

Five Fears

A Sermon

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“Yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him.” —[Ecclesiastes 8:12](#).

I HAVE heard it sometimes said by wicked men, when they would arraign the justice of the Most High, that it is unjust that God should condemn men for the use of the powers which he himself has given them. This most subtle evil has often grieved the hearts of those who are weak and ignorant, and have not seen its untruthfulness—for to speak plainly of it, it is a gross lie. God does not condemn men for the use of the powers he has given them; he condemns them for the misuse of those powers; not for employing them, but for employing them as they ought not to employ them; not for thinking, not for speaking, not for doing, but for thinking, speaking, and doing, contrary to his law God damnth no man for the use of the powers which he hath given him, let that be again repeated—but he doth condemn them for the abuse of those powers, and for their impudence in daring to turn those powers, which he hath given them, for his honor, against his service, and against his throne Now, my friends, there is no power which God hath given us, which may not be employed for God. I believe that David uttered a great truth, as well as a great exhortation to himself, when he said, “Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me, bless his holy name.” There is nothing in man that God has not there, which may not be employed in God’s service. Some may ask me whether anger can be brought in. I answer, yes. A good man may serve God by being angry against sin; and to be angry against sin is a high and holy thing. You may ask me, perhaps, whether ridicule can be employed. I answer, yes. I believe we may even rightly employ it in the preaching of God’s word. I know this, I always intend to use it; and if by a laugh I can make men see the folly of an error better than in any other way, they shall laugh, and laugh here, too; for ridicule is to be used in God’s service; and every power that God hath implanted in man—I will make no exception,—may be used for God’s service, and for God’s honor. What man hath gotten for himself by the fall, cannot be employed to serve God with, we cannot bring before God Adam’s robbery, to be a sacrifice to the Almighty, nor can our own carnal and sinful passions honor the Most High, but there are natural powers which God hath conferred, and none of these are in themselves sinful. I would have them, therefore, employed for the Master. Yea, even those powers with which it seems impossible to worship, such as the powers of assimilation, eating, and drinking, may be brought to honor God; for what says the Apostle?—“whether ye eat or drink, or

whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Jesus Christ.”

Now, you will notice that fear may be yoked into the service of God. True fear, not fearing, but believing, saves the soul; not doubt, but confidence, is the strength and the deliverance of the Christian. Still, fear, as being one of those powers which God hath given us, is not in itself sinful. Fear may be used for the most sinful purposes; at the same time it may be so ennobled by grace, and so used for the service of God, that it may become the very grandest part of man. In fact, Scripture has honored fear, for the whole of piety is comprehended in these words, “Fear God;” “the fear of the Lord;” “them that fear Him.” These phrases are employed to express true piety, and the men who possess it. Fear, I have said, may ruin the soul, alas! it has ruined multitudes. O Fear, thou art the rock upon which many a ship hath been wrecked. Many a soul hath suffered spiritual destruction through thee, but then it hath been not the fear of God, but the fear of man. Many have rushed against the thick bosses of the Almighty’s buckler, and defied God, in order to escape the wrath of feeble man. Many through fear of worldly loss have brought great guilt into their consciences; some through fear of ridicule and laughter have not had the boldness to follow the right, and so have gone astray and been ruined. Yea, and where fear doth not work utter destruction it is capable of doing much damage to the spirit. Fear hath paralysed the arm of the most gigantic Christian, stopped him in his race, and impeded him in his labors. Faith can do anything, but fear, sinful fear, can do just nothing at all, but even prevent faith from performing its labors. Fear hath made the Christian to sorrow, both by night and day, a cankering fear lest his wants should not be provided for, and his necessities supplied, has driven the Christian to unworthy thoughts; and distrustful, doubting fear hath made him dishonor God, and prevented his sucking the honey out of the promises. Fear hath kept many a child of God from doing his duty, from making a bold profession; hath brought bondage into his spirit. Fear misused, thou art the Christian’s greatest curse, and thou art the sinner’s ruin. Thou art a sly serpent, creeping amongst the thorns of sin, and when thou art allowed to twist thyself around manhood, thou dost crush it in thy folds, and poison it with thy venom. Nothing can be worse than this sinful fear; it hath slaughtered its myriads and sent thousands to hell. But yet it may seem a paradox; fear, when rightly employed, is the very brightest state of Christianity, and is used to express all piety, comprehended in one emotion. “The fear of God” is the constant description which the Scripture gives of true religion.

