

Of the Fear of God.

by John Gill

The sermon emphasizes the importance of fearing God, not men, and outlines the characteristics of a filial fear of God.

Scripture: Psalm 2:11, Psalm 34:9-10, Psalm 103:13, Psalm 130:4, Proverbs 8:13, Ecclesiastes 12:13, Isaiah 50:10, Malachi 4:2, Matthew 10:28, Hebrews 12:28

Topics: "True Worship", "Fear Of God"

Description

John Gill emphasizes the profound significance of the fear of God in true worship, asserting that it encompasses both internal and external expressions of faith. He explains that fearing God is not about being afraid of Him, but rather about reverence and respect, which leads to obedience and a life aligned with His commandments. Gill contrasts this godly fear with various forms of ungodly fear, such as servile or hypocritical fear, and highlights that true fear of God results in a hatred of sin and a commitment to righteousness. He concludes by affirming the blessings and promises that come to those who fear the Lord, including His protection, provision, and acceptance.

Transcript

A Body of PRACTICAL Divinity

Book 1--Chapter 5

OF THE FEAR OF GOD

The fear of God has so great a concern in divine worship, that it is sometimes put for the whole of it; and a worshipper of God is frequently described in scripture by one that fears him; and particularly internal worship, or experimental religion, as distinguished from an external observance of the divine commands, is expressed by it; for, according to the wise man, the whole of religion, experimental and practical religion, lies in these two things, to "fear God and keep his commandments" (Eccl. 12:13), and as worship itself is expressed by the fear of God, so the manner in which it is to be performed is directed to be in it and with it, for God is to be served "with reverence and godly fear"; (see Ps. 2:11; 5:7; 89:7; Heb. 12:28), concerning which may be observed, 1.

The object of fear, not the creature, but God the Creator. There is a fear due to men, "fear to whom fear"; that is, it should be rendered to whom it is due (Rom. 13:7 there is a fear and reverence due to parents

from their children (Le 19:3; Heb. 12:9), which is shown by the honour and respect paid unto them, and the obedience yielded them (Eph. 6:1,2), and the argument from hence is strong to the fear and reverence of God the Father of spirits (Heb. 12:9; 1 Pet. 1:14,17), there is a fear and reverence in the conjugal state, due from wives to their husbands (Eph. 5:33; 1 Pet. 3:5,6), and this relation affords a reason and argument why the church should fear and serve the Lord her God, because he is her husband (Ps. 45:11), there is a fear and reverence which servants should show to their masters (Eph. 6:5), and if such masters are to be obeyed with fear, much more our Master which is in heaven; and this is the argument the Lord himself uses, "If I be a Master, where is my fear?" (Mal. 1:6), there is a fear and reverence which ministers of the word should be had in by those to whom they minister (1 Sam. 12:18), this is one part of that double honour they are worthy of, to be esteemed very highly for their work sake.

Herod, though a wicked man, "feared John", that is, not dreaded him, but respected him, for he heard him gladly (Mark 6:20). There is a fear and reverence to be rendered to magistrates (Rom. 13:7), and especially to the king, the chief magistrate (Prov. 24:21), and if an earthly king is to be feared and revered, much more the King of kings and Lord of lords, "Who would not fear thee, O king of nations?" But then men are not so to be feared by the people of God, let them be in what character, relation, and station secret, as to be deterred by them from the service of God; "the fear of man too often brings a snare" in this respect.

God is to be hearkened to, served, and obeyed rather than men of the highest class and rank; they are not to be afraid of losing their favour and esteem, and of gaining their ill will thereby, as the Pharisees, who, though convinced that Jesus was the Christ, confessed him not, lest they should be put out of the synagogue, loving the praise of men more than the praise of God: nor should they be afraid of the revilings and reproaches of men, and be intimidated by them from serving the Lord their God, but with Moses should esteem reproach for the Lord's sake greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; nor should they be frightened from a profession of religion, and from an attention to it, by the threats and menaces of men, and by all the persecution they may endure from them.

