



Fire and Ice Sermon Series

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Directions Against Sinful Fear

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Fear is a necessary passion in man, which is planted in nature for the restraining of us from sin, and driving us on to duty, and preventing misery. It is either God, or devils, or men, or inferior creatures, or ourselves, that we fear. God must be feared as he is God; as he is great, and holy, and just, and true; as our Lord, and King, and Judge, and Father; and the fear of him is the beginning of wisdom. Devils must be feared only as subordinate to God, as the executioners of his wrath; and so must men, and beasts, and fire, and water, and other creatures he feared, and not otherwise. We must so discern and fear a danger as to avoid it. Ourselves we are less apt to fear, because we know that we love ourselves. But there is no creature that we have so much cause to fear, as our folly, weakness, and willfulness in sin.

Fear is sinful, 1. When it proceedeth from unbelief, or a distrust of God.
2. When it ascribeth more to the creature than is its due: as when we fear devils or men, as great, or bad, or as our enemies, without due respect to their dependence upon the will of God: when we fear a chained creature, as if he were unchained.
3. When we fear God upon mistake or error, or fear that in him which is not in him, or is not to be feared. As when we fear lest he will break his promise; lest he will condemn the keepers of his covenant; lest he will not forgive the penitent that hate their sin; lest he will despise the contrite; lest he will not hear the prayers of the humble, faithful soul; lest he will fail them, and forsake them; lest he will not cause all things to work together for their good; lest he will forsake his church; lest Christ will not come again; lest our bodies shall not be raised; lest there be no life of glory for the just, or no immortality of souls: all such fears as these are sinful. 4. When our fear is so immoderate in degree, as to distract us, or hinder us from faith and prayer, and make us melancholy: or when it hindereth love, and praise, and thanks, and necessary joy; and tendeth not to drive us to God, and to the use of means to avoid the danger, but to drive us from God, and kill our hope, and make us sit down in despair.

Directions Against Sinful Fear of God.

Direct. I. Know God in his goodness, mercifulness, and truth, and it will banish sinful fears of him: for they proceed from the ignorance or unbelief of some of these; or not considering and applying them to the cause that is before you. Psalm. 9:10, "They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee."

Direct. II. Know God in Jesus Christ the Mediator, and come to him by him. And then you many have "access with boldness and confidence," Eph. 3:12. We have "boldness to enter into the holiest by his blood, by the new and living way which he hath consecrated us, through the veil, that is to say, for his flesh. And having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith," Heb. 10:19-22. The sight of Christ by faith should banish immoderate fear. Matt. 14:27, "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid."

Direct. III. Understand the intention of the gospel, and the freeness of the covenant of grace, and then you will there find abundant encouragement against the matter of inordinate fears.

Direct. IV. Employ yourselves as much as possible in love and praise: for love expelleth tormenting fear; there is no fear in love, 1 John 4:18.

Direct. V. Remember God's particular mercies to yourselves: for those will persuade you that he will use you kindly, when you find that he hath done so already. As when Manoah said, "We shall surely die because we have seen God;" his wife answered, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received an offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things," Judges. 13:22, 23.

Direct. VI. Labour to clear up your title to the promises and special interest in Christ. Otherwise the doubts of that will be still feeding and justifying your fears.

Direct. VII. Consider what a horrible injury it is to God, to think of him as you do of the devil, as an enemy to humble, willing souls, and a destroyer of them, and an adversary to them that diligently seek him; of whom he is a lover and rewarder, Heb. 11:6. And so to think of God as evil, and fear him upon such misapprehensions.

Direct. VIII. Observe the sinfulness of your fear in the effects; how it driveth you from God, and hindereth faith, and love, and thankfulness, and discourageth you from prayer, and sacraments, and all duty. And therefore it must

needs be pleasing to the devil, and displeasing to God, and no way to be pleaded for or justified.