And now, beloved, I shall want you this morning to have some little patience with me whilst I try to go after certain fearing souls whose fear is of the right kind, even a fear which gendereth salvation, but who through it are now suffering some degree of torment, and are wishing to be delivered from it. An old Puritan says, “Jesus Christ would shake hands with a man that had the palsy.” I must try and do the same this morning. Some of you have the palsy of fear. I want to come after you and say unto you, “Fear not;” to bid you to be of good

cheer, because God would comfort you. There are five different kinds of fear, that persons are laboring under which I would now endeavor to address.

I. There is, first, THE FEAR CAUSED BY AN AWAKENING CONSCIENCE. This is the lowest grade of godly fear; here all true piety takes its rise. By nature, the sinner does not dread the wrath of God; he thinks sin a little thing; he looks upon its pleasures, and forgets its penalty, he dares the Almighty to the war, and lifts his puny arm against the Eternal. No sooner, however, is he awakened by God's Spirit, than fear takes possession of his heart, the arrows of the Almighty drink up his spirit, the thunders of the law roll in his ears; he feels his life to be uncertain, and his body frail, He dreads death, because he knows that death would be to him the prelude of destruction; he dreads life, for life itself is intolerable, when the wrath of God is poured out into his soul. Many of you who are now before me have passed through that dreadful ordeal of suffering under a sense of the wrath of God. We, my brethren, shall never forget, to our dying day, that hour of desperate grief when first we discovered our lost estate. By the preaching of the Word, by the reading of the Scriptures, by prayer, or by some Providence, we were led to look within; we discovered the evil of our hearts, and we heard how terribly God would punish the transgressor. Do you not remember how we started from our beds in the morning, having slept uneasily, and bowed our knees in prayer, and prayed until the hot sweat ran down our brow; but rose without a hope that we had been heard? Do you not recollect how, in our business, we were sometimes so absent in mind, that those who were round about us thought that we must have been bereaved of our wits? Do you not well recollect how the best dainties of our meals seemed to have the bitterness of wormwood in them, and the sweetest draughts were mingled with gall; how all day long we sorrowed, and went to our bed at night with another prayer, still as full of agony and still as hopeless; and by night we could not sleep, but dreamed of the wrath to come, saw dreams more horrible than we had dreamed before; each night and day the wrath of God seemed to increase, and our pangs and agonies became more terrible? Oh, we shall never forget it; those of us who have passed through the same will never let that era be forgotten, for the time of its beginning was the time of our conversion, and the time of its end was the time of our salvation. Have I any here who are in this same state this morning? I am coming after you, and in coming after you I proclaim the words of my text, "Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him." Sinner, it shall be well with thee if thou art now made to fear the wrath of God on account of thy sin; if God the Spirit hath poured forth the vials of Almighty wrath into thy soul, so that thou art cast down and sore vexed. Think not thou shalt be destroyed; it shall be well with thee. Let me comfort thee now, whilst thou art suffering these things, remember that what thou sufferest is that which all God's people have had to suffer in a measure. Many poor hearts come to me when I am sitting to see the anxious ones, and at other times, and they tell me they are in such deep distress; surely never anyone felt as they feel. And when I begin

to unfold to them the experience of all saints, and tell them how it is a well-trodden path which almost every traveler to heaven has had to tread, they stand astonished, and think it cannot be so. I tell thee sinner, that thy deepest woes have been felt by some one, even more keenly than thou feelest them now. Thou sayest, "I sink in deep mire where there is no standing." Why, man, there have been some that have sunk far deeper than thou hast sunk. Thou art up to thy ancles; I have known some to have been up to the loins, and there have been some that have been covered over their very heads so that they could say, "All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me." Your distresses are very painful, but they are not singular, others have had to endure the same. Be comforted, it is not a desert island; others have been there too; and if they have passed through this, and won the crown, thou shalt pass through it, and inherit yet the glory of the believer on the breast of Christ.

