

“We Should Fear, Love and Trust in God Above All Things”

– Rev. J. C. Oehlschlaeger.

Here is something to learn for a lifetime. In eternity we shall learn fully what it is to fear, to love, and to trust in God above all things. Let us turn our hearts to the fear of God, that we may be wise, for the fear of God is the beginning of all wisdom. If we do not know God in holy fear and reverence we do not know Him at all. The fear of God is a service of God. We serve God in the first place by attaining to a true knowledge of Him. “And this is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him whom Thou hast sent, even Jesus Christ” – John 17:3. If we possess the true knowledge of Him we should be in holy fear of doing anything against it.

Such fears sanctifies by keeping from sin, as it kept pious Joseph clean from the allurements of Potiphar’s wife, and by opening the heart to ever increasing knowledge of God. “The fear of God is clean, enduring forever” (Psalm 19:9). “God giveth grace to the humble,” which humility, however, is nothing but humble fear of God. Coarse, reckless hearts have no true knowledge of God.

The fear of God makes firm and steady in the way of righteousness, for nothing is feared more than departure therefrom. Confusion, disgrace, persecution, loss of money, honor, and even life itself can not move the heart which stands in the fear of God. Nebuchadnezzar may heat his fiery furnace ten-fold; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego fear not its glowing heat. God-fearing Daniel fears not the lion’s den. Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace is not so hot as the flames of God’s wrath, and to fall into the jaws of hungry lions is not so dreadful as to fall into the hands of the living God: and Nebuchadnezzar’s favor? What is it, or the favor of any mortal or any number of mortals compared with the favor of our God? Which would you sooner lose? Who is your God? O, I fear to lose the favor of God, for on it depends my salvation. His grace is my life – my all.

To such fear of God belongs also *love*. Where fear and love are not united, there fear remains servile and bound under the law, and is rather dread than fear. Such fear does not unite with God, but separates from Him, and even drives to recklessness and despair.

But where love is united with fear, there is no bondage, no pressure, but blessed liberty, so that the heart is subject to nothing but God and has all its joy in Him. Love is the life of all worship of God. It raises the heart above every creature, frees it from the burden of its own vain desires and fixes it alone on God. Psalm 73:25-26 – “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And

there is none on earth that I desire beside Thee. Let my flesh and my heart fail – God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” O, what a portion has the heart that loves God! To such a heart God’s word is more precious than gold, yea, than much fine gold, and sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. To such a heart everything is sweet, because it comes from God and draws it nearer to God. It even glories in the cross. From the manner in which we bear our afflictions we may judge our love to God. Are you enabled to thank God even for your tribulations, then you truly love Him. The unregenerate murmur against God and curse His holy name when pains and losses come upon them. But a child of God comforts himself in the words of the Psalmist, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God” – Psalm 42:11.

Trust also belongs to the first commandment because God is to be worshiped not as an inactive being, but as a God who cares for us and from whom cometh every good and perfect gift. Although our subsistence ordinarily depends immediately upon temporal things, as food, raiment, and help in time of need, yet it is God in whom we should trust. It is He alone who bestows them. The child’s food is the bread in the cupboard but although it sees nothing there, it takes no care, but is happy in trust, for it knows its father will provide. So should we also not trust in the gifts, but in the Giver, and be as happy when we see nothing, as when our purses, cellars and barns are full, in trust to God that He will provide. He is our God, and not the gifts which He bestows. If it be His will He can help in ways and by means altogether unknown to us.

But we should not only trust in His help, but also in His love. If in a special case help is denied us (at least according to our opinion), we should still rest assured that it is well for us, for God does all things well. Such trust in God is the highest exercise of faith, without which the first commandment can only condemn us as altogether idolatrous. See an example of this trust in Abraham. The promise of God is sufficient, he obeys God and prepares to sacrifice his only son, trusting against hope that God could and would provide the blessed Seed. The highest trust we can place in God is this, that we rely firmly and fully on His faithful saying that we, though sinners, are reconciled unto Him through His Son. This is the highest trust we can have in Him, without which we shall despair in the perils of death.

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