Direct IX. Mark how you contradict the endeavours of God, in his word, and by his ministers. Do you find God driving any from him, and frightening away souls that would fain be his? Or doth he not prepare the way himself, and reconcile the world to himself in Christ, and then send his ambassadors in his name and stead to beseech them to be reconciled unto God, and to tell them that all things are ready, and compel them to come in. (2 Cor. 5:19, 20; Luke 14:17; Matt. 22:8.)

Direct. X. Consider how thou wrongest others, and keepest them from coming home to God. When they see thee terrified in a way of piety, they will fly from it as if some enemies or robbers were in the way. If you tread fearfully, others will fear there is some quicksand. If you tremble when you enter the ship with Christ, others will think he is an unfaithful pilot, or that it is a leaking vessel. Your fear discourageth them.

Direct. XI. Remember how remediless, as to comfort, you leave yourselves, while you inordinately fear him, who alone must comfort you against all your other fears. If you fear your remedy, what shall cure the fear of your disease? If you fear your meat, what shall cure your fear of hunger? If you fear him that is most good and faithful, and the friend of every upright soul, what shall ease you of your fear of the wicked and the enemies of holy souls? If you fear your Father, who shall comfort you against your foes? You cast away all peace, when you make God your terror.

Direct. XII. Yet take heed lest under this pretense you cast away the necessary fear of God; even such as belongeth to men in your condition, to drive them out of their sin and security unto Christ, and such as the truth of his threatenings require. For a senseless presumption and contempt of God, are a sin of a far greater danger.

Directions Against Sinful Fear of the Devil

Direct. I. Remember that the devil is chained up, and wholly at the will and beck of God. He could not touch Job, nor an ox, nor an ass of his, till he had permission from God, Job 1. He cannot appear to thee nor hurt thee unless God give him leave.

Direct. II. Labour therefore to make sure of the love of God, and then thou art safe; then thou hast God, his love and promise, always to set against the devil.

Direct. III. Remember that Christ hath conquered the devil in his temptations, on the cross, by his resurrection and ascension. He “destroyed through death him that had the power of death, even the devil, that he might deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage,” Heb. 2:14,15. The prince of this world is conquered and cast out by him, and wilt thou fear a conquered foe?

Direct. IV. Remember that thou art already delivered from his power and dominion, if thou be renewed by the Spirit of God. And therefore let his own be afraid of him, that are under his power, and not the free-men and redeemed ones of Christ. God hath delivered thee in the day that he converted thee, from a thousand-fold greater calamity than the seeing of the devil would be; and having been saved from his greatest malice, you should not over-fear the less.

Direct. V. Remember what an injury it is to God, and to Christ that conquered him, to fear the devil, while God is your protector (any otherwise than as the instrument of God’s displeasure): it seemeth as much as to say, I fear lest the devil be too hard for God; or lest God cannot deliver me from him.

Direct. VI. Remember how you honour the devil by fearing him, and pleasure him by thus honouring him. And will you not abhor to honour and please such an enemy of God and you? This is it that he would have; to be feared instead of God he glorieth in it as part of his dominion: as tyrants rejoice to see men fear them, as those that can destroy them when they will, so the devil triumpheth in your fears as his honour. When God reprehendeth the idolatry of the Israelites, it is as they feared their idols of wood and stone. To fear them, showed that they took them for their gods, 2 Kings 17:38,39; Dan. 6:26.

Direct. VII. Consider that it is a folly to be inordinately fearful of that which never did befall thee, and never befalleth one of many hundred thousand men: I mean any terrible appearance of the devil. Thou never sawest him; nor hearest credibly of but very few in an age that see him (besides witches). This fear therefore is irrational, the danger being utterly improbable.

Direct. VIII. Consider that if the devil should appear to thee, yea, and carry thee to the top of a mountain, or the pinnacle of the temple, and talk to thee with blasphemous temptations, it would be no other than what thy Lord himself submitted to; who was still the dearly beloved of the Father, Matt. 4. One sin is more terrible than this.