But I will tell thee something else to comfort thee; I will put this question to thee—Wouldst thou wish to go back and become what thou once wast? Thy sins are now so painful, that thou canst scarce eat, or drink, or sleep. There was a time when thy sins never haunted thee, when thou couldst drink and may with Satan and with sin as merrily as anyone. Come, wouldst thou like to be as thou wast then? "No," I hear thee say, "no; my Master, my God, grieve me more, if so it pleaseth thee, but do not let me be hardened any more." Ask the poor strickened conscience, in the first agonies and throes of his grief, whether he would like to be a hardened sinner? "No," he says; and when he hears the blasphemer swear against God, the tear is in his eye; he says, "Lord, I thank thee for my miseries, if they deliver me from hardness of heart. I can extol thee for my agonies, if they save me from such dire presumption, such rebellion against thee." Well, then, be of good cheer, your condition, you see, is not the worst of all; there is a worse state yet. Oh, it thou hast come so far, hope thou in Christ, thou shalt come further yet. But the great consolation is this, Jesus Christ died for thee. If God the Holy Ghost hath shown thee that thou art dead in sin, and if he hath revealed to thee the desperate character of thine iniquity, and broken thee in pieces with penitence on account of thy guilt—hear me, I speak not now at hap-hazard, I speak with God's authority—Jesus Christ died for thee; yes, for thee, thou vilest of the vile. I am no general redemptionist, I believe Jesus Christ died for as many as will be saved; I do not believe he died in vain for any man alive. I have always believed that Christ was punished instead of men. Now, if he were punished in the stead of all men, I could see no justice in God punishing men again after having punished Christ for them. I hold and believe—and, I think, on Scriptural authority, that Jesus Christ died for all those who believe or will believe; and he was punished in the stead of all those who feel their need of a Saviour, and lay hold on him. The rest reject him, despise him, sin against God, and are punished for their sine. But those who are redeemed, having been blood-bought, shall not be lost. Christ's blood is too precious to have been shed for men who are damned. It is too awful a thing to think of the Saviour standing in a sinner's stead, and then that sinner after all having to bear his own

iniquities; I can never indulge a thought which appears to be so unrighteous to God, and so unsafe to men. All that the Saviour bought he shall have, all that his heavenly Father hath given him, he says, shall come unto him. Now here is something solid for thee, poor soul. I ask again, dost thou know and feel thyself to be lost and ruined? Then the Saviour bought thee, and will have thee; then he was punished for thee and thou never wilt be punished again; then he hung upon the cross for thee that thou mightest not perish. For thee there is no hell, so far as thou art concerned. The eternal lake is quenched; the dungeons of hell are broken open, their bars are cut in sunder. Thou art free; no damnation can ever seize thee, no devils can ever drag thee to the pit. Thou art redeemed, and thou art saved. "What!" sayest thou, "I redeemed! Why, sir, I am full of sin." It is the very reason why thou art redeemed. "But I feel myself to be the guiltiest of all the human race." Yes, and that is just the evidence that Christ died for thee. He says himself, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." If you have got abundance of good works, and think you can go to heaven by them, you will perish; but if you know your guilt, and confess it—it is not my affirmation, but the affirmation of the Scriptures—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom," says the Apostle, "I am chief." Lay hold on that, poor soul: and then I repeat to thee the text, "Yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him." It shall be well with thee yet, and black though thou art, thou shalt one day sing among the blood-washed ones in glory everlasting. That is the first stage of fearing God; we shall now proceed to another.

