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Trembling at the Word of the Lord

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“To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit,
and trembleth at my Word”—Isaiah 66:2

PORTRAIT painting is a great art. Many pretend to it, but the masters of the art are few. In the Word of God we have a gallery of portraits so accurate, so striking, that only the hand of the Lord could have drawn them. Most of us have been startled to see our own portrait there. The best of all is, that at the bottom of each likeness we have the Lord’s judgment upon the character, so that we are able to form an estimate of what our true condition is before the Lord. Here you have a man drawn to the life: he is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at the Word of the Lord. Here, also, you have the Lord’s estimate of him: “To this man will I look.”

I hope to dwell chiefly upon the character described in the closing words, “*And trembleth at my Word.*” Support the text by the fifth verse, “Hear the Word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his Word.” This trembling is, in God’s esteem, an admirable trait in their character. The glorious Jehovah, from his throne in heaven, speaks of those contrite ones who tremble at his Word: and then the prophet takes up the strain, and cries, “Hear the Word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his Word.” It is a very great mercy that there are descriptions of saints given in the Word of God which go very low, and reach the feeblest degrees of grace, and the saddest frames of mind. We find the children of God sometimes upon very high places: their spiritual life is vigorous, and their inward joy is abounding. When we give you descriptions of saints in that condition, many of the Little-faiths and Despondencies at once cry out, “Alas, I know nothing of this! Would God it were so with me! but indeed it is not.” They are greatly discouraged by those very things which should raise their spirits and stimulate their desires: for surely if one believer is able to climb the Delectable Mountains, there is all the more hope that another may do so.

Yet, we have to thank God that, in his priceless Scripture, he has painted for us portraits of the believer in his low estate. In the picture gallery of those saved by faith we find Rahab as well as Sarah, erring Samson as well as holy Samuel. In the family register of the Lord we have the names of believers who were weak, and sad, and faulty. We have instances in the sacred record of undoubtedly gracious men who were in very uncomfortable and undesirable conditions. Men are spoken of as the Lord’s people when their souls are sick, when grace is at a very low ebb, and when joy is eclipsed. God’s people are in Scripture owned as such when it is winter with their spirits, and grace lies dormant, like sap stagnant in the tree. The Lord owns spiritual life in his own, when there is small evidence of it; and that evidence is confused. The mention in the Scriptures of small but sure evidences is cheering to many.

I know many of God’s people that have been greatly comforted by the text, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” “Oh,” they have said, “we do feel a love to all God’s people, whoever they may be; and if that is evidence of grace, we have that evidence.” Apostles could say, “We know, and we are quite sure about it, that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren;” therefore we also may be encouraged, by our sense of love to the saints, to enjoy the same assured confidence that we also have passed from death unto life. You may, some of you, think this an insecure ground of consolation; but I can bear witness that it is like the conies’ hole among the rocks, a very useful shelter from the enemy.

That is a very choice evidence, too, where God speaks of those that think upon his name: “A book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.” If our thoughts dwell lovingly upon the name of the Lord, this is a saving sign; and yet how small a thing it seems!

Thoughts are like straws, but they show which way the wind blows. Surely the Lord's net of comfort hath meshes small enough to hold the smallest fish.

That, again, is very comforting where the Lord says, "Your heart shall live that seek him." Even seekers shall live. Though as yet they are rather seekers than possessors, they have the Lord's promise of eternal life. Though they are only pursuing, and have become faint in the pursuit, yet the love which set them pursuing will keep them following on.

That is a blessed word indeed: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "I do call upon his name," said one, "I know I do. I am crying to him in prayer. I do wish to have his name named upon me. I choose him to be my God, and I dedicate myself to him; and if that is calling upon God's name, then, truly, I am a child of God." This precious passage has been a special stay to my own heart in time of great heaviness of spirit. I know I call upon the name of the Lord, and I shall be saved.