They are not to be feared who can kill the body, but God is to be feared who can destroy both body and soul in hell; and such who fear men, so as to neglect the worship of God, are the "fearful" ones, who shall have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone (Matthew 10:28; Rev. 21:8), if God is on the side of his people, as he most certainly is, they have no reason to fear what man can do unto them. God only is the object of fear, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him"; that is, him only (Deut. 6:13; 10:20), this is the principal thing God requires of his people, and they are bound in duty to render to him; "Now, O Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God?" this is the first thing, others follow (Deut. 10:12 hence because he is so much the object of the fear of good men, he is called "fear" itself; so the "fear of Isaac" is used for the God of Isaac (Gen. 31:42), and by whom Jacob swore (Gen. 31:53), who could be no other than the God of his father Isaac.

In the Chaldee paraphrase[1] the word alxr "fear", is sometimes put for the true God, as well as used of idols; and with some qeoV, the Greek word for "God", is by them derived from deoV, "fear";[2] and by the Lacedemonians "fear" was worshipped as a deity, and had a temple for it;[3] as Pavor and Pallor, fearfulness and paleness, were by Tullus Hostilius among the Romans;[4] but none but the true God is the object of fear. And, 1a. First, He is to be feared because of his name and nature; "Holy and reverend is his name", particularly his name Jehovah, expressive of his essence and nature; "that thou mayest fear this fearful and glorious name, The Lord thy God" (Ps. 112:9 Deut. 28:58 a name peculiar to him; there is no name of God but is to be revered; and that by which he is commonly spoken of ought always to be used in

a reverend manner, and not upon slight and trivial occasions, and with great irreverence, as it too often is, and when at every turn men are apt to say, O Lord!

O God! good God! &c. especially men professing the fear of God should be careful of such language, for it is no other than taking the name of God in vain. 1b. Secondly, God not only essentially but personally considered is to be feared, God, Father, Son, and Spirit; it is said of the Jews in the latter day, that they shall "seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days" (Hosea 3:5), where the Lord, who and his goodness will be feared by them, is Jehovah the Father, as distinguished from the Messiah the Son of God, and David their king, who will be sought for by them.

So in (Mal. 4:2). "Unto you that fear my name", whose name is Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, "shall the Son of righteousness arise with healing in his wings"; even the Son of God, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and so is distinguished from him whose name is feared. Jehovah the Son is also the object of divine fear and reverence, "Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread"; that is, the object of your fear and reverence; and what follows shows which of the divine persons is meant; and "he shall be for a sanctuary" to worship in, and a place of refuge for his people in times of distress; "but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence" (Isa. 8:13,14), which phrases are applied to Christ, and can only be said of him (Rom. 9:32,33; 1 Pet. 2:7,8).

Jehovah the Father, the lord of the vineyard, after sending many of his servants who had been ill used, says, "I will send my beloved Son", meaning Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, it "may be, they will reverence him when they see him" (Luke 20:13), they ought to have done it: reverence should be given to him, the heir of the vineyard, his church, the son in his own house, whose house believers are, and therefore should reverence him. Jehovah the Spirit also is and should be the object of fear; the Israelites in the wilderness rebelled against him, and vexed him, and they smarted for it, for "he turned to be their enemy, and fought against them" (Isa. 63:10), lying to the Holy Ghost, which was a most irreverent treatment of him, was punished with death in Ananias and Sapphira; and saints should be careful that they "grieve" not the Holy Spirit by their unbecoming conduct toward him, from whom they receive many blessings and favors. 1c.

Thirdly, God, in his perfections and because of them, is the object of fear; as his majesty and greatness in general; God is clothed with majesty, and majesty and honour are before him, and "with him is terrible majesty", such as is sufficient to command an awe of him; particularly his omnipotence, for "he is excellent in power" (Job 37:22,23), as also his omniscience, for nothing can be hid from his sight; the most enormous actions committed in the dark are seen by him, with whom the darkness and the light are alike; and his omnipresence, from whence there is no fleeing, for he fills heaven and earth with it; to which may be added, the justice and holiness of God, which make his majesty the more terrible and to be revered, since he is not only excellent in power, but also "in judgment, and in plenty of justice" (Job 37:23; 2 Chron. 19:7), and a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of a just and sin avenging God, the living God, the everlasting King, at whose wrath the nations tremble, and are not able to bear his indignation (Jer. 10:10). 1d.