II. There are many who have believed, and are truly converted, who have a fear which I may call THE FEAR OF ANXIETY. They are afraid that they are not converted. They are converted, there is no doubt of it. Sometimes they know they are so themselves, but, for the most part, they are afraid. There are some people in the world who have a preponderance of fear in their characters it seems as if their mind, from its peculiar constitution, had a greater aptitude for the state of fear than for any other state. Why, even in temporal matters they are always fearing; and, when these poor souls get converted, they are always afraid that they are not so. First, they will tell you they are afraid they never repented enough; the work in their hearts, they say, was not deep; it was just superficial surface-ploughing, and never entered into their souls. Then they are quite sure they never came to Christ aright, they think they came the wrong way. How that can be no one knows, for they could not come at all except the Father drew them; and the Father did not draw them the wrong way, Still they hold that they did not come aright; then if that idea is knocked on the head, they say they do not believe aright; but when that is got rid of, they say, if they were converted they would not be the subject of so much sin. They say they can trust Christ, but they are afraid they do not trust him aright; and they always do, what you may, come back to the old condition; they are always afraid. And now, what shall I say to these good souls? Why, I will

say this, “Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him.” Not only those who believe, but those who fear, have got a promise, I would to God that they had more faith; I would that they could lay hold on the Saviour, and had more assurance, and even attain unto a perfect confidence; but if they cannot shall I utter a word that would hurt them? God forbid; “Surely it shall be with even with them that fear God, with them that fear before him.” There are some of these poor creatures who are the holiest and most heavenly minded people in all the world. I have seen men who, with poor, desponding spirits, have exhibited the most lovely graces. There has not been the blushing healthful beauty of the rose; but the lily hath its beauties, sickly though it seemeth, and these, though they be faint and weak, have eminently the graces of humility and meekness, of patience and endurance, and they practice more of meditation, more of self examination, more of repentance more of prayer, than any race of Christians alive. God forbid that I should vex their spirits: there are some of God’s best children who always grow in the shade of fear, and can scarcely attain to so much as to say, “I know whom I have believed.” Darkness suits them best, their eyes are weak, and much sunlight seems to blind them, they love the shadows; and though they thought they could sing, “I know my Saviour, I love him, and he loves me;” they go back again, and begin to groan in themselves, “Do I love the Lord; indeed, if it be so, why am I thus?”

Now, I am about to utter a great paradox—I believe that some of these poor fearing people have got the greatest faith of anybody in the world; I have sometimes thought that great fear, great anxiety, must have great faith with it to keep the soul alive at all. See that man drowning, there—there is another in the water too, I see. He in the distance thinks he can swim: a plank is thrown to him; he believes himself to be in no danger of sinking. Well he clutches the plank very leisurely, and does not seem to grasp it firmly. But this poor creature here, he knows he cannot swim, he feels that he must soon sink Now put the means of escape near him, how desperately he clutches it; how he seems as if he would drive his fingers through the plank! He clutches it for life or death, that is his all, for he must perish if he is not saved by that. Now, in this case, he that fears the most believes the most; and I do think it is so sometimes with poor desponding spirits. They have the greatest fear of hell, and the greatest fear of themselves, and the greatest dread that they are not right. Oh, what a faith they must have, when they are enabled to throw themselves on Christ, and when they can but whisper to themselves “I think that he is mine”—“Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear-before him.”

But I want to comfort these poor souls a little. I do not think a minister does well in killing the lambs; for where would be the sheep next year if he should do so? But at the same time it is his business to make the lambs grow into sheep if he can. And you who are fearing, I would not say a word to hurt you, but I would say a word to comfort you if I could; I would remind you that you are not fit to judge of yourself. You have been just now examining