How often also have I said to myself, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see"! To see even a ray of light is conclusive evidence that I am no longer blind. The eye that can see a solitary ray of light has clearer evidence of being restored, if possible, than if it lived in the flood of sunlight; for if it can see a single ray, then is sight not only there, but it is there in no small degree. The man who can trust Jesus when grace is at its lowest in his own soul, is by no means a man of little faith, but rather is he a man of strong confidence.

Dear friends, rejoice that the Lord, in infinite mercy, has deigned to utter the words of my text, since they serve as a most comfortable evidence to God's people. There is a song the Jubilee singers used to sing, which begins, "Swing low, sweet chariot." I am sure I do not know what the singers mean by the expression; and so I give it a meaning of my own, and say that I am right glad when a promise swings so low that I can get into it. Surely a promise from God is a chariot lined with love, drawn upward by winged steeds, which bear our hearts aloft; and it is a mercy when it swings as low as this text: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

"Trembleth at my word." This is the description to which I call your attention. Here are the elect men upon whom the Lord looks, and with whom he dwells. They are not the chivalry of earth, but the chosen of heaven. They are not dancing, but trembling; and yet they have more reason to be happy than those have who laugh away their days.

Let us enquire concerning these chosen ones, first: *who are these people that tremble at the Lord's Word?* Secondly, let us enquire, *why do they tremble?* Whence comes their lowly spirit? their humiliation before the Lord? Then, next, we will give a glance at a comparison here used, and answer the question— *what does God compare them to?* What does God say that he will do for them? Let me read you the passage, "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my Word." There you see that God prefers the trembler to the temple, and makes to the contrite heart a larger promise than even to the consecrated shrine of his glory. May the Holy Spirit bless these meditations!

I. Aid me with your prayers while I try to answer the question—WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE THAT TREMBLE AT GOD'S WORD? I think I hear your heart crying, "Oh, that we may be numbered among them!" Let me begin to answer the question by telling you WHO THEY ARE NOT.

They are not a proud people: they do not cry, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice!" They are humbly hearing; hearing the Word of God, and inwardly reverencing the heavenly monitor. They are no longer careless and reckless, for the voice of the Lord has brought them to their bearings. They have bowed their heads before Jehovah, and they listen with rapt attention to everything that he may speak. They are like the child Samuel when he said, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." They are teachable, and lowly, and by no means belong to the school who correct the infallible, and judge the unerring.

They are not a profane people, that is clear: they neither make a mock at sin nor at God's Word. It is a terrible sign of hardness of heart when a man can find no jest-book so ready to his hand as Holy Scripture. Full sure, if men must play with words, I know not that they are always to be blamed; but they should find the word of man sufficient for their amusement, and not take Jehovah's Word to be their racket-ball. Oh, it is ill with a man's soul, be sure of that, when he can treat the Word of the Lord with lightness, and regard it as no more than the word of Shakespeare or Spencer. Such are not the men that tremble at God's Word, but very far from it. They would not themselves care to be so described; in fact, they would scorn the idea of being afraid of the Book they despise. Some there are that are downright scoffers. They twist texts of Scripture; they pervert them to make mischief of them. They will hold up even the blessed Christ of God to ridicule; and the Holy Spirit, although to speak ill of him is a fearful thing, yet even he has not been free from their profane utterances. No, the proud man, and the profane man, are as far asunder as the poles from the man that trembles at God's Word.

I must put down the careless in the same list, and say of the Lord's tremblers: *they are not indifferent people*. We have among us a class who cause us great sorrow of heart. They are not likely to jest at God's Word, but yet it has no power over them; they do not scoff at it, but they do not feed on it. They have too much thought and sense to become infidels; but yet they overlook the importance of the truth which they accept. God's Book lies in their houses honoured, but unread. They do not much trouble to go and hear about its meaning; or if, through custom, they become attendants at the house of God, they hear the gospel, but it goes in at one ear and out of the other. Like the French king who was brought to London in great state, and yet was only a prisoner to the Black Prince, so is the Bible bound in morocco and adorned with gilt, but is kept in bonds. There is no practical regard to it, no weighing it, no considering it, no meditating upon it, no applying it to the conscience and the daily life. Those cannot be said to tremble at God's Word, who neglect the great salvation. They put far from them a consideration of the law of the Most High, and live as if they had license given them to act as they please. O friends, careless souls cannot be numbered with those that tremble at God's Word!