Direct. IX. Remember that if God should permit him to appear to thee, it might turn to thy very great advantage; by killing all thy unbelief, or doubts, of angels, and spirits, and the unseen world. It would sensibly prove to thee that there is indeed an unhappy race of spirits, who envy man and seek his ruin; and so would more convince thee of the evil of sin, the danger of souls, the need of godliness, and the truth of Christianity. And it is like this is one cause why the devil no more appeareth in the world, not only because it is contrary to the ordinary government of God, who will have us live by faith and not by sight; but also because the devil knoweth how much it would do to destroy his kingdom, by destroying infidelity, atheism, and security, and awakening men to faith, and fear, and godliness. The fowler or the angler must not come in sight, lest he spoil his game by frightening it away.

Direct. X. If it be the spiritual temptations and molestations only of Satan which you fear, remember that you have more cause to fear yourselves, for he can but tempt you; and if you do not more against yourselves, than all the devils in hell can do, you will never perish. And if you are willing to accept and yield to Christ, you need not inordinately fear either Satan or yourselves. For it is in the name and strength of Christ, and under his conduct and protection, that you are to begin and finish your warfare. And the Spirit that is in us, is greater and stronger than the spirit that is in the world, and that molesteth us, 1 John 4:4. And the “Father that giveth us to Christ is greater than all, and none can pluck us out of his hands,” John 10:29. “And the God of peace will tread down Satan under our feet,” Rom. 16:20. If it were in his power he would molest us daily, and we had never escaped so far as we have done: our daily experience telleth us that we have a Protector.

Directions Against the Sinful Fear of Men, and Sufferings by Them.

Direct. I. Ground thy soul and hopes on Christ, and lay up thy treasure in heaven; be not a worldling that liveth in hope of happiness in the creature; and then thou art so far above the fear of men, as knowing that thy treasure is above their reach, and thy foundation and fortress safe from their assaults. It is a base, hypocritical, worldly heart that maketh you immoderately afraid of men. Are you afraid lest they should storm and plunder heaven? Or lest they cast you into hell? Or lest they turn God against you? Or lest they bribe or overawe your Judge? No, no! These are none of your fears! No; you are not so much as afraid lest they hinder one of your prayers from prevailing with God; nor lest their prison walls and chains should keep out God and his Spirit from you, and force you from your

communion with him! You are not afraid lest they forcibly rob you of one degree of grace, or heavenly-mindedness, or hopes of the life to come! (If it be lest they hinder you from these by tempting or affrighting you into sin, (which is all the hurt they can do your souls,) then you are the more engaged to cast away the fears of their hurting your bodies, because that is their very temptation to hurt your souls.) No; it is their hurting of your flesh, the diminishing your estates, the depriving you of your liberty or worldly accommodations, or of your lives, which is the thing you fear. And doth not this show how much your hearts are yet on earth? And how much unmortified worldliness and fleshliness is still within you? And how much yet your hearts are false to God and heaven? Oh how the discovery should humble you! To find that you are yet no more dead to the things of the world, and that the cross of Christ hath yet no more crucified it to you! To find that yet the fleshly interest is so powerful in you, and the interest of Christ and heaven is so low! that God seemeth not enough for you, and that you cannot take heaven alone for your portion, but are so much afraid of losing earth! O presently search into the bottom of this corruption in your hearts, and lament your worldliness and hypocrisy, and work it out, and set your hearts and hopes above, and be content with God and heaven alone, and then this inordinate fear of man will have nothing left to work upon.

Direct. II. Set God against man, and his wisdom against their deceit, and his love and mercy against their malice and cruelty, and his power against their impotency, and his truth, and omniscience, and righteousness against their slanders and lies, and his promises against their threatenings; and then if yet thou art inordinately afraid of man, thou must confess that in that measure thou believest not in God. If God be not wise enough, and good enough, and just enough, and powerful enough to save thee, so far as it is best for thee to be saved, then he is not God: away with atheism, and then fear not man.