yourself, and you came to the conclusion that you really are not a child of God. Now, you will not be offended with me, but I would not give one single farthing for your opinion of yourself. Why, I tell you, you have not any judgment. It is not long ago you were a base, presumptuous sinner, and then you thought yourself all right. I did not believe you then. Well, then you began to reform yourself. You practiced many good works, and thought, surely you were mending your pace to heaven then. Then I knew you were wrong. Now you are becoming a true believer in Christ, but you are very fearful, and you say you are not safe. I know you are; you are not fit to judge. I should not like to see you elevated to the bench; you would scarcely know how to deal with other men, for you would not know how to deal with yourself; and who is he that can deal with himself? We sometimes think ourselves proud, and we are never more humble than when we feel that we are proud. At other times, we think ourselves to be wonderfully humble, and we are never more proud than then. We sometimes say within ourselves, “Now I think I am overcoming my corruptions;” that is just the time when they are about to attack us most severely. At another time we are crying, “Surely I shall be cut off;” that is just the period when sin is being routed, because we are hating it the most and crying out the most against it. We are not qualified to fudge ourselves, our poor scales are so out of order, that they will never tell the truth. Now, then, just give up your own judgment, except thus far. Can you say that you “are a poor sinner and nothing at all, and that Jesus Christ is your all in all?” Then be comforted. You have no right to be anxious; you have no reason to be so. You could not say that if you had not been converted. You must have been quickened by grace, or else you would not be anxious at all; and you must have faith, or else you would not be able even to lay hold of Christ so much as to know your own nothingness and his all sufficiency. Poor soul! be comforted.

But shall I tell thee one thing? Dost thou know the greatest of God’s people are often in the same condition as thou art now? “No, no,” says the fearful soul, “I do not believe that, I believe that when persons are converted they never have any fear,” and they look at the minister, and they say, “Oh, but if I could be but like that minister; I know he never has doubts and fears. Oh, if I could be like old deacon So-and-so—such a holy man how he prays! Oh, if I could feel like Mr. So-and-so, who calls to visit me, and talks to me so sweetly. They never doubt.” Ah, that is because you do not know. Those whom you think to be the strongest, and are so in public, have their times of the greatest weakness, when they can scarcely know their own names in spiritual things. If one may speak for the rest, those of us who enjoy the greatest portions of assurance have times when we would give all the world to know ourselves to be possessors of grace; when we would be ready to sacrifice our lives if we might but have the shadow of a hope that we were in the love of Jesus Christ our Lord. Now, little one, if the giants go there, what wonder if the dwarfs must? What if God’s favourite and chosen ones, what if his valiant men, the body guard of Christ, those men whose swords are on their thighs, and who stand up for the truth and are its champions—if they sometimes

are weak, what wonder if thou shouldst be weak? What if the heirs of salvation and the soldiers of the cross sometimes feel their knees feeble and their hands hang down and their hearts faint, what wonder if thou, who art less than the least of all saints shouldst sometimes be in trouble too? Oh, be of good cheer; fear will never kill anybody. "Doubts and fears," said an old preacher, once, "are like the toothache nothing more painful, but never fatal." They will often grieve us, but they will never kill us, they distress us much but they will never burn the soul. Fears even do good at times. Let me not however, praise them too much. I heard a preacher say, the other day, that fear was a good housekeeper. I said, "So I have heard, but I do not believe it. She never will keep a cupboard full; she is a good doorkeeper; she can keep beggars and thieves away; she is a good housedog to guard us and protect us in the night, and warn us of dangers, lest we fall into them." The fear of anxiety then, is a good fear. Take this promise—"Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him."