These were not a critical, sceptical people. They trembled at the Word, and did not sit down on the throne of usurped infallibility, and call the Scriptures to their bar. There are men abroad nowadays—I grieve to say some of them in the ministry—who take the Bible, not that it may judge them, but that they may judge it. Their judgment weighs in its balances the wisdom of God himself. They talk exceeding proudly, and their arrogance exalteth itself. O friends, I know not how you feel about the prevailing scepticism of the age, but I am heart-sick of it! I shun the place where I am likely to hear the utterances of men who do not tremble at God's Word. I turn away from the multitude of books which advocate doubt and error. The evil is too painful for me. If I could be content to be an Ishmaelite, and have my hand against every man, I might seek this company, for here I find every faculty of my being called to warfare: but as I love peace, it sickens and saddens me to meet with the enemies of my soul. If I knew that my mother's name would be defamed in certain company, I would keep out of it; if I knew that my father's character would be trailed in the mire, I would travel far not to hear a sound so offensive. I could wish to be deaf and blind, rather than hear or read the modern falsehoods which, at this time, so often wound my spirit.

I feel more and more a tenderness for the truth of God of the same sort as I would feel for the good name of my wife or my mother. I wish the modern revilers would have some compassion upon us, old believers, to whom their talk is such torture. They might keep their doubts for home consumption. When a man was going to swear, a wise person bade him wait till he was further away from the town, so that nobody might hear him; for it might cause grief to a Christian ear. When a man has anything to say against the eternal truth of God let him speak it to those who love to hear it—to his mates and admirers. But as for us, we are determined we will not be tortured by this kind of thing: we cannot endure it; and we will not remain among those who bespatter us with it. "Oh, but surely you are open to conviction?" they say. We are open to no conviction that shall be contrary to the truth that has saved us from going down to the pit. We are open to no conviction that shall rob us of our eternal hope, and of our glorying in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We do not deliberate, for we have decided. To be for ever holding the truth of God, as though it might yet turn

out to be a lie, were to lose all the comfort of it. To be for ever prepared to desert our Lord and Master, to follow some brand-new philosopher, would be perpetual disloyalty. Nay, we have not come thus far at a guess. We have known our Lord and his truth for these forty years, and it is not may-be-or-may-not-be with us now. We neither speculate, nor hesitate; but we know whom we have believed, and by his grace we will cleave to him in life and in death.

Those who tremble at God's Word *are not presumptuous people*, who derive fictitious comfort from it. We meet at times with a vain-confident man, who puts behind his back every warning and threatening, and only appropriates to himself every promise, though the promise be not made to him. Such a man steals the children's bread, and without a question, dares to put into his felon mouth what God has reserved for his own. This thief knows nothing of trembling at God's Word: he makes much too free with what the godly hardly dare to look upon. I will not say a word in favour of unbelief: it is a dreadful sin; but I would say very much in honour of that holy caution, that sacred bashfulness, that godly reverence, which treats holy things with deep humility and careful jealousy.

Some of God's dearest children are so afraid of presumption that they go too far the other way, and hardly dare to be as confident as they might. Some of the holiest people that I know are afraid to say what they might say; for they scarcely dare to call themselves the children of God. On the other hand, I have heard others say what I fear they never ought to have said, for they have boasted that they never had a doubt. I heard one minister of great experience, who believes in the doctrine of perfection, assert very plainly that he had lived in the midst of the church of God for many years, and that he had seen many persons who claimed to be perfect, but he did not think that any one agreed with them; and, on the other hand, he had known intimately certain other persons whom he thought to be as nearly perfect as men could be, but in every case they had been the first to disown all notion of personal perfection, and mourned their own conscious imperfection.

That is my observation, also. I distrust the men who publish their own perfection: I do not believe one of them, but think less of them than I care to say. Deformity talks of its beauty, while true beauty mourns its deformity. I gaze with loving sympathy upon those known to me whom I liken to dew-laden lilies: they are so heavy with the dew of heaven that they bow low till they almost touch the ground. It may need a trained eye to see the beauty of lowliness, but assuredly for a chaste loveliness nothing can exceed it. The lily of the valley hath a charm about it that is not to be found in flowers which lift their glorious colors aloft. Give me such lilies, for I believe that among them Jesus lives; and that he loves right well the men that are of a broken and a contrite spirit, that tremble at his Word. There is too much brass, and too little gold, about the perfection of the present day. It hath a brazen forehead, and hath a way of sitting by the roadside—a way which in old time belonged not to true purity. I had rather tremble at God's Word than testify to my excellence. We have had enough of witnesses to themselves, let us now have some witnesses for God.

I have largely told you what these tremblers are not; and I must now tell you a little of **WHAT THESE PEOPLE ARE**. *They are people who do believe that there is a Word of God*. There are plenty of persons who profess and call themselves Christians, and yet do not believe that this sacred Book is the very Word of God. Say that it is inspired, and they answer, "So is the Koran, and so are the Vedas." They talk after this fashion: "This is the religious book of the ancient Hebrew nation. A very respectable book it is, but infallible, certainly not: the very Word of God, certainly not." Well, then, we distinctly part company with such talkers. We can have no sort of fellowship with them in any measure or degree with regard to the things of God. They are to us as heathen men and publicans. If we are to come under the head of those that tremble at God's Word, we must believe that there is a Word of the Lord to tremble at, as we do most assuredly believe, let others talk as they may.

They are a people who are acquainted with God's Word. You cannot tremble, in the sense here meant, at a voice you have never heard, or at a book you have never opened. There is nothing sacred in so much paper, ink, and binding—nothing in the fashion of a volume to make you tremble: you must hear the Lord speak, and know what he saith to you. When, like the ancient king, you have found the Word of God, and read its

holy laws, then you will tremble. You are astonished to find how much you have broken the law, and how short you have fallen even of the full enjoyment of the gospel, and then you tremble. An intelligent appreciation of the Word of God can alone make a man tremble at it; and the more he understands it, the more cause for trembling will he see in it. Ay, and the more he enjoys it, the more will he tremble. The highest joy which it yields to mortal men is attended with a reverent awe, and a holy trembling before God. If the believer went beyond the enjoyment of the literal Word, and saw the Incarnate Word himself, in all the splendor of his person, he would tremble still more; for what said John, “When I saw him I fell at his feet as dead”? A sight of the Incarnate Word would create even a greater trembling than the full understanding of the Word as it is written and revealed. Yet such trembling is a sign of grace, and by no means to be censured.

But what meaneth this trembling? Believe me, it does *not* mean a *slavish fear*. They that tremble at God’s Word at the first may do so, because the word threatens them with death. But afterwards, as they advance, and grow in grace, and become familiar with the God of love, and enter into the secret of his covenant, they tremble for a very different reason. They tremble because they have a *holy reverence* of God, and consequently of that Word in which resides so much of the power and majesty of the Most High. These are the men of whom we are going to speak at this time: these are they that reverence the Word, who would not have a syllable of it touched, who regard it as being divine after its measure, and therefore sacred as the skirts of Deity. What God has spoken bears a portion of his majesty about it, and we own that majesty. I say that these choice spirits are a people that all their lives long continue to tremble at the Word of the Lord. George Fox, the famous founder of the Society of Friends, was called a “Quaker” for no other reason than this: that often, when the Spirit of God was upon him, and he spoke the Word with power, he would quake from head to foot beneath the burden of the message. It is an honourable title. No man need be ashamed to quake when Moses said, “I exceedingly fear and quake.” In the presence of God a man may well tremble. Surely he is worse than the devil if he does not; for the devils believe and tremble. Demons go the length of that; and he that knoweth God, and hath any sense of his infinite power and inconceivable purity and justice, must tremble before him. I believe George Fox not only quaked himself, but he made others quake; and if we tremble at God’s Word, we shall make others tremble. True power, when it rests upon us, will discover our own weakness, but it will not itself be hindered thereby.

II. I have described these tremblers so far as my scant knowledge and brief time will allow: the time has now come to enquire, **WHY DO THEY TREMBLE?** I have been trenching upon this field of enquiry already. They do not tremble because they are going to be lost. Those who are going to be lost are pretty generally free from trembling: “there are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm.” I would, my hardened hearer, that you did tremble; and because you do not tremble for yourself I tremble for you. Oh, that you judged yourself, that you might not be judged! I would that you condemned yourself, that God might acquit you; I would that you were horribly afraid; for then the great cause for fear would be over. See how the text blesses all the contrite and the trembling; and, when you have seen it, seek to be among them.

God’s people tremble, first, because of *his exceeding majesty*. Note what became of Ezekiel, of Daniel, of Habakkuk, of John the beloved, when they had visions of God. No man could see God’s face and live. There must always be some sort of cloud between. Through the veil of Christ’s manhood we see God and live; but God absolutely is beyond all creature ken—the sight were far too much for us. Even a glimpse of his skirts is something overwhelming! They that have seen God at any time have trembled at him and at his Word. For the Word of the Lord is full of majesty. There is a divine royalty about every sentence of Scripture which the true believer feels and recognizes, and therefore trembles before it.

They tremble at *the searching power of God’s Word*. Do you never come into this place and sit down in the pew, and say, “Lord, grant that thy Word may search me and try me, that I may not be deceived”? Certain people must always have sweets and comforts; but God’s wise children do not wish for these in undue measure. Daily bread we ask for, not daily sugar. Wise believers pray that the Word of the Lord may prove to be quick and powerful, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of their hearts; that it may do with them what the butcher does with the animal when he cuts it down the middle, and lays the very entrails

open to inspection; ay, cleaves the mid-bone, and lets the very marrow be seen. That is what God's Word has done for you and me, I am sure; and when it has done so, we have trembled. I can personally bear my witness to the way in which the solemn Word of the Lord makes my whole soul to tremble to its centre. The Word of the Lord has cut very close sometimes with many of you, and made you cry, "Am I saved or not?" The man that did never tremble before the Lord does not know him. It is very easy to take the matter of your soul's salvation for granted, and yet to be mistaken. It is infinitely better to ask your way twenty times than miss your road home. And I do not blame the man who with holy anxiety says, "Is it so, or is it not so? for I want to know and to be sure." O beloved, I am not sorry that you tremble before the refining fire of sacred truth; I should be much distressed if you did not.

God's searching Word makes man tremble; so does the Word when it is in the form of *threatening*. Believe me, dear friends, the words of God about the doom of sinners are very dreadful. Hence there are some that try to pare them down, and cut the solemn meaning out of them; and then they say, "I could not rest comfortable if I believed the orthodox doctrine about the ruin of man." Most true, but what right have we to rest comfortable? What ground or reason can there be why we ever should have a comfortable thought with regard to the doom of those who refuse the Saviour? If with that dreadful doom before us which Holy Scripture threatens to ungodly men we do grow far too indifferent, to what will the church of God come when it has torn out the doctrine from the Bible, and given it up? Why, sinners will be more hardened, and professors more trifling. He who seeks comfort at the expense of truth will be a fool for his pains. Blessed in the end will that man be who can endure the Word of the Lord, when it is all thunder and flaming fire; and does not rebel against it, but bows before it. If it makes you tremble, it was meant to make you tremble. One said, after he had heard Massillon, "What an eloquent sermon! How gloriously he preached!" Massillon replied, "Then he did not understand me; another sermon has been thrown away." If a sermon concerning the future punishment of sin does not make the hearer tremble, it is clear that it is not God; for hell is not a thing to talk about without trembling. My inmost desire is to feel more and more the overwhelming power of Jehovah's judgment against sin, that I may preach with all the deeper solemnity the danger of the impenitent, and with tears and trembling may beseech them to be reconciled.