Direct. III. Remember what man is that thou art afraid of. He is a bubble raised by Providence, to toss about the world, and for God to honor himself by or upon. He is the mere product of his Maker's will: his breath is in his nostrils! He is hastening to his dust, and in that day his worldly hopes and thoughts do perish with him. He is a worm that God can in one moment tread into the earth and hell. He is a dream, a shadow, a dry leaf or a little chaff, that is blown awhile about the world. (Job 13:25; Psalm. 1.5, 6; 68:2; 73:20; Job 20:8) He is just ready, in the height of his pride and fury, to drop into the grave; and that same man, or all those men, whom now thou fearest, shall one of these days most certainly lie rotting in the dust, and be hid in darkness, lest their ugly sight and stink be an annoyance to the living. Where now are all the proud ones that made such a bustle in the world

but awhile ago? In one age they look big, and boast of their power, and rebel, and usurp authority, and are mad to be great and rulers in the world, or persecute the ministers and people of the Lord; and in the next (or in the same) they are viler than the dirt; their carcasses are buried, or their bones scattered abroad, and made the horror and wonder of beholders. And is this a creature to be feared above God, or against God? See Isa. 51:7, "Hearken to me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation." Isa. 2:22, "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Psalm. 146:3, 4, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help: his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." When Herod was magnified as a god, he could not save himself from being devoured alive by worms. When Pharaoh was in his pride and glory, he could not save his people from frogs, and flies, and lice. Saith God to Sennacherib, "The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn,—and hath shaken her head at thee: whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed, and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted thine eyes on high?" Oh what a worm is man that you are so afraid of!

Direct. IV. Remember that men as well as devils are chained, and dependent upon God, and have no power but what he giveth them, and can do nothing but by his permission. And if God will have it done, thou hast his promise that it shall work unto thy good, Rom. 8:28. And are you afraid lest God should do you good by them? If you see the knife or lancet in an enemy's hand only, you might fear it; but if you see it in the surgeon's or in a father's hand, though nature will a little shrink, yet reason will forbid you to make any great matter of it, or inordinately to fear. What if God will permit Joseph's brethren to bind him, and sell him to the Amalekites; and his master's wife to cause him to be imprisoned? Is he not to be trusted in all this, that he will turn it to his good? What if he will permit Shimei to curse David; or the king to cast Daniel into the lions' den; or the three confessors into the furnace of fire? Do you believe that your Father's will is the disposer of all? And yet are you afraid of man? Our Lord told Pilate when he boasted of his power to take away his life or save it, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above," John 19:11.

Objection: We Fear Them Only as God's Instruments.

I know you will say that it is only as God's instruments that you fear in them, and that if you were certain of his favour, and were not first afraid of his wrath, you should not fear the wrath of men.

Answer. By this you may see then what it is to be disobedient, and to cherish your fears of God's displeasure, and to hinder your own assurance of his love, when this must be the cause of, or the pretense for, so many other sins. But if really you fear them but as the instruments of God's displeasure; 1. Why then did you no more fear his displeasure before, when the danger from men did not appear? You know God never lacks instruments to execute his wrath or will. 2. And why fear you not the sin which doth displease him more than the instruments, when they could do you no hurt were it not for sin? 3. And why do you not more fear them as tempters than as afflictors? and consequently why fear you not their flatteries, and enticements, and preferments, and your prosperity, more than adversity, when prosperity more draweth you away to sin? 4. And why fear you not hell more than any thing that man can do against you, when God threateneth hell more than human penalties? 5. And why do you not apply yourselves to God chiefly for deliverance, but study how to pacify man? Why do you with more fear, and care, and diligence, and compliance, apply yourselves to those that you are afraid of if you fear God more than them? Repent and make your peace with God through Christ, and then be quiet, if it be God that you are afraid of: your business then is not first with the creature, but with God. 6. And if you fear them only as God's instruments, why doth not your fear make you the more cautiously to fly from further guilt, but rather make you to think of stretching your consciences as far as ever you dare, and venturing as far as you dare upon God's displeasure, to escape man's? Are these signs that you fear them only as the instruments of God's displeasure? or do you see how deceitful a thing your ear is? Indeed man is to be feared in a full subordination to God, 1. As his officers, commanding us to obey him; 2. As his executioners, punishing us for disobeying him; 3. But not as Satan's instruments, (by God's permission,) afflicting us for obeying him, or without desert. Rom. 13:3, 4, "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil." Would you have the fuller exposition of this? It is in 1 Pet. 3:10-15, "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that

will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness, and fear. Having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing." See also 1 Peter 4:13—15.

