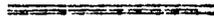


NO. 118.

R E V E R E N C E .

An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,
At Forest Gate, 15/4/18.



R E V E R E N C E .

An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,

Forest Gate, Mon. 15.4.18.

I want to speak, as the Lord shall enable, on the subject of "Reverence". The word "Reverence" is like to the word "Fear". We can easily see this if we take off its end. "Reverence" shortens to "revere". "Revere" is similar to "fear". Reverence toward God is a right fear of God. When we commence the study of fear, we approach a topic which has two very distinct aspects. There are few negative commands in Scripture that are more repeated than "Fear not". Many ~~have~~ of God's dear children, having passed through problems, have found a sweetness in the continual command, "Fear not", "Fear not", "Fear not". To collect the passages would be helpful. But this is ONE aspect of fear. Another aspect concerns the fear that hath torment, as 1 John 4 says, and we remember the prophecy of men's hearts failing them for fear, (Luke 21. 26). Thanks be unto God for the totally distinct aspect, the fear of the Lord which is approved; which, far from having torment, is the beginning of wisdom, and far from being condemned, it is commended, yea and commanded. I think I am right in saying that fourteen times over, the book of Proverbs encourages to the fear of the Lord, and this is an essential part of a right recognition of God. You recollect how clearly, in Malachi, God shows that all His Names have a corresponding responsibility. He says, If I be a Father, where is Mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is My fear? The Father is entitled to honour, and the Master is entitled to fear. Every name of God has a RESPONSIBILITY for us Oh how important that we should realise this. Again in the 119th Psalm, the psalmist is exceeding happy. It is true he says, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes", but there is also the declaration "I rejoiced at Thy word as one that findeth great

spoil". "How sweet are Thy words", and so forth. But he definitely says, "My heart standeth in awe of Thy word". In other language, we see he has a deep reverence for God, a deep concern that God may be exalted. "My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee, and I am afraid of Thy judgments." What is yet more remarkable is that in Scripture written for saints of the present dispensation there is the strongest approval of fear AND TREMBLING. I feel somewhat convinced that if such language were not occurring in the epistles by the Holy Spirit through Paul, there are a large number who would view such wording as extremely legalistic, and they would say, "It is quite out of keeping with the present dispensation". But to prevent this misunderstanding, the Holy Spirit has put this instruction in the epistles through Paul. The apostle himself was at Corinth with weakness, fear, and much trembling. He encourages believers to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling;- Phil. 2. 12: and in Eph. 6.5 we have the thought of servants being obedient to their masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of their heart as unto Christ. In like manner in 1 Pet. 1. 17 the apostle of the circumcision says, "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear". I would repeat, this is not the fear which hath torment, but it is a godly fear, a trembling before Him lest we grieve and dishonour Him! A sense of His greatness and an awe of Him. There are other parallel expressions which would prevent the sad confusion which men frequently make between intimacy and familiarity, and, likewise, between fear and a condition of being frightened. The believer has an intimacy, but is to avoid a mere familiarity as to God. He is to cultivate a fear, but he should never be terrified, or afraid with any amazement. These things are confused by man, but God has marked them out as quite distinct. We, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." That is a precious command. Our God is a Consuming Fire. God is not a man, and He is not to be

treated as a man. He is not to be treated lightly. God as a Father expects honour. The very name "Father" which brings Him so close to us is, as we have seen, associated with this in Malachi, and where the Lord Jesus unveils the Name "Father" He gives the same thought. For it is "Our Father, Which art in heaven, HALLOWED BE THY NAME". The very first petition is that the name of the Father may be hallowed, sanctified, set apart, exalted, glorified. "Hallowed be Thy Name". We find a remarkable case of a man who drew very near to God in the earlier Scriptures. Moses spoke with God as a man speaketh with his friend; or, rather, the Lord spoke with him thus. We must distinguish these two aspects. The Lord is not ashamed to call His people brethren, but there is no warrant in Scripture for them to address Him as Elder Brother, THAT is familiarity. The Lord will say to His people, Well done, good and faithful servant, but there are none who will go before Him and say, I have been a faithful servant. THEY will say, We have been unprofitable servants. Often to adopt the language which the Lord uses in mercy would be to pervert the language, for it would be setting forth of a proud self-assertion. Hence just as we find that Moses emphasizes God's glory, we find the privileged Moses particularly blamed and kept out from the land ~~was~~ because HE BELIEVED NOT GOD TO SANCTIFY HIM. He did not honour God and exalt God as he should have done. We realise that there is a great need for a holy sense of the majesty of God. Job spoke too glibly about going into God's presence, and defending his case there, till God revealed Himself, and then Job said, I abhor myself, mine eye seeth Thee. He realised the greatness of God, and God said, Job hath spoken of Me the thing that is right, - a very beautiful testimony. Then further we have brought before us the 45th Psalm which sets forth very beautifully the nearness of the Lord's people to Him, and that they are brought into bridal relationship with Him. But we have the striking statement there, He is **THEY** LORD and worship thou Him. Yes, beloved friends, we

