

43 - Right Fear

So I saw in my dream that they went on apace before, and IGNORANCE he came hobbling after. Then said CHRISTIAN to his companion, "It pities me much for this poor man; it will certainly go ill with him at last."

Hope. Alas, there are abundance in our town in his condition: whole families, yea, whole streets (and that of pilgrims too); and if there be so many in our parts, how many, think you, must there be in the place where he was born?

Chr. Indeed the Word saith, "He hath blinded their eyes, lest they should see," etc. But now we are by ourselves, what do you think of such men? Have they at no time, think you, convictions of sin; and so, consequently, fears that their state is dangerous?

Hope. Nay, do you answer that question yourself; for you are the elder man.

Chr. Then I say sometimes (as I think) they may; but they, being naturally ignorant, understand not that such convictions tend to their good; and therefore they do desperately seek to stifle them, and presumptuously continue to flatter themselves in the way of their own hearts.

Hope. I do believe as you say, that fear tends much to men's good, and to make them right, at their beginning, to go on pilgrimage.

Chr. Without all doubt it doth, if it be right; for so says the Word, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (#Job 28:28 Ps 111:10 Pr 1:7 9:10)

Hope. How will you describe right fear?

Chr. True, or right fear, is discovered by three things:

1. By its rise. It is caused by saving convictions for sin.
2. It drives the soul to lay fast hold of Christ for salvation.
3. It begets and continues in the soul a great reverence of God, His Word, and ways; keeping it tender, and making it afraid to turn from them, to the right hand or to the left; to anything that may dishonour God, break its peace, grieve the Spirit, or cause the enemy to speak reproachfully.

Hope. Well said; I believe you have said the truth. Are we now almost got past the Enchanted Ground?

Chr. Why, are you weary of this discourse?

Hope. No, verily; but that I would know where we are.

Chr. We have not now above two miles farther to go thereon. But let us return to our matter. Now the ignorant know not that such convictions that tend to put them in fear are for their good; and therefore they seek to stifle them.

Hope. How do they seek to stifle them?

Chr. 1. They think that those fears are wrought by the devil (though indeed they are wrought of God); and thinking so, they resist them, as things that directly tend to their overthrow. 2. They also think that these fears tend to the spoiling of their faith (when, alas for them, poor men that they are, they have none at all); and therefore they harden their hearts against them. 3. They presume they ought not to fear; and therefore, in despite of them, wax presumptuously confident. 4. They see that these fears tend to take away from them their pitiful old self holiness; and therefore they resist them with all their might.

Hope. I know something of this myself; for before I knew myself, it was so with me.

Job 28:28 Ps 111:10 Pr 1:7 9:10

“And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that *is* wisdom, And to depart from evil *is* understanding.’”
(Job 28:28 NKJV)

“The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do *His commandments*. His praise endures forever.” (Ps 111:10 NKJV)

“The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge, *But* fools despise wisdom and instruction.” (Pr 1:7 NKJV)

““The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One *is* understanding.” (Pr 9:10 NKJV)