Direct. V. Either you fear suffering from men as guilty or as innocent; for evil-doing, or for well-doing, or for nothing. If as guilty and for evil-doing, turn your fears the right way, and fear God, and his wrath for sin, and his threatenings of more than men can inflict; and acknowledge the goodness of justice both from God and man: but if it be as innocent or for well-doing, remember that Christ commandeth you exceedingly to rejoice; and remember that martyrs have the most glorious crown: and will you be excessively afraid of your highest honour, and gain, and joy? Believe well what Christ hath said, and you cannot be much afraid of suffering for him. Matt. 5:10-12, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." And will you fear the way of blessedness and exceeding joy? Matt. 10:17-19, "Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues, and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them—But take no thought," &c. You are allowed to beware of them, but not to be over-fearful or thoughtful of the matter. Verse. 22, 23, "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, fly to another."—Fly, but fear them not, with any immoderate fear: verse. 39, "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Luke 18:29, 30, "Verily I say unto you, there is no man hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come, life everlasting." Can you believe all this, and yet be so afraid of your own felicity? Oh what a deal of secret unbelief is detected by our immoderate fears! 1 Pet. 4:12-16, 19, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the

spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as an evil-doer. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him glorify God on that behalf—Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.” There is scarce any point that God hath been pleased to be more full in, in the holy Scriptures, than the encouraging of his suffering servants against the fears of men; acquainting them that their sufferings are the matter of their profit and exceeding joy and therefore not of too great fear.

Direct. VI. Experience telleth us that men have never so much joy on earth as in suffering for the cause of Christ; nor so much honour as by being dishonored by men for him. How joyfully did the ancient Christians go to martyrdom! many of them lamented that they could not attain it: and what comfort have Christ’s confessors found, above what they could ever attain before! And how honourable now are the names and memorials of those martyrs, who died then under the slanders, scorn, and cruelty of men! Even the papists that bloodily make more, do yet honour the names of the ancient martyrs with keeping holidays for them, and magnifying their shrines and relics; for God will have it so, for the honour of his holy sufferers, that even that same generation that persecute the living saints, shall honour the dead, and they that murder those they find alive, shall honour those whom their forefathers murdered: Matt. 23:29-31, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous: and say, if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them of the blood of the prophets.” Comfort and honour attend the pain and shame of the cross. Acts 5:41, “They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” Acts 16:25, “Paul and Silas sang praises to God at midnight in the prison and stocks,” when their backs were sore with stripes. It is written of some of the Christians that were imprisoned by Julian, that they would not forbear in the emperor’s hearing as he passed by, to sing, “Let God arise, and his enemies shall be scattered.”

Direct. VII. Love better the holy image of God upon your souls, and then you will be glad of the great helps to holiness which sufferings do afford. Who findeth not that adversity is more safe and profitable to the soul than prosperity? especially that adversity which Christ is engaged to bless to his servants, as being undergone for him? Rom. 10:3-5, “We glory in tribulation also knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed.” God “chasteneth us for our profit that we may be partakers of his holiness: now no chastisement for the present seemeth to be

joyous, but grievous nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby,” Heb. 12:10,11. Moses “esteemed the very reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: and therefore rather chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,” Heb. 11:25, 26. It is but “now for a season, and if need be, that we are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of our faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ,” 1 Pet. 1:6, 7. Who is it that knoweth himself, that feeleth not a need of some afflictions? To awake us from our drowsiness, and quicken us from our dullness, and refine us from our dross, and wean us from the world, and help us to mortify the flesh, and save us from the deceits of sin?

