these flourishings, you would look upon this man as mad: but if this man should mount an ordnance, and level it against his enemy, and then should shoot at him, you would think this were but reasonable; although the act of shooting be the man's, the force of the act proceeds from the powder, fire, and cannon, which discharge the bullet. So for a man indeed to resolve against his lusts by his own power, and by the strength of his own resolutions, this can do no good: but for a man by the sword of the Spirit, and by the strength of Christ, to go out against his corruptions; this is as the discharging of a cannon, there is some reason to expect that execution should be done, because such a person is carried forth by the power of God. Thus I have opened the first head

of those sins which oppose the fear of God by way of excess, and that is slavish fear.

CHAP. XVI.

Of superstitious fear, in respect of things natural, casual. and religious, which do oppose the fear of God by way of excess.

Secondly. **T**HERE is a *superstitious fear*, which likewise by way of excess, doth oppose the fear of God. I shall rank this under three heads;—Superstitious fear in respect of things natural;—Superstitious fear in respect of things casual;—Superstitious fear in respect of things religious.

1st. In respect of things natural: and here I shall principally touch upon two things, both which are evident to experience.

1. The superstitious fear, which many persons do exercise in reference to those eclipses, or natural changes which may be in the heavens. We have had in our times a large experience of the vanity of men's fears in that respect. Jer. 10. 2. "Thus saith the Lord, learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the heathen are dismayed at them." When the children of Israel were to be transported into Babylon among the Chaldeans, who were most skilful in those arts, then doth God fortify them against judicial astrology, and bids them not to be dismayed at the signs of the heavens. I confess, this is an heathenish fear; but alas we find, that for these many hundred years this hath continued among the christians, notwithstanding those antidotes that have been prepared against it. And what is the reason of it? It is this, because those persons look upon these eclipses and conjunctions of the heavenly bodies to be prodigious, and to portend and import some disastrous and sad events: I shall only say thus much, all

such eclipses proceeding from natural causes, are not in the least prodigious. It is natural, that the sun and moon should meet at determinate seasons; and it is natural that when they do meet, the opacous body of the moon should make a partial eclipse of the sun. It were prodigious indeed, if in the conjunction of these two bodies there should be no eclipse; and therefore for a person superstitiously to fear such things, he may upon the same reason fear sad events every night that ensues, because then the sun is eclipsed from us by the interposition of the earth; and therefore this is a great folly. I confess it was a prodigy, that the sun was darkened at the passion of Christ, for then the moon was not in conjunction with, but in opposition against the sun: and it was a prodigy, when there was darkness among the Egyptians for three days. But here, since all things in this manner proceed from the concatenation that is between causes and effects, there is no reason to tremble. And therefore God, in scripture, doth sometimes deride this fear, and sometimes dissuades from it, sometimes derides it as matter of scorn and greatest vanity, and sometimes dissuades from it and condemns it, as here in the text recited to you.

2. There is a superstitious fear in reference to natural things, and that principally upon the account of dreams; for there are many among us whose fears commence from their fancies, who do not rest while they sleep, but while their reason is asleep their fears are awake: these are the persons that have no dreams but what are accompanied with an interpretation, or with a prediction; and if one event happens to be true, it is a rule for an hundred with them. Now the vanity of such persons the scripture takes notice of, and as an antidote against it, take these two things. (1.) Those that make use of their dreams as a rule for their acts, give the greatest advantage to satan; the reason is this, because he then is able to exercise his power when the creature is unable to resist him. If once you grant that there may be impressions upon your fancy (in dreams) of things that are to come, the devil then takes the reins into his own hands, and he will tempt you when you cannot oppose him. (2.) As you give advantage to satan, so it is the greatest injury to a man's self; for such a soul is under perpetual fear, and makes himself miserable.

2dly. There is a superstitious fear in reference to casual things (and this is beneath a sermon, but yet necessary for some persons) some are transported with every trifling contingency; if the salt falls towards them, or if a hare crosseth them in the way, presently they grow pale or red upon it, as if there were some evil that must ensue; this is the quintessence of folly.

3dly. And principally, there is a superstitious fear in reference to religious things, and this opposeth the fear of God, and it consisteth usually in one of these two things.

1. When a person is afraid to do that which God allows, or which God commands; and thus men make more sins than the ten commandments. So we read of the Jews, they fancied the name Jehovah was not to be expressed but only by the high-priest, and that once a year, and that only in the "holy of holies;" and we read of the primitive christians, they were scrupulous about days, months, and meats, as if there were some tie upon conscience which did retrench them from these things.

2. As they are abstemious from what God allows, so they are exact in that which God doth not require, and this is eminently among the papists at this day. I might largely speak of this sin, I will only say thus much of it;—All the services of a superstitious person are unacceptable to God;—All the services of a superstitious person are odious to him.

(1.) A superstitious person's services are unacceptable to God. When a man is carver of his own obedience, he doth enter upon God's right, and so his services are unacceptable. There is an expression in Col. 2. 18. "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." There are two things which we may observe there, one is from that expression, a voluntary humility; the word in the Greek *Εὐβαστεύων* is a voluntary in humility, one that is a volunteer that offers up will-worship to God, the apostle saith he doth intrude into those things which he hath not seen. The word which we translate, intrude may (with a great correspondency to the original notation of the word) be rendered thus, invading; that is, such a person doth invade God's right, and insolently set foot upon God's possession, as actors in a tragedy, where they went in a lofty and strutting manner; from

thence the Greek word signifies to enter upon the right of another; such a person invades God's right, and thereby renders all his services unacceptable.

(2.) The services of a superstitious person are odious to God. There is one scripture which is most convincing, where the Lord speaks concerning the sacrifices of the Jews, and shows how he doth dislike them, "he that offers a sacrifice is as if he cut off a dog's neck, and he that makes an offering as if he offered swine's blood;" Isa. 66. 3. where the Lord declares, that he looked upon their sacrifices to be no other than mere slaughter, and their priests to be the butchers; for although the substance of their sacrifices were ordained by God, yet because they innovated in the form, all these sacrifices as they were thankless, so they were hateful to God. Certainly this is one of the profundities of satan, to lead a soul by superstitious fear into these practices. And usually you shall observe, that profane youth is turned into a superstitious old age; so that sin which was let out at the gate, returns in at the postern, and poor men work the work of death and hell when they fancy that they are in the way to heaven. As you shall see sometimes a poor dove, when its eyes are sealed and dark, it will mount up to heaven, but alas it is with an undiscerning wing, with fear and trembling; the dove doth not consider that this flight of her's is made as a trail for the hawk to prevail over her. So here, many blind ignorant souls mount up to heaven in their superstitious devotions (as they think) but they are made but a trail for satan. Superstition is the ivy of religion, that seems to embrace it, but it dispirits it, and eats out its sap and moisture: therefore learn to quench and cast this out of the soul. The sum of all is, let us labour to keep alive in our souls an ingenuous and filial fear of God, let us fear his goodness that we may not displease him, let us fear his justice, so as we may not provoke him; let us fear him in all his perfections, let us fear him as the angels fear him, as he is the holy and the pure God; and he that fears God thus, that fear from the imperfection of a man, shall at last be raised to the perfection of an angel; that fear shall be like the sun, whose light breaks forth into greater clearness, till it arrives to perfect day.