

CHRISTIAN AND HOPEFUL

“RIGHT FEAR”

So I saw in my dream, that they went on apace before, and *Ignorance* he came hobbling after. Then said *Christian* to his companion, It pities me much for this poor man; it will certainly go ill with him at last.

2. **Hope.** Alas! there are abundance in our town in his condition, whole families, yea, whole streets, (and that of Pilgrims too;) and if there be so many in our parts, how many, think you, must there be in the place where he was born?

3. **Chr.** Indeed the Word saith, *He hath blinded their eyes, lest they should see, &c.*

4. But now we are by ourselves, What do you think of such men? Have they at no time, think you, convictions of sin, so consequently fears that their state is dangerous?

5. **Hope.** Nay, do you answer that question yourself, for you are the elder man.

6. **Chr.** Then I say, sometimes (as I think) they may; but they being naturally ignorant, understand not that such convictions tend to their good; and therefore they do desperately seek to stifle them, and pre-

sumptuously continue to flatter themselves in the way of their own hearts.

7. **Hope.** I do believe, as you say, that fear tends much to men's good, and to make them right at their beginning to go on Pilgrimage.

The good use of fear.

8. **Chr.** Without all doubt it doth, if it be right; for so says the Word, *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom.*

Job 28. 28.
Psal. 111.10
Prov. 1. 7.
Ch. 9. 10.

9. **Hope.** How will you describe right fear?

10. **Chr.** True or right fear is discovered by three things: ¹

Right fear.

1. By its rise, It is caused by saving convictions for sin.

2. It driveth the soul to lay fast hold of Christ for salvation.

3. It begetteth and continueth in the soul a great reverence of God, his Word and ways, keeping it tender, and making it afraid to turn from them, to the right hand or to the left, to any thing that may dis-

¹ The author makes a good distinction betwixt that fear of the Lord, which is a fruit of the Spirit, and that slavish fear which arises from selfish considerations, and instead of leading to Christ, keeps the soul at a distance from him.

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honour God, break its peace, grieve the Spirit, or cause the enemy to speak reproachfully.

11. **Hope.** Well said; I believe you have said the truth. Are we now almost got past the Enchanted ground?

12. **Chr.** Why, art thou weary of this discourse?

13. **Hope.** No, verily, but that I would know where we are.

14. **Chr.** We have not now above two miles further to go thereon. But let us return to our matter. Now the ignorant know not that such convictions that tend to put them in fear, are for their good, and therefore they seek to stifle them.

15. **Hope.** How do they seek to stifle them?

16. **Chr.** 1. They think that those fears are wrought by the Devil; (tho' indeed they are wrought of God;) and thinking so, they resist them, as things that directly tend to their overthrow.

2. They also think that these fears tend to the spoiling of their faith, (when, alas! for them, poor men that they are, they have none at all!) and therefore they harden their hearts against them.

3. They presume they ought not to fear, and therefore in despite of them wax presumptuously confident.

4. They see that those fears tend to take away from them their pitiful old self-holiness, and therefore they resist them with all their might.

17. **Hope.** I know something of this myself; before I knew myself, it was so with me.²

18. **Chr.** Well, we will leave, at this time, our neighbour *Ignorance* by himself, and fall upon another profitable question.

19. **Hope.** With all my heart, but you shall still begin.

20. **Chr.** Well then, did you not know, about ten years ago, one *Temporary* in your parts, who was a forward man in religion then?

21. **Hope.** Know him! yes, he dwelt in *Graceless*, a town about two miles off of *Honesty*, and he dwelt next door to one *Turnback*.

22. **Chr.** Right, he dwelt under the same roof with him. Well, that man was much awakened once; I believe that then he had some sight

Italk about one Temporary.

Where he dwelt.

He was towardly once.

² By the remembrance of their own mistakes, and the working of their hearts in the times of ignorance, believers are enabled to account for the workings of the hearts of others. A faithful experienced minister, while he sets forth what has passed in his own mind, hold up a glass, in which others may see their faces; and though a perfect stranger to them, some are constrained to say, “He told me all things that I have done.”

Why ignorant persons do stifle convictions.

1. In general

2. In particular.

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of his sins, and of the wages that were due thereto.

23. **Hope.** I am of your mind, for (my house not being above three miles from him) he would oft times come to me, and that with many tears. Truly I pitied the man, and was not altogether without hope of him: But one may see, it is not every one that cries, *Lord, Lord*,—

24. **Chr.** He told me once, that he was resolved to go on pilgrimage, as we do now; but all of a sudden he grew acquainted with one *Saveself*; and then he became a stranger to me.