Fourthly, The works of God make him appear to be a proper object of fear and reverence; his works of creation, the Psalmist on mention of them says (Ps. 33:5-8). "Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him"; who has made such a display of his greatness and goodness in them, as show him worthy of fear and reverence. The prophet instances in what may seem small, yet a most wonderful thing, and enough of itself to command an awe of the divine being; "Fear ye not me, saith

the Lord? will ye not tremble at my presence? which hath placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass it"; and at the same time the stupidity of the people is observed, who, notwithstanding the goodness of God in his works of providence towards them, yet were wanting in their fear and reverence of him: "Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God that giveth rain, the former and latter rain in its season; he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest" (Jer. 5:22,24), which, though common providential blessings, yet are what should engage men to fear the Lord and his goodness; and especially God's works of grace should have such an effect upon the hearts of his people, as they have when they come with a divine power; particularly the pardoning grace and mercy of God; "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared" (Ps. 130:4; Hosea 3:5). 1e.

Fifthly, The judgments of God which he threatens, and sometimes inflicts, and the promises of grace he makes and always fulfils, render him an object of fear and reverence. The judgments of God on sinners are awful to the saints themselves, and strike their minds with fear of God; says David, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments" (Ps. 119:120), not as coming upon himself, but as terrible to behold on others; and these are dreadful and formidable to sinners, when they see them near approaching, who go into the holes and clefts of rocks, and into the caves "for fear of the Lord, and the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth lo shake terribly the earth" (Isa. 2:19,21), and nothing has a greater influence on a filial and godly fear in the saints, and to stir them up to the exercise of it, than the free, absolute, and unconditional promises of grace in the covenant; thus after the apostle had observed such promises, strongly urges to "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 6:16,18; 7:1). 2.

The nature and kind of fear. 2a. There is a fear which is not good nor commendable, and it is of different sorts; there is an idolatrous and superstitious fear, which is called deisidaimonia, "a fear of demons", which the city of Athens was greatly addicted to, observed to them by the apostle when there, to their disgrace; "I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious", or given to the fear and worship of false deities; such is all will worship, worship not founded in the word of God, which brings on a spirit of bondage unto fear; and all such false and vain imaginations which inject dread and terrors into the minds of men, and cause them to "fear where no fear is", or where there is no reason for it; such as the pains of purgatory after death, invented by the Papists to extort money from men; and the beating of the body in the grave, a figment of the Jews.

There is an external fear of God, an outward show and profession of it, which is taught by the precept of men, as in the men of Samaria, who pretended to fear the Lord, as the priest instructed them, and yet served their own gods; and such an external fear of the true God Job's friends supposed was all that he had, and that even he had cast off that (Job 15:4). There is an hypocritical fear, when men draw nigh to God with their mouths and honour him with their lips, and their hearts are removed far from him; and when they fear and serve him for some sinister end and selfish view, which Satan insinuated was Job's case, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" and perhaps the same is suggested by Eliphaz, "Is not this thy fear?" (Job 1:9; 4:6).

And there is a servile fear, such as that of some servants, who serve their masters, not from love but from fear of punishment; and such a "spirit of bondage to fear", the Jews were much subject to under the legal dispensation; but now saints being "delivered out of the hands" of sin, Satan, and the law, they "serve" the Lord "without fear", without slavish fear and with a filial one (Rom. 8:15; Luke 1:74,75). And this sort of fear arises, 2a1. From a sense of sin, and the guilt of it on the conscience, without a view of pardon; thus no sooner were Adam and Eve sensible of their sin and their nakedness by it, but they fled through fear from the presence of God, and hid themselves among the trees of the garden, as yet having no discovery of

pardoning grace made to them; for said Adam to God calling for him, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself" (Gen. 3:10).

Thus a wicked man, conscious of his guilt, flees when no man pursues, and is like Pashur, a Magormissabib, "fear round about", a terror to himself and others. 2a2. From the law entering the conscience of a sinner, having broken it and working wrath in it; for the law, when it comes with powerful convictions of sin, and with menaces of punishment for it, "it worketh" present "wrath", or a sense of it in the conscience, and leaves a "fearful looking for of judgment" to come, and of "fiery indignation" which shall consume "the adversaries" of God; when persons in such a condition and circumstances would be glad of rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of God, which appears to them intolerable. 2a3.

