

Building a Godly Home

VOLUME ONE:
A Holy Vision for Family Life

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William Gouge

edited and modernized
by Scott Brown and Joel R. Beeke



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Contents

Preface	vii
Biographical Introduction.....	xi
1. Serving Each Other in the Fear of the Lord	1
2. Particular Callings and the Wife's Submission	18
3. Headship in Marriage and the Church	33
4. Husbands and the Love of Christ.....	50
5. Love That Purifies the Unclean.....	60
6. Redeemed for Glory.....	80
7. Marital Love and Self-Love	90
8. Christ's Union with His Beloved Body	107
9. The Ancient Law and Unique Bond of Marriage	132
10. The Mystery and Practice of Marriage	150
11. The Child's Duties to His Parents.....	160
12. The Parents' Duty towards Their Children	185

Preface

Have you ever desired a seasoned friend, thoroughly grounded in Scripture, to help you troubleshoot a family problem? Then, just as you are hoping for someone to come alongside to help, it happens again. It might be an explosion of anger or a cold distance. Or perhaps it's just a nagging sense of inadequacy. Sometimes it feels like there are invisible walls between you and the others in your home. You know that you're not all that you should be toward your loved ones. You know you need to change. And yet, where to begin? Wouldn't it be nice to sit down with someone older and wiser, someone you could trust, for some guidance on how to be a better husband, wife, father, mother, son, or daughter?

This book is just such an opportunity. In these pages, we hear the voice of a wise and loving mentor, calling us to the old paths laid out for the family in the Bible. Reading it is like sitting down to coffee with a gentle grandfather and wise pastor.

In this book, the first part of *Building a Godly Home*, you will find William Gouge's brief but helpful exposition of Ephesians 5:21–6:4. He lays out the wife's voluntary submission to her husband, the husband's sacrificial love for his wife, the child's obedient honoring of parents, and the parents' nurturing leadership of their children.

Gouge brings us some of the most compelling language explaining the significance of family life. He writes: "The

family is a seminary of the church and commonwealth. It is as a beehive, in which is the stock, and out of which are sent many swarms of bees. In families all sorts of people are bred and brought up, and out of families they are lent into the church and commonwealth. The first beginning of mankind and of his increase was out of a family."

He has given us helpful categories by which we can understand the purpose of family life. He says the family is "a little church...or at least a lively representation of these." He notes, "It is like a school where the first principles and grounds of government and subjection are learned, and by which men are fitted to greater matters in church or commonwealth."

In this volume, you will also find his Puritan understanding of authority and submission in the home. His simplicity and clarity on the authority of the head of the household and the submission of the wife are refreshing. He not only explains the details of how authority ought to function, but he also examines why God has ordered marriage that way. Gouge explains many nuances of the use of authority and submission in a home that are often missed in marriage. In a world that despises authority, Gouge sets us aright and proclaims just what kind of authority a husband is called to exert: "The goodness of Christ is set down in these words, 'and He is the Savior of the body.' Every word almost has His emphasis. Even the conjunction 'and' shows that the goodness which Christ does for His church, He does because He is the head of it. O how happy a thing is it for the church that it has such a head! A head that does not tyrannize over it, nor trample it under foot, a head that does not pole, nor peel the church, but procures its peace and safety."

Also in this volume, Gouge gives brief instruction that he elaborates on in the volume on parents and children. He gives an overview of matters such as: the parents' duty with children; provoking children; seeking the good of children;

nurturing children; and discipline. He speaks with the voice of experience on the matter of discipline: “Extremes on either side are dangerous and pernicious to parent and child. For remissness will make children careless of all duty to God and parent; rigor will make them desperate. But virtue and safety consists in the balance between both.”

As Paul does, Gouge gives the majority of his attention to marriage as a living image of Christ’s love relationship with His church. Thus, you will discover that this book on marriage is full of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the second and third books, published separately, Gouge enters into much more detailed application of these principles to practical situations. All in all, *Building a Godly Home* shows us that when the Word is the rule of our duty, duty becomes delight.

So come and listen to this spiritual patriarch. Let him answer your questions, encourage your heart, and guide you into biblical truth. God’s Word draws a lovely picture of what marriage and family can be even in our fallen world. By the transforming love of Christ, may this book enable you to make your family into a showcase for grace. When Christian families imitate Christ, then a skeptical world is confronted by the beauty of our God.