III. And now, my brethren, in the next place there is A FEAR WHICH WORKS CAUTION. When we get a little further advanced in the Christian life, our present state is not so much a matter of anxiety as our future state. We believe that we shall never totally fall from grace. We hold it as a cardinal doctrine of our religion that by no means will God ever leave his people or suffer them to perish. But we often think within ourselves, I am afraid lest I should bring dishonor on the cause of Christ; I am afraid lest, in some moment of temptation, I shall be left to go astray; I am afraid lest I should lose that hallowed peace and that delightful joy which it has been my privilege to enjoy, and shall yet go back into the world. God grant I may not prove to be a hypocrite, after all! Now, I have hundreds of persons just now in this place, who are feeling like this, and I will tell you one ill effect of this fear. These persons say, "I dare not join the church, because I am afraid I shall fall." A friend mentions to them that they hold it to be their duty, if they have believed, to make a profession of their faith in baptism. They say, "Well, I believe it to be my duty to partake of the two institutions of our Saviour; I ought to be buried with him in baptism unto death; I ought also, I know, to hold fellowship with him in the Lord's supper, but I dare not join the church; for suppose I should bring dishonor upon the cause, suppose I should disgrace the church, what a sad thing it would be!" That fear is good, in itself. But do you think that you would not bring disgrace on Christ's cause as it is? You are always at the place of worship; you are never away. You were always looked upon as being one of the church, though you have not made a profession. Now, if you were to sin, would it not dishonor the church even now? You know your relatives and friends esteem you to be a Christian. You would scarce dishonor the church more if you were actually to join it; for you really are united with it. If you would be consistent, you must never go to the chapel any more. Just stop away; give up your seat; turn right down irreligious, and then you cannot dishonor the church. Do one or the other, but never think you will be saving Christ's church by dishonoring God, as you really are

doing now. And then I will ask you this question, Where do you think a man is safest—in the paths of obedience, or in the paths of disobedience? Now you know you are disobedient; you are quite sure of that. Do you think you are safer where your wayward will leads you, or where God's Spirit points the way? And remember this, if you cannot trust God to keep you standing, you must have a poor faith indeed. If you cannot just risk that and be united with the church, and hope that Christ will keep you, then I fear you will have some terrible fall. If you do not join the church, you will bring far more disgrace upon it by being outside it, than you would have done if you had been united with it and had been kept. Ah, friends, I believe that union with the Christian church is often a means under God, of preserving men from sin; for then they think there is a bond upon them, and a sacred claim, and many of them are more careful what they do. And I trust there would be the same check upon you.

But now, I daresay that the poor creature who has been uttering this, thinks I am about to condemn her; and the poor man who has been talking so thinks I would cut him off and say he is no child of God. God forbid! My text belongs to him. You are afraid you will fall into sin—"Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him." If you should tell me you were not afraid of falling, I would not have you in the church for the world; you would be no Christian. All Christians, when they are in a right state, are afraid of falling into sin. Holy fear is the proper condition of a child of God. Even the most confident will not go into presumption. He that knows his love to the Saviour, and his Saviour's love to him, is yet afraid lest he should dishonor him. If there be a man who has an assurance of such a kind, as to put fear out of the question, so that he is never afraid of sinning, I will tell him he has a satanic assurance, an assurance which came from Satan and not from God for the more assured we are of our own conversion, the more careful we shall be lest we should offend God, and the more fearful lest by word or look, or deed, we should grieve God's Holy Spirit. I love your fear, and love you too for it, you are my brother and sister in Jesus, if you can truly say that you fear lest you should sin. Seek then, my friends, to grow in this fear of caution, obtain more and more of it; and whilst thou dost not distrust the Saviour, learn to distrust thyself more and more every day.

IV. I shall not detain you many more minutes; I have only to notice in the next mace the fear which I may call THE FEAR OF JEALOUSY. Strong love will usually promote jealousy. "Love is as strong as death;" then comes the next, "Jealousy is cruel as the grave." We cannot love strongly without feeling some jealousy—I mean, not jealousy against the object of our love; for, "perfect love casteth out fear"—but jealousy against ourselves. "Oh what jealousy," says the Apostle, addressing the Corinthians, "what revenge," did grace work in you when you were first converted. The true believer, when he gets his Saviour in full possession, and in blissful communion, is so jealous lest any rival should intrude in his heart; he is afraid lest his dearest friend should get more of his heart than the Saviour has. He is

afraid of his wealth; he trembles at his health, at his fame, at everything that is dear to him, lest it should engross his heart. Oh, how often does he pray, “My Lord, let me not be of a divided spirit; cast down each idol—self-will, self-righteousness.” And I tell you the more he loves, the more he will fear lest he should provoke his Saviour by bringing a rival into his heart, and setting up an Antichrist in his spirit; so that fear just goes in proportion to love; and the bright love is congenial, and must walk side by side with the deepest jealousy and the profoundest fear. Seek, my brethren to know the meaning of communion, and you must know, then, the meaning of fear; for fear and communion must, to a great degree go together.