From the curse of the law, and the weight of it on the conscience. The voice of the law is terrible, it is a voice of words which they that heard entreated they might hear no more. It accuses of sin, pronounces guilty for it, is a ministration of condemnation and a killing letter; its language is, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10), which to hear is dreadful when the conscience of a sinner is awakened; but how much more terrible is it, when a sinner feels as it were in his own apprehension all the curses of the law upon him, as he does when "the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy/ smoke against" him, "and all the curses written in the lair lie upon him" (Deut. 29:20), with what slavish fear must he be then filled? 2a4.

From a view of death as the demerit of sin; "The wages of sin is death", the just desert of it; sin is the sting of death, gives it its venom and fatal influence, and makes it that terrible thing it is; and some "through fear of death are all their life time subject to bondage", and are under a continual servile fear of it. 2a5. From a dread of hell and everlasting damnation. This fear is of the same kind with that of devils, who believe there is one God and tremble; tremble at present wrath and future torment.

So wicked men, who have a fearful apprehension of everlasting punishment, it appears to them greater than they can bear, as it did to Cain. 2b. But there is a fear of God different from this and opposite to it, and may be called a filial fear, such as that of a son to a father; the scriptures call it eulabeia, and which is rendered "godly fear" (Heb. 12:28), and the same word is used of the fear and reverence of Christ to his divine Father, who was "heard in that he feared", or "because of fear" (Heb. 5:7 his filial fear of his Father which lay in honoring him, in obedience to him, and in submission to his will, even when with supplications he deprecated death; and now a fear like this in the saints arises, 2b1.

From the spirit of adoption, who delivers the people of God from a servile fear, and gives them a filial one, by witnessing their sonship to them; "Ye have not received", says the apostle, "the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father", and so are freed from a spirit of bondage which induces a servile fear (Rom. 8:17). They that fear the Lord are in the relation of children to him; wherefore their fear of him, which he takes notice of and regards, must be a childlike one, arising from their being put among the children, and their sense of it; and which seems to be implied in (Ps. 103:13).

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him", where they that fear the Lord in the latter clause answer to children in the former. 2b2. From the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Spirit, which produces love to God again; "there is no fear", no slavish fear, "in love, but perfect love", a sense of the perfect, everlasting, and unchangeable love of God "casts out" such kind of fear; for the

true fear of God is no other than a reverential affection for God flowing from a sense of his love; such do not dread his wrath, but desire his presence and communion with him, and say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee" (Ps. 73:25). 2b3.

This filial fear is attended with faith and trust in God; it is a fiducial fear; hence they that fear the Lord and who trust in him, are characters put together, and which describe the same persons; and they that fear the Lord are exhorted and encouraged to trust in him (Ps. 31:19; 115:11). Job was a man that feared God, and yet such was his faith and confidence in him, that he could say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"; and what a strong expression of his faith in Christ as his living Redeemer have we in (Job 19:25; 1:1; 13:15). 2b4.

It is a fear that is consistent with great joy in the Lord; "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Ps. 2:11), and with the utmost courage and magnanimity of mind; it is a fearless fear; a man that fears the Lord has no reason to fear anything, or what any man or devil can do unto him; he may say as David did, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear", &c. (Ps. 27:1,3). 2b5. Such a fear is opposed to pride and self-confidence; it is an humble fear, a diffidence of a man's self, placing his trust and hope alone in God; "Be not high minded, but fear" (Rom. 11:20), this is that "fear" and "trembling", or that modesty and humility with which the saints are exhorted to work about or employ themselves in things that accompany "salvation"; as knowing that "both to will and to do", the disposition and ability to perform any duty aright, are owing to the efficacious operation of the Spirit of God, and that it is by the grace of God they are what they are, and do what they do; they that fear the Lord are such who "rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh", declaring that when they have done all they can they are but unprofitable servants (Phil. 2:12,13; 3:3). 3.

Wherein the fear of God appears, and by what it is manifested. 3a. In an hatred of sin. "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil" (Prov. 8:13), as nothing is more opposite to good than evil, nothing is more to be abhorred; it is to be hated with a Stygian hatred as hell itself, apostugounteV "abhor that which is evil" (Rom. 12:9), and a man that fears God, who has a reverential affection for him, will hate it as being contrary to him, "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil" (Ps. 97:10), every thing that is evil is hated by such a man; as evil thoughts, which are only evil and that continually; the heart is full of evil thoughts, and out of it they daily proceed, and these are the object of a good man's hatred, "I hate vain thoughts", says David (Ps. 119:113), and now as no one but a man himself is conscious of them and privy to them, to hate them shows that the fear of God is in his heart.