Direct. VIII. Remember that sufferings are the ordinary way to heaven. Love heaven better, and your sufferings will seem lighter, and your fear of them will be less. Christ hath resolved on it, that “if any one come to him, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be his disciple: and whoever doth not bear his cross and follow him, cannot be his disciple: and whoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be his disciple,” Luke 14:26, 27, 33. “In the world we shall have tribulation, but peace in him,” John 16:33. “Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God,” Acts 14:22. “If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us,” Rom. 8:17, 18. “Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God,” 1 Tim. 4:10. In preaching the gospel, Paul saith, he “suffered as an evil-doer even unto bonds, but the word of God is not bound,” 2 Tim. 2:9. “I suffer these things,” saith he, “nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day,” 2 Tim. 1:12. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,” 2 Tim. 3:12. Our patience in sufferings is the joy of our friends, and therefore they are not too much to be feared. 2 Thess. 1:4, 5, “So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer.” Therefore take the conclusion of all from God, Rev. 2:10, “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried: and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” Phil. 1:25-30, “And in nothing

terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God: for to you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.” And shall we fear so great a gift?

Direct. IX. Remember how small and short the suffering will be, and how great and long the glorious reward. It is but a little while, and the pain and shame will all be past; but the glory will be never past: what the worse now is Stephen for his stones, or John Baptist for being beheaded, or Paul for his bonds and afflictions, which did every where abide him, or any holy martyr for the torment and death which they underwent? Oh how the case is altered with them, now God hath wiped away all tears from their eyes Are we so tender that we cannot endure the grief that is but for a night, when we know that joy will come in the morning? Psalm. 30:5. “For this cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal,” 2 Cor. 4:16-18. “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him,” Heb. 10:35-38.

Direct. X. When you are delivered from the power of the devil himself what cause have you to fear his instruments? Can they do more than he? If Goliath the champion and the general be overcome, the common soldiers are not like to overcome us.

Direct. XI. Are you better than your Lord? Look to him, and be confirmed. “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household,” Matt. 10:24. Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God; for consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied, and faint in your minds,” Heb. 12:1-3.

Direct. XII. Be of good cheer: our Lord hath overcome the world, John 16:33. And shall we fear inordinately a conquered world? Yea, he overcame it by

suffering, to show us that by suffering we shall overcome it. He triumphed over principalities and powers (greater than mortals) “on the cross,” Col. 2:15. And therefore “all power in heaven and earth is given to him,” Matt. 28:19, and he is “Lord both of the dead and living,” Rom. 14:9, and “is made Head over all things to the church,” Eph. 1:21, 22. And so, though “for his sake we be killed all the day long, and counted as sheep to the slaughter, yet in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us;” that is, we have a nobler victory than if we conquered them by the sword.

Direct. XIII. Think how little your suffering is in comparison of what your sin deserved, and your Lord hath freely saved you from. Should a man grudge at the opening of a vein for his health, who deserved to have lost his life? Can you remember hell which was your due, and yet make a great matter of any thing that man can do against you?

Direct. XIV. Remember that to sin through fear of suffering, is to leap into hell to escape a little pain on earth. Are you afraid of man? Be more afraid of God. Is not God more terrible? “It is a fearful thing to fall into his hands: for he is a consuming fire.” (Heb. 10:31,26,27,29; 12:29.) Hear your Lord. “And I say to you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: fear him which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him,” Luke 13:4, 5. If their fire be hot, remember that hell is hotter: and that God is the best friend, and the dreadfulest enemy.

Direct. XV. Remember that you shall suffer (and it is like as much) even here from God, if you escape by sin your suffering from men. If you sin to escape death, you shall die when you have done; and oh! how quickly! And how much more joyful it is to die in Christ, than a little after unwillingly to part with that life, which you denied to part with for your Lord! and what galls will you feel in your guilty conscience both in life and at your death! So that even in this life, your fear would drive you into greater misery.