V. And now I will conclude by just mentioning that fear which is felt WHEN WE HAVE HAD DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS. Did you never, in the silence of the night, look up and view the stars, feeding, like sheep, on the azure pastures of the sky? Have you never thought of those great worlds, far, far away, divided from us by almost illimitable leagues of space? Did you never, whilst musing on the starry heavens, lose yourself in thoughts of God; and have you never felt, at such a time, that you could say with Jacob, “How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven.” Have you never seen the craggy hills lift their summits to the skies? Have you never marked the tempests sailing o’er them, and seen the thunder-cloud burst upon the mountain, and heard the heavens shake beneath the tramp of the Most High, and seen the skies all glaring red with fire, when God hath sent his thunder-bolts abroad; and have you not trembled that God was there, and in other and happier seasons have you not in your chamber been so wrapt in devotion, have you not so manifestly known the presence of God that you were filled with trembling? Fear took hold upon you and made all your bones to shake, not because you dreaded God, but because you then saw some of his greatness. It is said of Moses, that when he saw the burning bush he feared to look upon God. God is so great a Being, that the rightly constituted mind must always fear when it approaches into his presence. The Eastern subject, when he came before his king, regarded him as a being so infinitely superior to himself, that even in the vestibule he began to shake, and as he neared the throne he began to totter and his cheek was blanched with fear. Like Esther, he would faint when he came before the king, so glorious was his majesty. And if it be so with earthly monarchs, how fearful must it be to come into the presence chamber of the King of kings, and to feel one’s self near him! Why, I believe that even in heaven we shall have this kind of fear. Certainly the angels have it. They dare not look on God. They veil their faces with their wings, and whilst they cry aloud, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts yet they dare not view him. The very sight of him might destroy them, and they tremble at his presence. Now this kind of fear, if you have ever felt it, if it has been produced in your heart by contemplation of God, is a high and hallowed thing, and to you this promise is addressed—“Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him.”

And now, might I go round again this morning—I cannot do it personally, yet by my voice—to the poor trembling soul who is overcome with sin. Poor man, where art thou? Hath the devil got hold of thee, and have thy sins covered thee up, so that thou canst not see the face of the sun, and behold the light of mercy? Listen to me; you may never hope till you have left off hoping in yourself. You have never any right to believe, till you have nothing to believe in yourself. Until you have lost all, you have no right to take anything. But now, if you have lost all your own good works and righteousness, if you feel that there is no reason why you should be saved, that is the very reason why you should be. My Master bids me tell the naked to come to his heavenly wardrobe, and take his royal garment for their clothing. He bids me tell the hungry to haste away to his heavenly granaries, and feed upon the old corn of the kingdom to their very full. He bids me tell the thirsty that the river of life is broad and deep, and flows freely to all those who thirst after it. Now, sinner, if thou art sick of sin, and grieved at heart where thou standest, follow me in spirit in these words: “O Lord, I know my guilt, and I confess my misery. If thou dampest me to all eternity, thou wilt be just; but, O Lord, have mercy upon me, according to thy promise, which thou hast made in Christ Jesus, unto those who confess their faults.” If that came from your heart, go out of that door, and sing all the way home, for you are a pardoned sinner. You shall never see death—the second death, the death of the soul. Go home to your chamber! let your heart burst itself in tears of thankfulness. Go, and there prostrate yourself, and bless God that he has enabled you to see that only Jesus can do a helpless sinner good. And then, “go your way; eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart. Let your head lack no oil, and your face no ointment; for God hath accepted you; and you have a right to be happy. Live cheerfully and joyfully all the days of your life, hereafter and for ever.”