Evil words are also hated by him; not only cursing, swearing, blasphemy, and all obscene and filthy language, but every vain and idle word, foolish and frothy expression, which comes out of his mouth when not on his guard, gives him uneasiness, as being displeasing to God, grieving to his Spirit, and what must be accounted for in the day of judgment; as "in many words" there are "divers vanities", the wise man opposes the "fear of" God unto them (Eccl. 5:7), and if evil thoughts and evil words are hated by such, then most certainly evil actions; and not only those of others, as the deeds of the Nicolaitans, the garment, the outward conversation garment spotted with the flesh, the filthy conversation of the wicked, but his own actions springing from corrupt nature, done by him contrary to the law of his mind; "What I would, that do I not, but what I hate, that I do" (Rom. 7:15), evil men and their company are abhorrent to those that fear the Lord, and are shunned and avoided by them; they choose not to have any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, and the workers of them; society with them is a grief and burden to them, as it was to Lot, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others, nay hateful to them: "Do not I hate them that hate thee?"

I hate them with perfect hatred" (Ps. 139:21,22; Prov. 4:14,15). All evil and false ways, not only of immorality, but of superstition and will worship, are rejected with abhorrence by men that fear the Lord, and make his word the rule of their faith and practice. Wisdom herself, or Christ, has set an example, proving the truth of the assertion in (Prov. 8:13). "Pride and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate"; and wisdom is justified of her children; says David, who was one of them, "I hate every false way" (Ps. 119:128), yea all evil doctrines, which reflect on the divine persons in the Godhead, on the free grace of God in man's salvation, on the person and offices of Christ, and the operations of the Spirit, are the object of the hatred and aversion of one that fears God; he cannot bear them that are evil, neither receive them into his house, nor wish them God speed.

In short, everything that is evil in its nature, as sin is in every shape exceeding sinful, a breach of the law of God, contrary to his nature, that abominable thing his righteous soul hates, is also hateful to a good man, to a man that fears the Lord, and hereby the fear of the Lord is manifested by him. 3b. It shows itself by departing from evil; "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil" (Prov. 16:6 3:7 not only from open and public sins, but from private and secret ones; Job was a man that feared God and eschewed evil, avoided and departed from it, as every wise man does; yea to depart from evil is understanding, this shows a man both to be a wise man and one that fears the Lord (Job 1:1; 28:28; Prov. 14:16), yea such an one will abstain from all appearance of evil, from everything that looks like it or leads unto it; will shun every avenue, every bypath, that has a tendency to ensnare into it, taking the wise man's advice, "Enter not into the path of the wicked", &c. (Prov. 4:14,15). 3c.

The fear of God appears in men in not allowing themselves to do what others do, and what they themselves formerly did; so Nehemiah, speaking of some ill things done by former governors, says, "So did not I, because of the fear of God" (Neh. 5:15). Not that such who fear God are without sin; Job feared God, but was not free from sin; he was sensible of it, acknowledged it, and implored the pardon of it; but they cannot give themselves that liberty to sin that others do, and walk as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, and in a sinful course of life; they have not so learned Christ, and the grace of God teaches them other things. 3d.

The fear of God manifests itself by a carefulness not to offend God nor man; such study to exercise a conscience void of offence to both, and would willingly give no offence to Jew nor Gentile, nor to the church of God; and next to God they are careful that they offend not against the generation of his children, either by word or deed, and even to put no stumbling block before any, but fear the Lord their God, for to do otherwise would be contrary to it (Lev. 19:14). Nay, such are not only on their guard to avoid sin and give no offence by it, but they are in an opposition to it; the spiritual part in them lusteth against the carnal part; there are as it were a company of two armies in them fighting one against another; they strive against sin, acting the part of an antagonist to it, take to themselves the whole armor of God, and make use of it against it. 3e.

The fear of God in men is seen by a constant attendance on the worship of God, and by a strict regard to his will and the observation of it; the fear of God has so great a share and concern in divine worship, as has been observed, that it is sometimes put for the whole of it, both internal and external; such who fear the Lord cannot be easy in the neglect of the worship of God, but as they desire to be filled with the knowledge of his will, so to be found in the practice of it; and, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, to walk in all the ordinances and commands of the Lord blameless; and to fear God, and keep his commandments, is the whole required of man; and such who make a custom of it to forsake the assembling of themselves together to worship God, do interpretatively cast off the fear of God. 3f.