Biographical Introduction

William Gouge (1575–1653) was a godly husband and father to his family, and a spiritual father to many more. Born in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, Gouge grew up in a godly home. He inherited a spiritual legacy and passed it on to future generations.

His father was a devout Christian. His mother was the sister of two preachers, Samuel and Ezekiel Culverwell. William benefitted especially from the preaching of his Uncle Ezekiel. Furthermore, one of his mother's sisters married Laurence Chaderton, the patriarch of the Puritan movement at Cambridge. Another of his aunts married William Whitaker, the great Reformed defender of the clarity and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures against the spiritual tyranny of the pope and the Roman Catholic Church.

As a young man, Gouge gave himself to his studies and to personal devotions. While at King's College in Cambridge, he never missed morning prayers at 5:30 a.m., and consistently read fifteen chapters of the Bible every day. He mastered biblical studies, theology, logic, and philosophy, learning Hebrew from a rabbi who visited Cambridge. He became a preacher of the gospel, serving at Blackfriars Church in London from 1608 to his death in 1653. Though he received offers to move to more prominent churches, he stayed there. He said that he hoped to go straight from Blackfriars to heaven.

In his late twenties, he married Elizabeth Coulton, a God-fearing Christian woman. Together they had thirteen children, though only eight lived to maturity. Losing a third or more of one's children was not unusual in the seventeenth century. Gouge led his household with great patience and kindness. He was quick to humble himself, and brokenhearted in his confessions of sin. He conducted family worship in his home, and made sure that all those in his household (including his servants) were free to rest on the Lord's Day.

He poured out his life in gospel ministry. He preached twice on Sundays, and once more on Wednesday morning. On Sunday afternoons, he invited poor people to his home for dinner and to discuss the sermon with them. The Wednesday lecture drew large numbers of people, including other ministers and those visiting London on business. He also served prominently in the Westminster Assembly, helping to write the Westminster Confession of Faith.

He was chosen to write the commentaries in the Westminster *Annotations* on the Old Testament books from 1 Kings to Esther. He was an accomplished author, publishing treatises on John 5, the armor of God (Eph. 6:10–20), how to keep the Sabbath, the epistle to the Hebrews, and how to respond rightly to disasters such as the plague, famine, and war.

One of Gouge's greatest writings was his book on family life. It opens with an exposition of Paul's inspired instructions for household life in the epistle to the Ephesians. Then, with gracious and detailed applications, it explores the responsibilities of husbands, wives, children, parents, servants, and masters. Almost four centuries have passed since Gouge published *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622). In some ways, his language has become difficult for modern readers to understand. But his thoughts are vibrant, warm, and rich in biblical wisdom.

We are delighted to present to the reader a modernized version of this book, titled *Building a Godly Home*. We have rendered Gouge's early modern English into twenty-first-century language, changing words and sometimes phrases. We have also omitted the sections on servants and masters because, though full of insight, they are not directly relevant to our lives in North America today. We have added footnotes to explain the meaning of certain words communicating important theological or historical ideas perhaps unfamiliar to many readers.

Serving Each Other in the Fear of the Lord

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

—EPHESIANS 5:21

It has pleased God to call everyone to two vocations. One vocation is *general*, in which certain common duties are to be performed by all men (as knowledge, faith, obedience, repentance, love, mercy, justice, truth, etc.). The other is *particular*, in which certain specific duties are required of individual people, according to those distinct places where divine providence has set them in the nation, church, and family.

Therefore God's ministers ought to be careful in instructing God's people in both kinds of duties; both those which concern their general calling and those which concern their particular calling. Accordingly Paul, who, like Moses, was faithful in all the house of God (Num. 12:7), after he had sufficiently instructed God's church in the general duties that belong to all Christians, regardless of sex, state, degree, or condition (Eph. 4:1–5:21), proceeds to lay down certain *particular* duties, which apply to particular callings and conditions (Eph. 5:22–6:9). Among these particular duties, he notes those which God has established in a family.

With excellent skill he passes from those general duties to the particular ones, laying down a transition between them with these words, "Submitting your selves one to another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21). The form and manner of setting

down this verse, with the participle “submitting,” shows that it depends on that which was said before. Again, the fact that the word itself is the very same which is used in the following verse, shows that this verse contains the sum of that which follows, and connects the general to the particulars. This manner of passing from one point to another, by a perfect transition which looks both to that which is past and to that which is coming, is very elegant and frequently employed by our apostle.