25. **Hope.** Now, since we are talking about him, let us a little enquire into the reason of the sudden backsliding of him and such others.

26. **Chr.** It may be very profitable, but do you begin.

27. **Hope.** Well then, there are, in my judgment, four reasons for it.

1. Though the consciences of such men are awakened, yet their minds are not changed:³ therefore,

³ Though there is no conversion without conviction of sin, there may be strong convictions which do not issue in conversion. Unless sin be hated in itself, as well as the just consequences of it feared, it will retain its dominion in the soul. The truth of God's Word may, in a measure, be apprehended without a saving change; but its beauty, goodness, and suitableness can only be discovered by that divine light, which is an infallible token of salvation.

when the power of guilt weareth away, that which provoked them to be religious ceaseth: wherefore they naturally turn to their own course again; even as we see the dog that is sick of what he hath eaten, so long as his sickness prevails, he vomits and casts up all: not that he doth this of a free mind (if we may say a dog has a mind) but because it troubleth his stomach; but now, when his sickness is over, and so his stomach eased, his desires being not at all alienated from his vomit, he turns him about and licks up all; and so it is true which is written, *The dog is turned to his own vomit again*. This I say; being hot for heaven by virtue only of the sense and fear of the torments of Hell; as their sense of hell and the fears of damnation chills and cools, so their desires for heaven and salvation cool also: so then it comes to pass, that when their guilt and fear is gone, their desires for heaven and happiness die, and they return to their course again.

2. Another reason is, they have slavish fears that do overmaster them; I speak now of the fears that they have of men: *For the fear of men bringeth a Snare*. So then though they seem to be hot for heaven so long as the flames of Hell are about their ears, yet when that

Without this light, the strongest effects of external means, and the most promising appearances will, sooner or later, wither and come to nothing. That dangerous companion, *Save-self*, will, like Barabbas, the robber and murderer, be preferred before Christ.

2 Pet. 2. 22.

Prov. 29. 25.

Reasons why
towardly
ones
go back.

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terror is a little over, they betake themselves to second thoughts, namely, that 'tis good to be wise, and not to run (for they know not what) the hazard of losing all, or at least of bringing themselves into unavoidable and unnecessary troubles, and so they fall in with the world again.

3. The shame that attends religion lies also as a block in their way; they are proud and haughty, and religion in their eye is low and contemptible: therefore when they have lost their sense of Hell, and wrath to come, they return again to their former course.

4. Guilt, and to meditate terror, are grievous to them; they like not to see their misery before they come into it, though perhaps the sight of it first, if they loved that sight, might make them fly whither the righteous fly and are safe; but because they do, as I hinted before, even shun the thoughts of guilt and terror, therefore when once they are rid of their awakenings about the terrors and wrath of God, they harden their hearts gladly, and choose such ways as will harden them more and more.

28. **Chr.** You are pretty near the business, for the bottom of all is, for want of a change in their mind and will. And therefore they are but like the felon that standeth before the judge; he quakes and trembles, and seems to repent most heartily; but the bottom of all is, the fear of the halter; not that he hath any detesta-

tion of the offence, as it is evident, because, let but this man have his liberty, and he will be a thief, and so a rogue still; whereas, if his mind was changed, he would be otherwise.

29. **Hope.** Now I have shewed you the reasons of their going back, do you shew me the Manner thereof.

30. **Chr.** So I will willingly.

*How the
apostate goes
back.*

1. They draw off their thoughts, all that they may, from the remembrance of God, death, and judgment to come.

2. Then they cast off by degrees private duties, as closet-prayer, curbing their lusts, watching, sorrow for sin, and the like.

3. Then they shun the company of lively and warm Christians.

4. After that they grow cold to public duty, as hearing, reading, godly conference, and the like.

5. Then they begin to pick holes, as we say, in the coats of some of the godly, and that devilishly, that they may have a seeming color to throw religion (for the sake of some infirmity they have spied in them) behind their backs.

6. Then they begin to adhere to, and associate themselves with carnal, loose, and wanton men.

7. Then they give way to carnal and wanton discourses in secret; and glad are they if they can see such things in any that are counted honest, that they may the more boldly do it through their example.

C H R I S T I A N A N D H O P E F U L “ R I G H T F E A R ”

8. After this, they begin to
play with little sins openly.

9. And then being hardened,
they shew themselves as they are.

Thus being launched again into the
gulf of misery, unless a miracle of
grace prevent it, they everlastingly
perish in their own deceivings. †

NOTES:
