Proverbs - Commentaries by John Thomas Mawson

Scripture Truth: Volume 1, Fear of God, The

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“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10).

We are impressed by the great need of the fear of God when dealing with divine things. No one can rightly either minister the truth or receive it who is not walking in this fear. To traffic in the things of God without it is disastrous, and the man who attempts it can only miss his way, and wander into the bog of error, where, lured on by the will-o’-th’-wisp of human thought, he is in danger of becoming enshrouded at last in the outer darkness of total apostasy.

“There is no fear of God before their eyes” is the Divine declaration as to man in his natural state, and this lies at the root of all his folly; but this awful condition is not only seen in notoriously profane and Godless men, but it is painfully prominent in many who pose as ministers of righteousness. They have laid rude hands upon the precious Truth that proceeded from the Father, which was fully declared by the Son in Manhood, and which is now unfolded to the subject heart by the Holy Spirit. With glib and impious lips they have dared to deny these great verities and to proclaim in their stead God-dishonoring doctrines, pernicious things, profane and vain babblings, the doctrines of devils.

These things “eat as doth a canker,” they spread like leaven, and the authority of the Word has been weakened thereby in the souls of many.

Saints of God, have we taken sufficiently to heart the fact of this open and blatant apostasy? has it caused us to grieve in secret, and driven us to our knees in prayer, that God in His great mercy would revive in the hearts of His people the fear of the Lord, and a holy reverence for the Scriptures?

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” and by it we depart from the paths of folly; it clears away the fogs and mists that gather about the soul; it delivers from that fatal color-blindness which cannot discern between truth and error; by it things become sharply defined and set in their right relations, and as a ship is held in its course by the helm, so the soul is kept by the fear of God in the track of eternal truth, and that irrespective of the thoughts of men, for when God — the LIVING GOD — is a reality, men and the things of time shrink into their proper insignificance.

In the fear of God we shall be reverent listeners to His word; it will be to us as the candle of the Lord searching our inward parts, and bringing us to heart-renunciation of everything that would lead from God. By that word our souls shall live, and in the light of it our feet will discover straight paths. We shall be in subjection to the Holy Spirit, so that we may know the Divine interpretation instead of leaning on our own understanding, while our souls will be filled with adoration, because of the holy privilege afforded us of having to say to these things at all.

Malachi’s days were days of great departure from the truth, but in the midst of all the darkness that enshrouded the mass, there were those of whom God signified His especial approval — these “feared the Lord and thought upon His Name,” and they were accounted of, the Lord of Hosts as His “special treasure” (Mal. 3:16,17, margin).

That was at the end of the last dispensation; we are now evidently near the end of the present day of grace; “wherefore.... let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”