Thereby he teaches us to pay attention to that which follows, while we do not forget that which is past. While we must give diligent attention to that which remains to be said, we must also retain that which we have heard, and not let it slip. Otherwise, if (as one nail drives out another) one precept makes another to be forgotten, it will be altogether in vain to add line to line, or precept to precept.

Joining Service to Men with Our Praising of God

As this verse refers to that which was delivered before (concerning our duty to God), it teaches us this lesson: it is the duty of Christians to set forth the praise of God (Eph. 5:19–20), in order to be serviceable one to another. Likewise, to the first table of the Ten Commandments, which prescribes that duty which we owe to God, is added the second table, which declares the service that we owe one to another. Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:37–39). The apostle, declaring those sacrifices by which God is well-pleased, joins these two together, to give thanks to God, and to do good to man (Heb. 13:15–16). The service which we perform one to another in the fear of God is an evident and real demonstration of the respect we bear to God. Our goodness adds

nothing to God (Ps. 16:2). He is so high above us, so perfect and complete in Himself, that neither can we give to Him, nor He receive of us (Job 22:3; 35:7). But in His own place He has placed our brother like us, to whom we may do harm (Job 35:8), or by our faithful service we may do much good (Ps. 16:3), which gives God much honor.

This shows the hypocrisy of those who make great pretense of praising God, and yet are scornful and disdainful to their brethren, and slothful to do any service to man. These people's religion is vain (James 1:25–27). By this note did the prophets in their time, as did Christ and His apostles in their time, display the hypocrisy of those among whom they lived, and so may we also in our times. For many people, in their houses and in the midst of the congregation, frequently sing praise to God, and perform other parts of God's outward worship, but towards one another are proud, stubborn, envious, unmerciful, unjust, slanderous, and very opposed to do any good service. Surely, that outward service which they pretend to perform to God does not wipe away the spot of profanity. How much more does their neglect of duty to man brand their foreheads with the stamp of hypocrisy (James 1:26–27; Isa. 58:3–12; Micah 6:6–12; Matt. 23:14; 1 John 4:20).

Let us not upon pretext of one duty, though it may seem to be the weightier, think to discard another, lest that fearful "woe" which Christ denounced against the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 23:23) fall upon our heads. As God is careful to instruct us how to act both towards His own majesty and also towards one another, so in both let us seek His approval. Remember what Christ said to the Pharisees, "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Luke 11:42). The same Lord that requires praise to His own majesty instructs us in mutual service one to another. "What

therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matt. 19:6).

Everyone’s Submitting Himself to Another

Again, as this verse refers to that which follows, it declares the general sum of all, which is to submit ourselves mutually one to another in the fear of God. There are two parts to this verse, an exhortation and a direction.

The exhortation notes both the duty itself in this word “submit,” and also the parties to whom it is to be performed, “one to another.” Both branches of the exhortation, namely, the duty, and the parties joined together, bear this doctrine: *It is a general mutual duty pertaining to all Christians, to submit themselves one to another.* This precept is as general as any of the former, belonging to all sorts and degrees of people. So much does this phrase “one another” imply that the apostle in another place exhorts to “serve one another” (Gal. 5:13), and again, “Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth” (1 Cor. 10:24).

Concerning subordinates, it is clear beyond question that they ought to submit themselves to their superiors. Yet, even concerning equals no great question can be made, but they in giving honor must prefer one another (Rom. 12:10), and so submit themselves. However, concerning superiors, questions may be raised, whether it is a duty required of them to submit themselves to their subordinates.

To resolve this doubt, we must first distinguish between submission of respect, and submission of service. *Submission of respect* is that whereby one testifies of a high position and superiority in them whom he respects, by speech, by giving them a title of honor, or in gesture, by some kind of courteous behavior, or in action, by a quick obeying of their commands. This is proper to subordinates.

Submission of service is that whereby one in his place is ready to do what good he can for another. This is common to all Christians, a duty which even superiors owe to subordinates, according to the previously mentioned extent of this phrase "one another." In this respect, even the highest governor on earth is called a "minister," for the good of those that are under him.

Second, we must note a difference between the work itself and the manner of doing it. That work which in itself is a work of superiority and authority, in the manner of doing it may be a work of submission, that is, if it is done in humility and meekness of mind. The magistrate by ruling with meekness and humility, submits himself to his subject. In this respect the apostle exhorts that *nothing* (no, not the highest and greatest works that can be) "be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. 2:3).