He that knows the Lord aright also trembles with *fear lest he should break God's law*. He sees what a perfect law it is, and how spiritual it is, and how it overlaps the whole of human life, and the man cries, "It is high; I cannot attain unto it; O my God, help me, I pray thee." He views the law with reverence. He admires with a sacred fear. He trembles at God's word, not because he dislikes it, but because he cannot bear to be so far off from compliance with its righteous demands. He sees the law fulfilled in Christ, and there is his peace; but yet the peace is mingled with deepest awe. "Oh," says one, "if he trembles like that, it shows he does not know the love of God." It shows that he does know it. Have you heard of the boy whose father was exceedingly fond of him? He was asked by some other boys to go and rob an orchard with them, but he said, "No, I will not go." They replied, "Your father won't scold you, nor beat you; you may safely come." To this he answered, "What! do you think because my father loves me, that therefore I will grieve him? No, I love him, and I love to do what he wishes me to do. Because he loves me I fear to vex him." That is like the child of God. The more he knows of God's love, the more he trembles at the thought of offending the Most High.

We, also, tremble *lest we should miss the promises* when they are spread out before us, sparkling like priceless gems. We hear of some who "could not enter in because of unbelief;" and we are taken with trembling lest we should be like them. We tremble lest there should be any passage of Scripture or doctrine of revelation that we are not able to believe: we pray for grace that we may never stagger at anything in the Word. I believe Martin Luther would have faced the infernal fiend himself without a fear; and yet we have his own confession that his knees often knocked together when he stood up to preach. He trembled lest he should not be faithful to God's Word. Angels have a holy fear of God, and well may you and I tremble when engaged in his service. To preach the whole truth is an awful charge. It was as much as even the Son of man could do fully to discharge his mission here below. You and I, who are ambassadors for God, must not trifle, but we must tremble at God's Word.

III. Now we have got through the description of these trembling ones, and we have shown why they so exceedingly fear and quake; our third question was to be, **WHAT DOES GOD COMPARE THEM TO?** Harken, for here is a thing to be noted and thought upon. *The Lord compares the tremblers at his Word to a temple.* “Where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my Word.” They are his temple. And to the Jews the temple was something very wonderful. There stood the holy and beautiful house, the joy of the whole earth. Lined with unrotting wood, and overlaid with pure gold, and its hewn stones put together without hammer or axe. To the Israelite’s mind there never was such a building before. Yet the glorious Jehovah speaks lightly of the temple, and says, “Where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my Word.”

So, then, a man that trembles at God’s Word is God’s temple; and he is emphatically so. He is so beyond the sense in which the house of Solomon was thus honoured. His heart is full of worship. His trembling is, in itself, worship. As the angels veil their faces in the presence of the Lord, so do good and true men veil theirs, trembling all the while, as they worship him that liveth forever. As the temple, even to the posts of the doors, moved at the presence of the God of the whole earth, so doth every part of our manhood become awe-stricken when he that dwelleth between the cherubim shines forth within our spirit. Well may we tremble to whom the Infinite draweth nigh! The ungodly, in their brutishness, may be free from the fear of God; but the man to whom grace has given a holy sensitiveness, worships with fear and trembling.

Note that the Lord does not merely compare us with the temple, but *he prefers us to the temple*; and further, he prefers us even to the great temple of the universe not made with human hands, which he himself sets so much above the house that Solomon built. The Lord says. “The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool;” and yet he seems to say, “All this is not my rest, nor the place of mine abode; but with this man will I dwell, even with him that trembleth at my Word.” The Lord prefers the trembling spirit, not only to the golden house below, but to the heavenly house above. The Lord speaks of heaven as his throne; and what is the trembler at God’s Word but God’s throne? God is evidently enthroned within him. Under a sense of the divine presence, the stupendous weight of Deity has crushed the man, and made him tremble in every part of his nature. It is the glory of the revelation which causes the sinking of heart, the shrinking of the soul. As for the earth, it is Jehovah’s footstool; but so is this lowly, trembling man. He is willing to be God’s footstool, willing to be as the dust beneath God’s feet.