we never realise too much the greatness of God. He is great and greatly to be praised, and as our very wall reminds us, greatly to be feared in the assembly of His saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are about Him". We dare not treat God lightly. Now that is the general aspect of our study. I am convinced that our particular need is, (I speak to myself as to you), our need is that the Holy Spirit should apply this in the details of our life, where we often overlook true manifestations of reverence.

I suppose that we have no hesitation in the first thought, that we are to reverence God in our hearts. "Sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself, and let Him be your Fear and let Him be your Dread", is explained as "Sanctify the Lord in your hearts" 1 Pet. 3. 15. We have no difficulty in realising this, that God is to be feared, honoured, exalted in the inner recesses of our heart. We are to think of His majesty. The idea of a believer's body being a temple implies how everything in that believer is to centre round the worship of God. It is not only a house, but a temple. A believer is a worshipping person. The characteristic of the whole ^{experience} ~~person~~ is to be "worship". It is here that we fall short, but we can easily apply this thought in general and see at once it is right. Worshipping God in the heart, and fearing Him, and having a dread of grieving Him, - this is a true internal reverence, but our worship must not only be within, there must be the actions without. Our body is to EXPRESS what is inside, and though we cannot "see" the worship within, the outer arrangements of the temple must indicate what building it is. It is worthy of notice that men are religious in a number of ways. They have an attitude of worship, and the child of God needs to be impressed with the thought that many who are serving idols seem to show more devotion than the believer, - but this is a disgrace. We ought by our actions to express what God has put within. I am thinking, primarily, of actions in our own individual life, and first; - Is there not a wall for reverence as to prayer, - individual prayer? I suppose all of us find that one of the greatest dangers is a

careless manner of private prayer. The very fact that our private prayer is frequent, and rightly frequent, is often made the background for a lightness in its manner. In other words, the very earnestness with which we seek to have prayer morning, noon, and night, as it were, would seem to be Satan's opportunity for making us indifferent, and oftentimes, I suppose, in our very kneeling down we find that we readily place ourselves in a posture which tends toward sleepiness, and thus indifference rather than a godly trembling. I suppose every believer must feel that though God is not a taskmaster, and that though God delights in His people's prayers, even when they are tired out, yet we often take "advantage" of His love, to put our body in a position which invites a lack of devotional enthusiasm. Our faces buried in our hands help to send our brains to sleep, and thus we are apt to put aside all intensity. Doubtless the Holy Spirit knew this when He emphasized the forms of prayer, as kneeling and standing, and when He also laid a stress upon the stretching out of the hands; for kneeling, unless there is a measure of stretching out of the hands is apt to become quite as lazy as sitting down. Oh, beloved friends, I would speak to myself as well as to you, that we may be careful not to ask the Lord to keep us out of temptation, and then run into it. If we want to be awake with an intensity in prayer, let us not put ourselves in the position of going to sleep. If we want to be reverent, let us not recline our bodies and rest our heads in a way which would easily tend toward the grossest irreverence. God should be honoured and exalted as to our prayer.

Secondly, God is to be revered in our use of His Name. The believer should avoid all language which lacks reverence. Some expressions are ALWAYS out of place. There are many who use the name of God very lightly, provided it is not a usual name of God; they use exclamations which drag in some name of the Lord. Believers should stand aloof from this altogether. But even right expressions must be used carefully. Our old English "God forbid" does not occur in the original Greek.