Third, we must distinguish between the different social places of men, for even those who are superiors to some, are subordinates to others. Recall the centurion who said, "For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me" (Matt. 8:9). The master that has servants under him may be under the authority of a magistrate. Furthermore, God has so positioned every one's place, that there is not anyone who is not in some respect under another. The wife, though a mother of children, is under her husband. The husband, though head of a family, is under public magistrates. Public magistrates are under another, and all are under the king.

The king himself is under God and His Word delivered by His ambassadors, where even the highest are to submit themselves. And ministers of the Word, as subjects, are under their kings and governors. He that says, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers" (Rom. 13:1), does not make an exception for ministers of the Word, and he

that says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves" (Heb. 13:17), makes no exception for kings. The only difference is this, that the authority of the king is in himself, and in his own name he may command obedience to be performed to himself, but the authority of a minister is in Christ, and in Christ's name only may he require obedience to be performed to Christ.

The reason why all are bound to submit themselves one to another is because everyone is set in his place by God, not for himself, as for the good of others. The apostle exhorts, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth" (1 Cor. 10:24). Even governors are put in places of dignity and authority for the good of their subjects rather than for their own honor. Their callings are, in truth, offices¹ of service, even burdens under which they must willingly put their shoulders. Being called of God, to whom they will give an account concerning the good which they have done to others, it is needful that they submit themselves.

Let everyone therefore, high and low, rich and poor, superior and subordinate, magistrate and subject, minister and people, husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant, neighbors and fellows, all of all sorts in their various places take notice of their duty in this point of submission, and be careful to put it in practice: *magistrates*, by procuring the wealth and peace of their people, as Mordecai; *ministers*, by making themselves servants to their people, not seeking their own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved, as Paul; *fathers*, by well educating their children, and taking heed that they provoke them not to wrath (Eph. 6:4), as David; *husbands*, by dwelling with their wives according to knowledge, giving honor to the wife as to the weaker vessel, as Abraham; *masters*, by doing that which is just and

1. *Office*: a public position entrusted with authority and responsibility for certain tasks.

equitable to their servants, as the centurion; *everyone*, by being of kind affection one towards another, and by serving one another in love, according to the apostle's rule. Let this duty of submission be first well learned, and then all other duties will be better performed.

Be not high minded, nor haughty against one another. Though outwardly some may be higher than others, yet in Christ all are one whether bond or free, all members of one and the same body (Gal. 3:28). Now consider the mutual affection (as I may so speak) of the members of a natural body towards one another; none of them will puff himself up, and rise against the other. The head which is the highest and of greatest honor will submit itself to the feet in performing the duty of a head, as well as the feet in performing their duty, as do all other parts. Neither is it implied that those who are in place of dignity and authority should forget or relinquish their place, dignity, or authority, and become as subordinates under authority, no more than the head does. For the head, in submitting itself, does not go upon the ground and carry the body like the feet, but it submits itself by directing and governing the other parts, and that with all the humility, meekness, and gentleness that it can.

If this is true of all superiors, much more must equals and subordinates learn to perform their duty with humility and meekness, without scorn or disdain. We know that it is unnatural and inappropriate for the head to scorn the feet, but it is more than monstrous for one hand to scorn another. What shall we then say if the feet rise up against the head? Surely such scorn and disdain among the members would cause not only great disturbance, but also utter ruin to the body. And can it be otherwise in a body politic?² On the contrary, when everybody of all sorts shall (as has been shown)

2. *Body politic*: a society composed of many people united like members of a living body.

willingly submit themselves one to another, the whole body, and every member within it, will reap good. By this mutual submission, as we do good, so we shall receive good.

The Fear of God

We have discussed Paul's exhortation to this point; now we move on to the direction, "in the fear of God." This clause is added, to declare partly the *means*, how men may be brought to submit themselves readily to one another: and partly the *manner*, how they ought to submit themselves. "The fear of God" is both the efficient cause³ that moves a true Christian willingly to perform all duty to man, and also the purpose that he refers everything that he does. To better understand this, I will briefly declare:

1. What this fear of the Lord is.
2. How the Lord is the proper object of it.
3. What is the extent of it.
4. Why it is urged so much.