Direct. XVI. Think of the dangerous effects of your immoderate fear. It is the way with Peter to deny your Lord: yea, the way to apostasy, or any wickedness which men shall drive you to by terrors. If you were where the Turk is now tyrannizing among Christians, if you overcome not your fear, he might overcome your fidelity, and make you turn from Jesus Christ: and that is the sin which the apostle so dreadfully describeth, Heb. 10:26, 27, 29, “If we sin willfully, (that is, willfully renounce our Lord,) after the acknowledgment of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fire

which shall devour the adversary.” Oh how many have been drawn by the fear of men, to wound their consciences, neglect their duties, comply with sin, forsake the truth, dishonour God, and undo their souls. And often in this life they do as poor Spira did, who, by sinning through the fear of man, did cast himself into melancholy and self-murdering despair. Your fear is a more dangerous enemy to you than those that you fear are. “The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe. Many seek the ruler’s favour, but every man’s judgment cometh of the Lord,” Prov. 29:25, 26. Fear is given to preserve you: use it not to destroy you.

Direct. XVII. Believe and remember God’s special providence, extending to every hair of your head, and also the guard of angels which he hath set over you. “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are numbered: fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows,” Matt. 10:29, 30. Oh that this were well believed and considered! Psalm. 34:7, “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.”

Direct. XVIII. Think what a vile dishonour it is to God to have his creature, even breathing dirt, to be feared more than him As if he were less powerful to do good or hurt to you than man, and were not able or willing to secure you, so far as to see that no man shall ever be a loser by him, or any thing which he suffereth for his cause (See Isa. 7:4; 35:4; 41:10,13; 42:2,8; 54:4; Jer. 5:22). Isa. 57:11, “And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart. Have I not held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not?” How did Daniel and the three confessors honour God, but by fearing him more than the king and the flaming furnace: saying, “We are not careful to answer thee in this matter: if it be so, the God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king: but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods,” &c. (Dan. 3:16-18). Daniel would not cease praying thrice a day openly in his house, for fear of the king, or of the lions. “Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing him that is invisible,” Heb. 11:27. “So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me,” Heb. 13:6.1

Direct. XIX. Remember the dangers which you have been saved from already; especially from sin and hell. And is an uncircumcised Philistine more invincible than the lion and the bear?

Direct. XX. Remember the great approaching day of judgment, where great and small will be equal before God; and where God will right all that were wronged by men, and be the full and final avenger of his children! He hath promised, though “he bear long, to avenge them speedily,” Luke 18:7, 8. Can you believe that day, and yet not think that it is soon enough to justify you fully and finally, and to make you of all your wrongs? Cannot you stay till Christ come to judge the quick and the dead? You will then be loth to be found with those that, as Saul, made haste to sacrifice, because he could not stay till Samuel came; whose soul, “drew back, because they could not live by faith.” Matt. 10:26, “Fear them not therefore; for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known.” 2 Thess. 2:6-10, “Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance, &c. When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.”

Direct. XXI. Remember that the fearful and unbelieving shall be shut out of heaven, Rev. 21:8; that is, those that fear men more than God, and cannot trust him with their lives and all, but will rather venture upon his wrath by sin, than on the wrath of man.

Direct. XXII. Turn your fear of the instruments of the devil into pity and compassion to men in such lamentable misery; and pray for them as Christ and Stephen did: foresee now the misery that is near them. When you begin to be afraid of them, suppose that just now were the day of judgment, and you saw how they will then tremble at the bar of God (as conscience sometimes makes some of them do, at the hearing or remembering of it; as Felix before Paul): see them as ready to be sentenced to the fire prepared for the devil and his angels, as Matt. 25. Can you fear him that is near such endless misery, whom you should lament and pity (as the ancient martyrs used to do)? 1 Pet. 4:17, “What shall the end” of the persecutors “be, and where shall the ungodly sinners appear, if judgment begin at the house of God, and the righteous be saved with so much ado?”

About the fear of death, I have written largely already in my “Treatise of Self-denial,” and in the “Saints’ Rest,” and in “The Last Enemy Death,” &c. and in “The Believer’s Last Work.” Therefore, I shall here pass it by.

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