It is put in by man, and the tendency is found among not a few to use such an expression, or "Praise the Lord", or "Hallelujah" in a way which is quite unbecoming His reverence. Only a man who bows before God as Nehemiah, is able to engage in ejaculatory prayer with becoming manner. Our language also should be careful as to abbreviations. Have you not heard many who profess the Name of the Lord say "D.V." quite glibly, forgetting that they are shortening the Name of God, by the letter "D", and that they are uttering it in an offhand and almost careless manner. Even when we say "If the Lord will" we should be careful to realise WHO He is. THIS should not be merely an expression uttered by our lips. We want grace to FEEL what we say. There is such a danger lest, with frequency of utterance, words should become mere words to us and nothing more.

I go a step further. The believer should be reverent in his actions toward the things which are related to God, and associated with Him. It is not encouraging to see a believer use his Bible "roughly". It is not encouraging to see a believer put it aside in a careless way. I do not mean that we are to worship paper and ink. I do not mean that we are to hold books in our hands as though they were our gods. There is a danger that Satan will turn EVERYTHING away from the Lord. But, Oh, beloved friends, in avoiding one unlikely extreme, do not run into the other likely extreme. The other, and alas usual, extreme, is to be careless about the things of God. Careless about our Bibles, careless about that which is associated with the Lord. In this connection, may I suggest that the way in which believers often pile a bumper of other books on the top of their Bibles hardly suggests a due care for the Scriptures. I do not say that the heaping up of other books damages a Bible. But is it wise? Does it suggest reverence to OTHERS?

Further, there is a need for reverence which will show itself in the quality of all our home and business actions. A reverence for God which trembles to grieve Him, which trembles lest there should be an excusing of sin. A clear conscience is

very precious., not only on ONE ~~text~~^{point}, but as to all details. We should dread dishonouring the Name of God by breaking His appointments and showing a carelessness - let this word not be repeated in vain, - a carelessness as to His will.

I pass next to consider the assembly of the saints where God is greatly to be feared. Now, I suppose, beloved friends, that the oldest Christian is still prone to extremes, and he is to be careful lest in revolt from mere formalism he exalts "informalism". The Corinthians had little gatherings, and assembly meetings. In the little gatherings they seem to have definitely put aside certain forms of reverence, and into the assembly gathering they brought their meal, or rather just prior to the assembly gathering they, having brought their meals, eat them, and some fellow believers were quite overlooked and discarded. Then after such selfish and indulgent feasts those gathered went on with that which claimed to be the Lord's Supper. The apostle spoke with a tremendous severity in this connection. He said, Have ye not houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the church of God? He did not mean that the structure was the church of God, but that the assembling of God's people was a deeply solemn matter, that the Lord Who particularly presences Himself where two or three are gathered into His Name, has a special stress upon the united worship of those who enter into the words "In the midst of a called out assembly I will sing praise unto Thee". Not only is a believer raised to a great dignity as a believer; but a company of believers is of peculiar importance because of what it is to Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit in the midst. God made certain arrangements for Israel because He walked in the camp, and THEREFORE THE CAMP WAS HOLY. God's arrangements for His people in the olden times have many parallels now; just as the non-muzzling of the ox that treadeth out the corn was to give striking teaching for saints to-day. Nothing is unimportant. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints".

The apostle throughout this chapter emphasizes that the thought is GOD'S exaltation. When he makes arrangement for "sisters" as to all their prayer, he does not simply suggest relationship to other fellow creatures, though he does mention this. He does not only indicate position as to angels, though he does refer to this, but he reaches the climax in connection with the thought "Is it comely to pray thus unto GOD? Now we have the same aspect further on in the chapter. Despise ye the church of GOD? It is because it belongs to GOD that there should be reverence. Now I take it we acknowledge that all ^{ir}reverence in a gathering is despising God, for that which despised a church of God was, and is, despising something which was important because it belonged, and belongs, to God. His presence should cause us to have a reverence. Now this has a twofold bearing. First, as to ourselves individually. We should be very careful if anything hinders OUR due behaviour, but the Corinthians were particularly blamed for the effect of their actions upon others, and we need to enter into the same thought. Anything that takes other believers away from a fitting reverence is CRUEL. It is despising a church of God, or that which is in measure parallel, and even when only a few believers are gathered apart from the breaking of bread, as we are gathered this evening, it is serious to disturb worship.