First, the fear of God is an awe-filled respect of the divine majesty. Sometimes it arises from faith in the mercy and goodness of God. When the heart of man has once felt a sweet taste of God's goodness, and found that all happiness consists only in His favor, it is struck with such an inward awe and reverence, that it would not displease His majesty for anything. Rather, it would do whatever it knows to be pleasing and acceptable to Him. These are two effects which arise from this kind of fear of God:

1. *A careful endeavor to please God.* In this respect good king Jehosaphat, having exhorted his judges to execute rightly the judgment of the Lord, added this clause, "Let the fear

3. *Efficient cause*: the principle or power that brings about motion or change according to Aristotle's philosophy.

of the LORD be upon you" (2 Chron. 19:7). This implies that God's fear would make them endeavor to approve themselves to God.

2. *A careful avoiding of such things as offend the majesty of God, and grieve His Spirit.* The wise man said, "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil" (Prov. 8:13). Of Job it is said that he, fearing God, departed from evil (Job 28:28).

Sometimes again, awe and dread of the divine majesty arises from distrust. When a man's heart doubts God's mercy, and expects nothing but vengeance, the very thought of God strikes an awe or rather dread into him, and so makes him fear God.

From this double cause of fear, where one is contrary to another, has arisen that usual distinction of a *filial*, or son-like, fear, and a *servile*, or slavish fear. This distinction is grounded on these words of the apostle, "ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear [this is a servile fear]; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). This causes a filial fear. The filial fear is such a fear as dutiful children bear to their fathers. But the servile fear is such as bond-slaves bear to their masters. A son simply fears to offend or displease his father, so that his obedience is accomplished with love. A bond-slave fears nothing but the punishment of his offense, so that his obedience is joined with hatred. Such a man fears not to sin, but to burn in hell for sin.

Faithful Abraham, like a gracious child, feared God (as God's angel bears witness in Genesis 22:12) when he was ready to sacrifice his only son, rather than offend God by refusing to obey His command. But faithless Adam, like a servile bond-slave, feared God (as he testifies against himself in Genesis 3:10) when, after he had broken God's command, he hid himself from the presence of God. This slavish fear is

plainly a diabolical fear, for the devils so fear that they tremble (James 2:19). It makes men wish there were no hell, no day of judgment, no Judge, even no God. We must serve the Lord without this fear (Luke 1:74). There is nothing acceptable to God in this fear to submit one's self. Therefore, it is the filial fear to which this clause refers.

Second, God is the proper *object* of this fear, as by this and many more testimonies of Scripture is evident, where the fear of *God* and of the *Lord* is mentioned. This fear has so proper a relation to God, that the Scripture describes God by a kind of property, with this title *Fear*. Where Jacob mentions "the fear of Isaac," he means the Lord whom Isaac feared (Gen. 31:42, 53).

Is it then unlawful to fear anyone but God? No. Men also may be feared, those who are princes, parents, masters, and other superiors. For the apostle, exhorting to give everyone their due, gives this instance, "fear to whom fear" is due (Rom. 13:7). But may God nevertheless be said to be the proper object of fear, because all the fear that is due to any creature, is due to him in and for the Lord whose image he carries? In truth it is not so much the person of a man as the image of God placed in him, by virtue of some authority or dignity pertaining to him, which is to be feared. If there should be any such opposition between God and man, such that by fearing man our fear would be withdrawn from God, then the rule of Christ is to take place. This rule is, "fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).

Third, the extent of this true filial fear of God is very large. No one point throughout the whole Scripture is more urged than this *fear of the Lord*. It is often added to other duties, by which they are seasoned, and without which they cannot well be performed. Therefore, we are commanded to "serve

the LORD with fear" (Ps. 2:11), to be "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1) and "to work out your own salvation with fear" (Phil. 2:12). The churches are commended for "walking in the fear of the Lord" (Acts 9:31). Likewise, particular men as Abram (Gen. 22:12), Joseph (Gen. 42:18), Job (Job 1:1), and many others feared God.

The whole worship of God is often included under this branch of fear. Our Savior, Christ, referring to this text, "thou shalt fear the LORD thy God" (Deut. 6:13), thus expresses it, "thou shalt worship the LORD thy God" (Matt. 4:10). And again, where the Lord by His prophet Isaiah says, "Their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men" (Isa. 29:13), Christ quotes the text, "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). Comparing these two passages, it is evident that under the *fear* of God is included the *worship* of God. All that duty which we owe to God and man is included under this title, the fear of God. David, when he would declare in one word the sum and substance of all that which a minister ought to teach his people, says, "I will teach you the fear of the LORD" (Ps. 34:11).

