

BE NOT AFRAID, (4)

This week, as we have given consideration to some things we ought not to fear, we have emphasized that no threat on the part of men ought to deter us from obedience to God. The Psalmist said: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Psalms 27:1

But now we turn our attention to what we should fear. Jesus said: "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 ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. " (Luke 12:4-5) What men might do to us is limited to our fleshly existence. GOD'S POWER RULES IN TIME AND ETERNITY. Solomon wrote: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."

We do not fear God in the sense that we are afraid of injustice or unfair treatment on His part. Nor do we anticipate failure of His grace and mercy. To fear God means that we live in awe of His greatness; we respect His power; we believe His warnings; and we submit to His will.

The direction of our lives ought to be determined by a fear of the Lord. Such a respect will lead us to obey His commandments. Knowing the terror of the Lord, we are kept from disobedience. Paul wrote: "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." (Romans 11:22) We are told to work our own salvation with fear and trembling. Philippians 1:12

Another of the things we ought to fear is sin. Sin is a transgression of God's law. It is every kind of religious and moral disobedience. We live in a time when sin is often beautified and portrayed as a course to make life pleasant. But the Bible strips its false colors and reveals its true ugliness.

Sin is to be feared! It separates from God. (Isaiah 59:2) It incurs the wrath of God and leads to punishment worse than death. Hebrews 10:30-31 says, "For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

In this connection, let us notice, too, that we ought to fear our own weaknesses. We are tempted to sin when we are drawn away of our own lusts, and enticed. (James 1:14) It is in those things wherein we are weak that the tempter makes his approach. Therefore, we ought to fear being overcome by our own weaknesses. Paul wrote of his own experience with these words: "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." I Corinthians 9:27

The truth of these things are summed up by these words from Ecclesiastes: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."