Who is there among you, my beloved in the Lord, that would not feel highly honoured if he might be permitted to be as the footstool of the Infinite Majesty? It is too high a place for us! To lie as a door-mat at his temple-gate for the poorest of his saints to wipe his shoes upon, is an honour greater than we deserve: we feel it to be so. At any rate, I speak for myself: when God is near me, I feel as if it was an honour to be the servant of the least of his poor people. “I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness.” Yet, see! the Lord makes his throne and footstool out of the heart and conscience of the man that trembles at his Word. It is a sublime comparison: ye are the temples of God, and something more. The more you study these verses, the more you will be astonished.

And what does God say he will do? He saith, “*To this man will I look*” —look first *with approval.*” The Lord seems to say, “I will not look on proud Pharisees; I will not look on the presumptuous; but I will look at the lowly trembling truster. I will fix my eye upon him; he shall be countenanced by me. I will lift up the light of my countenance upon him. He is right with me, and I will show myself gracious to him.” It is right that the creature should tremble before his Judge; right that a child should give due honour to his august Father; therefore will the Lord look upon such a one with approval. Sweetly does Miss Steele pray in her song:—

“Low at thy feet my soul would lie,
Here safety dwells, and peace divine;

Still let me live beneath thine eye,
For life, eternal life is thine.”

The text means, next, that he will look upon him with care. You know how we use the expression, “I will look to him;” thus will God look to the man that trembles at his Word. You that can stand alone may look to yourselves; but he that trembles shall have God to look to him. When you grow so self-satisfied that as the young man you can run without weariness, you shall both weary and fall. Oh, trust not in yourselves, but tremble before the Lord, and he will look to you, and see that no evil shall come nigh unto you!

“With sacred awe pronounce his name,
Whom words nor thoughts can reach,
A contrite heart shall please him more
Than noblest forms of speech.”

The look of the Lord shall mean a third thing, namely, *delight*. We had a part of that in the term approbation: it is marvellous that God should take delight in the man that trembles at his Word. The Lord has no such pleasure in the careless and carnally secure. He that goes tramping through his Christian career as if he were somebody, and all were safe, is no favourite of heaven. The man who takes things easily and self-confidently, with a kind of happy-go-lucky feeling that all must end well with him—he has no consideration from God. Have you seen the fine professor who has despised the tender in heart? Mark that man, for the end of that man will be a crash—“great shall be the fall thereof.” Have you heard the boastful preacher, self-sufficient as to his own knowledge and eloquence? Mark that man also, for his end is confusion. But watch that trembling one, whose only hope is in Christ, whose only strength is in the Lord, for he shall be sustained. Watch the self-distrustful one who never pounces upon a privilege as if it were his by right of merit, but humbly accepts it as a gift to the unworthy—he is the man that shall stand in the evil day. He that goes through life fearing is the man who has nothing to fear. “Happy is the man that feareth always,” says the Word of the Lord. He that is afraid of falling under trial, and cries, “Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil;” he shall be kept from sin; but he who rashly rushes into temptation shall fall by it. He who watches by day as well as by night, puts on his armour when there seems no war, and carries his sword always drawn even when there is no enemy visible: oh, that is the man who shall cope with the deadly enemy of souls! The Holy Ghost is in him, and the Lord has regard unto him; he shall not fall by the hand of the enemy. Though oftentimes he trembles, he shall be safe at last. Glory shall thus be given to God that helped him. The self-confident would not have glorified God if he had succeeded, or he would have thrown up his cap inside the gates of heaven, and magnified his own name. As for this man, he doffs his crown. “*Non nobis, Domine,*” he cries, when he enters heaven. “Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord,” is still his cry. Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood; unto him that kept us from falling, and preserved us to his kingdom and glory, unto him shall be all honour. Every man who this day trembles at God’s Word says “Amen” to this. God bless you, my beloved! The Lord himself look to you, and dwell with you!

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