Fourth, the reason why the Holy Spirit so urges the fear of God, I take to be this: to show a difference between that integrity and perfection of God's image which was first planted in man at creation, and the renovation of that image while he lives in this world. So complete and perfect was God's image in man, that he needed no other motive to provoke him to any duty but love. When the Holy Spirit would set forth that perfection of God's image first planted in man, he adds this title "love" to other duties, whether they concern God or man. Concerning God, Moses exhorts Israel to love the Lord and serve Him (Deut. 11:13), and again, to love the Lord, to walk in His ways, to keep His commandments (Deut. 30:16). Concerning man, the apostle exhorts to serve

one another by love (Gal. 5:13) and to do all things in love (1 Cor. 16:14).

Sometimes the Holy Spirit is pleased even to include all duties under love. In this respect Christ calls this commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord," the great commandment (Matt. 22:37–38), which includes all the commandments of the first table under it. For the second table, Paul says, that "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10). But by Adam's fall, and the corruption which thereby infected man's nature, the love of God has grown cold in man. Even though the saints are created again according to that image of God, while they live in this world, that image is not so perfect as it was, and the flesh remains in the best of people. In this respect God has fast fixed this affection of fear in man's heart, and thereby both restrains him from sin, and also provokes him to every good duty.

The Fear of God Moving Us to Do Service to Men

Having briefly declared the *nature, object, extent, and use* of fear, I return to the point in hand, to show how fear is laid down as a motive to stir up men to perform the duty required here. By this clause, "in the fear of the Lord," the apostle implies that *it is the fear of God which moves men in good conscience to submit themselves one to another*. This made David to rule the people of God so well (2 Sam. 23:3) and Joseph to deal so well with his brethren (Gen. 42:18). This is even noted to be the cause of the righteous rule of Christ Himself (Isa. 11:2–3). Well did that good king Jehoshaphat know this, and therefore when he appointed judges over his people, as a motive to stir them up to execute the judgments of the Lord, he said to them, "Let the fear of the LORD be upon you" (2 Chron. 19:7). Peter also, in order to move subjects to honor their king, prefixed this exhortation with "fear God" (1 Peter 2:17).

The fear of man may bring one to submit himself to another. A magistrate may be moved to deal justly and mildly with his people through fear of insurrections and rebellions. Subjects may be brought to submit themselves by severe laws and tyranny, and other subordinates also by threats, by hard usage, and by other means.

Though the fear of man be a motive, it does not follow that the fear of God should be no motive; it may be another motive, and a better motive. The submission which is performed through fear of man is a forced and a slavish submission. Nothing is acceptable to God but that which is performed through a true filial fear of God, a free, willing, ready, cheerful submission in good conscience. Such a submission as will stir us up to do the best good we can to those to whom we submit ourselves is therefore more acceptable to God by reason of its cause, and more profitable to man by reason of its effects and fruits.

A true fear of God makes us respect more what God requires and commands than what our corrupt heart desires and suggests. It subdues our unruly passions, and brings them within the compass of duty. It makes us deny ourselves and our own desires, and, though through the corruption of our nature and inborn pride we are loath to submit, yet God's fear will bring down that proud mind and make us humble and gentle. It will keep those who are in authority from tyranny, cruelty, and too much severity, and it will keep those who are under subjection from giving half-truths, deceit, and conspiracies.

Behold how necessary it is, that a true fear of the Lord be planted in men's hearts, in the hearts of kings and all governors, in the hearts of subjects and all people, whether superiors or subordinates. Where no fear of God is, there will be no good submission to man. Abraham thought that the men of Gerar would have no respect toward him or his wife,

nor make conscience of common honesty, nor abstain from innocent blood, because he saw no fear of God in that place (Gen. 20:11). The apostle, having made mention of many notorious effects of man's natural corruption, concludes with this as the cause of all, "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18).

Therefore, let magistrates, parents, masters, and all in authority, take special care that their subjects, children, servants, and all under them may be taught and brought to fear the Lord. I dare declare that such subordinates who are taught to fear God will do better service to their superiors than those that fear their superiors only as men, and do not fear God. Let ministers especially urge and press upon the consciences of men a fear of God. Let all subordinates pray that the fear of the Lord may be planted in the hearts of their superiors, that so they may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty under them.