Oh, beloved friends, it is comparatively easy for us to see the need for reverence when we are talking together of the things of God and never to speak lightly of Him then. It is comparatively easy for us to SAY we will have reverence for God that is afraid of ^{altering} ~~breaking~~ His appointed will. But we want to go a step further. We do want that we should be careful about the LITTLE things which hinder communion with God, which, imperceptibly, hinder power in a meeting. The Lord is equal to all emergencies. When we preach God's gospel at a street corner we are sometimes in the midst of utter confusion and the Lord's people have experienced the joy of His presence

like Stephen in the midst of a hubbub of an excited crowd. Some of us present can remember prayer-meetings in Aldgate Avenue amidst the din of continual noise at the door, which one would have said would have naturally prevented the whole of worship: but God was, and is, equal to such things when we cannot stop them. When there is the ~~wildness~~^{wildness} of the sinful heart let loose to try and break up that which is service unto God, God can give a peace of mind amid it all, but when that which hinders reverence is our own fault and can itself be hindered, we should, by His grace, deal with it firmly and sternly. Perhaps in this connection I ought to say, speaking with one who was recently with us for a few days, respecting the Lord's Supper, I found that there was considerable difficulty in his fullest enjoyment of the gathering, though it was an evening when the Lord blessed us very much, - a considerable difficulty because of the little helps to irreverence of some moving about in the meeting. Perhaps such came in late, and, as a result, another "difficulty", and another - of various kinds - will seem to intrude, and perplex and confuse I feel it is only right to mention this. I believe that if children of God would unite in prayer, lateness on the Lord's day, at least, will be a thing of the past, and that our gracious God will manifest (as parents are more and more spiritually concerned in the home) - will manifest that He has power to keep the little ones quiet in the gathering of His people. I do not for one moment feel that believers should lose the privilege of breaking bread because they have little ones in their family, - that would be, I think, committing an act which grieves the Lord; but I equally feel that it is their responsibility to expect, and all our responsibilities to expect, and to act accordingly, that God will prevent such hindrances to the worship of His people. In this connection, may I point out how often a believer will cause irreverence and hinder worship even by just turning round in the meeting. It appears a very slight action, but it hinders others. Sometimes a believer may say

"just a word" to another while the gathering is going on. This can considerably hinder reverence. I suppose in nearly every case the word could have been kept back till afterwards, or omitted altogether. There is not a necessity for it. I am not pleading for the exaltation of a building, but that there should be a quietness when children of God are gathered! Though not pleading for the exaltation of a building, I do feel that the building where we gather to worship God and to honour Him is oftentimes more likely to see quiet and reverent meetings if there is a quietness, within, and outside, it, BEFORE the meetings and AFTERWARDS. To glibly say, "Oh the meeting is not on and the building is nothing" would be to fail in the realisation of the solemnity of God and His majesty and His glory. It is easier to hinder others than we know. I feel in this connection that those who do not know the Name of the Lord, who are not His people, should be taught and urged to show a definite respect for the concern of those who are His people, whether they be young or old, should be kept back from any irreverence of hurrying about in a meeting-room when children of God are just preparing for worship, or have just finished worship. Worship is so solemn, for God is so holy. Even the moving of a form, or table, may interrupt others. Details of arrangement may cause perplexity, and may take the mind off the Lord. Beloved friends, we are all apt to see the faults of others more than our own. We are all apt to think the little trifling things cannot be avoided when they are our own actions. I do not want a believer to say, Oh I must keep away from the gathering because I have a cough. I do not want a believer if suffering from a cold to be in dread the whole evening if he or she should disturb by coughing; but I do feel that the power and the grace of God can even deal with a cough, and that oftentimes we are more careless if we have a cough ourselves than we desire others to be. We can often bury every disturbing noise more fully than we think, that there may be a quietness and a help to the solemnity of reverence before our glorious and gracious God. I have only mentioned a few things,

but I want them to be pondered in the Holy Spirit. There are hundreds of other things. Let us search our hearts that we may show what we can do to prevent a lack of quietness before God. I am quite aware that in the week many MUST come in from their business when the meeting is started. Yet I would ask them to avoid moving about the room during prayer or singing of a hymn of praise. I am quite aware that coming from their business they must be late, nor does this wrongly hinder us. God overrules when the problem is necessary. Unnecessary troubles need to be put on one side.

I would earnestly, therefore, ask God's dear people to make these things a matter of prayer, and to seek grace from Him that in the power of the Holy Spirit there may be obedience and a concern which will henceforth glorify His Name.
