

*The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.... (Psalm 19:8-9)*

In this time when preachers seem feverishly occupied with trying to persuade every rebellious, God-hating sinner that God loves him and that He would never do anything to cause him any inconvenience or discomfort, the idea that God ought be feared meets with suspicious skepticism if not outright unbelief. This is because our minds do not appreciate the diverse ideas portrayed by “fear.”

There is a fear that is craven, cowardly...that reduces man’s dignity and makes him a cringing animal. Such fear has nothing in it but terror and torment. Nothing clean or noble can arise from it. It is a fear that does not edify but rather intimidates. Rather than enlarging the man it reduces him. Rather than liberating the person it captivates him, puts him into bondage, makes him a mindless slave to that which he fears.

This fear, of course, cannot be the fear in view of the psalmist for “ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear...” (Romans 8:15). Again, “perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment.” (I John 4:18)

There is a fear that is corrupting. This is a covetous, idolatrous fear that makes men honor and defer to men and principles, not because they are right and moral, not because they are intimidated by them, but because by doing so they hope to profit. Where such fear reigns, truth and right are not guiding principles, but gain and power. This fear is impermanent and fickle. We fear only those who have power to help or hurt us financially, and we fear them only so long as they have that power. When they lose it we have to fear the new power; and woe is us if we have made an enemy of him. We can never rest or have peace in such fear because we never know whom we must fear next.

But there is a fear that is clean. This is the fear of the Lord. This fear is neither craven nor corrupting; it is a reverent, adoring, loving, respectful, worshipful fear. It is pure, because it ennobles, makes us single in mind and heart, directs us into a practice of life that is holy and just. It is liberating in that it utterly frees us from fear of all men, elements and powers. We fear nothing else simply because we fear God; knowing that He has sworn to care for those who fear Him, we rest in quietness, contentment and peace.

-C.M.