Happy is that kingdom where magistrates and subjects fear the Lord. Happy is that church where ministers and people fear the Lord. Happy is that family where husband and wife, parents and children, master and servants fear the Lord. In such a kingdom, church, and family, everyone will submit themselves to the mutual good one of another. But if those that do not fear God submit themselves, whether they be superiors or subordinates, it is for their own ends and advantages, and not for the good of those to whom they submit themselves.

Limiting All Duty to Man, within the Compass of the Fear of God

Again, as this clause "in the fear of God" declares the manner of submission, it shows that *no submission is to be performed to man, but that which may stand with the fear of God*. Thereby we show that we have respect to God, and labor above all

to approve ourselves to Him. Thus David is commanded to rule "in the fear of God" (2 Sam. 23:3). Other magistrates are to perform their duty "in the fear of the LORD" (2 Chron. 19:9), which Nehemiah, that good governor, was careful to do (Neh. 5:15). Subjects are likewise to obey in the fear of the Lord, which Peter implies by prefixing this precept, "Fear God," before, "Honour the king" (1 Peter 2:17). It is as if he had said that by honoring the king, you may manifest your fear of God; let not this latter be opposed to the former. Servants likewise are commanded to be obedient to their masters with this provision, fearing the Lord (1 Peter 2:18). Such phrases as these, "for the Lord's sake," "as unto the Lord," "in the Lord," "as servants of Christ," etc., when describing the duties of subordinates, imply as much (Col. 3:22; 1 Peter 2:13; Eph. 5:22; 6:1, 6).

There is great reason that all service should be limited by the fear of God. God is the highest Lord to whom all service primarily and principally is due; whatever service is due to any man, high or low, is due in and for the Lord. The Lord has set superiors in the high places where they bear the image of God. The Lord also has set subordinates in their places, and commended them as His charge to the government of those who are over them. He that does not obey those who are over him in the fear of God, shows no respect of God's image, and he who does not govern those who are under him in the fear of God shows no respect for God's charge.

Besides, God is that great Judge to whom all superiors and subordinates are to give an account of their service. Though by our service we have never so well approved ourselves to men, yet if we have not had respect towards God, and approved ourselves to Him, how will we appear confidently before His dreadful judgment seat? Can the favor

of those whom we have pleased in this world protect and shelter us from the fury of God's displeasure?

Behold the folly of such governors who wholly apply themselves to the fancy of their people, even though it be against the Lord and His Word. This was Adam's folly who, at his wife's motion, did eat of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:6). This was Aaron's folly who, to please the people, erected an idol (Ex. 32:1). And this was Saul's folly who, against God's express prohibition, suffered his people to take some of the spoil of the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:21). The same may be said of Joash, who listened to his princes to set up idols (2 Chron. 24:17), and of Pilate, who, to please the people and against his conscience, delivered Christ to be crucified (Mark 15:15). The fearful issue of this type of submission which lacks a fear of God, may be a warning to all superiors. They must take heed how they seek to please them that are under them, more than God who is above them. The result of Adam's, Aaron's, Saul's, and Joash's base submission is noted by the Holy Spirit in their several histories. Of Pilate it is recorded that, being brought into extreme necessity, he laid violent hands upon himself.

Neither is it to be accounted folly only in superiors to submit themselves to their subordinates against the Lord, but also in subordinates to their superiors. Thereby they show that they fear man more than God, which Christ expressly forbids His friends to do (Luke 12:4-5). The captains who went to fetch Elijah obeyed their king by doing so, but what did it profit them (2 Kings 1)? Was the king able to save them from the fire which God sent down from heaven upon them? The women reprov'd for offering incense to the queen of heaven did it with their husbands' consent, yet they were not excused (Jer. 44:19). The children and others in the family submitted themselves to Dathan and Abiram in standing in the door of their tents at a distance against Moses. Because

their submission was not in the Lord, but against Him, they were not exempted from the judgment (Num. 16:32). Therefore, let all set the *fear of God* as a mark before them to aim at in all their actions.

Let superiors neither do anything to give consent to their subordinates (Num. 11:29), nor suffer any thing to be done for their sakes by their subordinates (1 Sam. 24:8), which cannot stand with the *fear of God*. Let subordinates neither do (Gen. 39:10; 1 Sam. 22:17), nor stop doing at the will of their superiors anything swerving from the fear of God (Acts 4:19), but everyone submit themselves one to another in the fear of God (Eph. 5:21).