

a natural transition, he is led in contrast to his previous meditations to contemplate the character of God, and to draw from it such joys and comforts as His goodness is so well calculated to afford. From this, as a conclusion, he is induced to pray for a continuance of that protection which he and all the faithful people of God have ever experienced; while in faith he sees the downfall and final destruction of those that work iniquity. We shall review the first four verses as they occur in their order.

1st verse—"The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes."

These are the words of a man much experienced in the ways of mankind. No man knew better than David what it was to have the fear of God habitually before his eyes, and he knew that with such a state of mind as this implies, wickedness was quite inconsistent. It is true that by the corruption of human nature, he himself was led into deep and hideous sins, but the fear of the Lord ever inspired him to the deepest humiliation and repentance, and he finally triumphed over every evil propensity, and was denominated "the man according to God's own heart."

The fear of the Lord is generally understood in Scripture to signify a holy reverence and affection for his person, attributes and ordinances. When we fear the Lord, we have not only a dread of his displeasure and coming judgments, but we have also an ardent desire for his favor. We have a regard for his excellency, and a zeal for his glory. We feel ourselves animated by a pious submission to his will and a grateful remembrance of his benefits. We feel a sincere delight in engaging in his worship, and in endeavoring to render a conscientious obedience to his commands. Knowing these to be the feelings and character of the man who fears God, the experience of the Psalmist led him to declare, as if it were a truth seen in the light of its own evidence that no man could possibly be in the habitual fear of God who was a worker of iniquity. The great truth which is contained in the verse before us is, that the state of the heart in regard to the fear of God is manifested by the outward actions of men. Saul professed to have a reverence for God, who had raised him from an obscure station to be king over Israel, but his actions corresponded not with his professions. Instead of serving the Lord as he was commanded, and doing all things for the advancement of his kingdom and glory, his conduct was that of a selfish hypocrite, whose only zeal was his own aggrandizement; and this was conspicuous throughout the greater part of his reign. Men may profess to be what they please, but the world will judge of them by their actions. If any man professes to believe in God, and yet shows by his actions that he has no fear of God before his eyes, his belief is of the most vague and indefinite kind. Were it not that universal experience brings the fact to every

man's knowledge, it would seem a strange consistency that an individual should say he believed in God, while yet it was evident there was no fear of God before his eyes. We would persuade ourselves that there is scarcely a single individual to be found who, after a calm survey of the works of nature, and an impartial examination of his own history, would in reality conscientiously deny the existence of that God who made and governs all things; and we would also believe that there are few if any who are not convinced of their own immortality and responsibility; and how seldom do we see men acting as if they were their real convictions. They profess to believe in all that God has revealed concerning himself and the final destination of the impenitent; yet there is no corresponding reverence manifested in their conduct, either in regard to his authority, or laws, or institutions; nor do they show by their actions that they have any dread of his coming judgment.

Are there any in this assembly who are living in the habitual practice of any known sin? We would say to such, so long as you continue in your present practice, whatever may be your professions, there is no fear of God before your eyes. You profess to be the disciples of Christ, but you are none of his. The disciples are known by their works, as the good tree is known by its fruit. If you have the fear of God before your eyes, and regard him as one who cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence, you will study to avoid every appearance of evil. If you fear him as a righteous God who has denounced punishment against transgressors, you will not continue to despise his threatenings and neglect his warnings, but will endeavor to flee from the wrath to come. If you fear him as that Almighty Being who is able to perform as he has threatened, you will feel an abhorrence at every act of transgression, and will endeavor to avoid the pending destruction by instantly repeating your sins and closing with his gracious offers of mercy. Try yourselves, then, by the test which the Psalmist has given, because if you have the fear of God before your eyes, you are assured you will depart from iniquity.

The three verses which immediately succeed may be considered as an illustration of the first.

2nd verse—"For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful."

Whenever a man has lost the fear of God, he has lost all motives to holiness, and his evil desires and corrupt propensities become supreme over his soul. The chief, if not the only inducements which can incite him to a life of holiness are the beauty of holiness itself, as it is exemplified in the character of the blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; the gratitude which we owe to God for the multitude of his tender mercies towards us; the glorious rewards that are promised to the righteous, or the fearful punishments that are denounced upon the wicked. If any