The fear of God is seen and known in men by their withholding nothing from God, though ever so dear unto them, whenever he requires of them; so Abraham, when he so readily offered up his son at the command of God, received this testimony from him, "Now know I", saith the Lord, "that thou fearest God" (Gen. 22:12); on the contrary, when men keep back a part from God of what he expects from them, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, it is a proof that the fear of God is not before their eyes and in their hearts. 4.

The springs and causes of the fear of God, or from whence it flows. 4a. It is not from nature, nor is it in natural men; the want of it is a part of the description of corrupt nature, and of men in a natural state; "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18), it may be said of the heart of every natural man, what Abraham said of Gerar, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place" (Gen. 20:11), and which may be concluded from the wickedness that is in it, and that by what comes out of it; "The transgression of the wicked", discovered by his words and works, his life and actions, "saith within my heart", suggests this to my mind, speaks as plainly as well can be, it is an observation of David, "that there is no fear of God before his eyes" (Ps. 36:1). 4b.

It arises from the grace of God, it is a gift and grant of grace; "O that there were such an heart in them that they would fear me", or "who will give such an heart?" (Deut. 5:29), none but God can give it, and he has promised it in covenant; it is a blessing of his grace, which he has provided in it; "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever. I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me" (Jer. 32:39,40). In consequence of which promise and covenant, 4c.

It is implanted in the heart in regeneration; it is put there by the Spirit of God, where it was not before, and where it never could have been, had he not put it there, and it appears as soon in a regenerate man as any grace whatever; upon first conversion there is quickly found a tenderness of conscience with respect to sin, and a carefulness not to offend God; and indeed "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10). No man is truly wise until he fears God, and as soon as he fears the Lord he begins to be wise, and not before; yea the fear of the Lord is wisdom itself; it is that wisdom and truth which God desires and puts into the inward and hidden parts of the heart (Job 28:28; Ps. 51:6). 4d.

The word and prayer are the means of attaining it; the fear of the Lord, as it is a duty, and expressive of worship, is to be learned; "Come ye children, hearken unto me", says David, "I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Ps. 34:11). The law of God, and especially the whole of doctrine both legal and evangelical, is the means of learning it (Deut. 4:10; 17:19), and therefore is called the fear of the Lord (Ps. 19:7,9), but as a grace it is diligently sought after and earnestly importuned of God; the heart must not only be instructed but united to fear the Lord, and which is to be prayed for (Ps. 86:11; Prov. 2:3-5). 4e.

It is encouraged, promoted, and increased by fresh discoveries of the grace and goodness of God, "They shall fear the Lord and his goodness"; the goodness of God made known, bestowed, and applied, greatly influences the fear him (Hosea 3:5), especially an application of his pardoning grace and mercy, "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared" (Ps. 130:4). 5. The happiness of those that fear the Lord. There is scarcely anyone character by which the people of God are described, under which more promises of good things are made unto them, than this. 5a.

First, with respect to things temporal. Godliness in general, and this part of it, the fear of the Lord, in particular, has the promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come. 5a1. It is promised they shall have no want, not of temporal good things, "O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that

fear him" (Ps. 34:9,10), not of any good thing; that is, which is suitable and convenient for them, and God in his wisdom sees fit and proper for them; and rather than they shall want, he will do wonders for them, and open sources of relief they never thought of (Isa. 41:17,18; 43:19,20). 5a2.

Though they may have but little of the good things of this world, yet "better is little with the fiat of the Lord, than great treasures and trouble therewith" (Prov. 15:16), this with the fear of God and with righteousness is better than great revenues without right, and better than the riches of many wicked (Prov. 16:8; Ps. 37:16). 5a3. Yea wealth and riches are promised to be in the house of that man that fears the Lord, and that by humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life (Ps. 112:1,3; Prov. 22:4), which can only be understood of some, not of all that fear the Lord; unless spiritual wealth, riches, honour, and life, are intended, since the fear of the Lord itself is the good man's treasure (Isa. 33:6), it is a treasure of itself. 5a4.

It is said that the man that fears the Lord shall eat of the labour of his hands, and he shall not only be happy, and it shall be well with him in his person, but in his family; his wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of his house, and his children shall be as olive plants round about his table (Ps. 128:1-4). 5a5. They that fear the Lord are in the utmost safety; in his fear is strong confidence, and they have no reason to be afraid of anything; they shall not be visited with evil, yea the angel of the Lord encamps round about them and protects, defends, and delivers them from all dangers and from all enemies (Prov. 14:26; 19:23; Ps. 34:7). 5a6.

The fear of the Lord prolongeth days, or adds unto them (Prov. 10:27), which was always reckoned a great temporal blessing; the wise man says of a sinner, "though his days be prolonged", as they may be, and he not happy, "yet surely", says he, "I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him" (Eccl. 8:12), be their days more or fewer. 5b. Secondly, with respect to things spiritual, much is promised to them that fear the Lord, and they are spoken of as most happy persons. 5b1.

The Lord is said to take pleasure in them that fear him, as having the utmost complacency and delight in them, being his special and peculiar people, his Hephzibah in whom he delights, his Beulah to whom he is married (Ps. 147:11). 5b2. They are accepted of him, and are acceptable to him; "Of a truth", says Peter, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34,35), his person is accepted with him in Christ the beloved, and his sacrifices of prayer and praise are acceptable to him through Jesus Christ. 5b3.

The heart of God is towards them; he has a sympathy and fellow feeling with them in all their distresses, trials, and exercises; in all their afflictions he is afflicted, and he comforts and supports them; "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Ps. 103:13). 5b4. The eye of the Lord is upon them for good; "the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him" (Ps. 33:18), not only his eye of providence, which runs to and fro throughout the earth to show himself strong on their behalf, to protect and defend them, and to avenge himself on their enemies; but his eye of special love, grace, and mercy, is upon them, and is never withdrawn from them, but is ever delighting in them and caring for them (Ps. 103:11,17; Luke 1:50). 5b5.

His hand is open and ready to communicate to them; he "gives meat to them that fear him", spiritual food, the blessings of his covenant, of which he is ever mindful; the comforts of his Spirit in which they walk who walk in the fear of the Lord; he gives them grace, fresh and rich supplies of it, and at last gives them glory; and in the meanwhile withholds no good thing from them, to support their faith, encourage their hope, and

engage their trust in him and dependence on him. 5b6.

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him"; the secrets of his heart's love to them, and of his gracious designs towards them, are disclosed unto them, by which he uses them as his most intimate and bosom friends; and he will show them his covenant, the blessings and promises of it, and their interest in them (Ps. 25:14), what is said of Christ the head of the covenant, is true of all the covenant ones in their measure (Mal. 2:5), to which may be added, that the Lord grants the requests and fulfils the desires of them that fear him, hears their cries and saves them (Ps. 145:19). 5b7.

They are remembered by him with the favour he bears to his own people, with his tender mercies and lovingkindness, which have been ever of old; he remembers them when in a low estate, and brings them out of it; he remembers his promises to them, and fulfils them; "a book of remembrance is" said to be "written before him, for them that feared the Lord" (Mal. 3:16). 5b8. It is promised to them "that fear the name" of the Lord, that "unto" them "the Son of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings" (Mal. 4:2).

Christ the Saviour shall come and show himself with a discovery and application of pardoning grace and mercy; nay, one that "fears the Lord", though he "walks in darkness and hath no light", yet he is encouraged to "trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God" (Isa. 50:10). 5b9. "Salvation", a fresh view of interest in it, a renewed application of it, as well as the full enjoyment of it, "is nigh them that fear" the Lord (Ps. 85:9), for that is nearer to them than when they first believed, and had the fear of God first implanted in them, and were set a seeking after it, and had first hope of interest in it. 5b10.

Great and good things are laid up for such persons in the heart of God, in the covenant of grace, and in the hands of Christ, and in heaven; even a blessed hope, a crown of righteousness, and things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard of, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive of; "O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!" (Ps. 31:19). ENDNOTES:

[1] Targum Jerus. in Deut. xxxii. 15. & Targ. Jon. in v. 18.

[2] "Dictum volunt qeon alii a nomine deoV, i.e. metus", Scapula.

[3] Plutarch in Cleomone, p. 808. vol. 1.

[4] Lactant. Institut. l. 1. c. 20.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-gill/of-the-fear-of-god/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net