

*Obadiah's Character:
a Sermon to Young People*

by

Edmund Calamy



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OBADIAH'S *Character*:

A

S E R M O N

TO

Young People,

Preach'd

In *Old Jewry*, on *Monday*

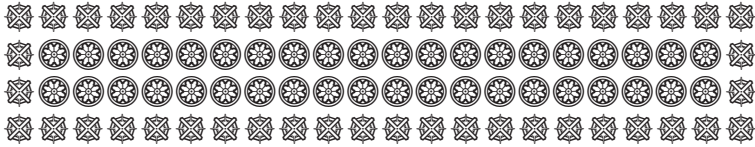
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By EDMUND CALAMY, D. D.

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To the Reverend

Mr. JOHN BILLINGSLEY,

Dear SIR,

TH O' *the Printing, this plain Discourse was remote from my thoughts when I deliver'd it from the Pulpit to your Hopeful CATECHUMENS, yet upon your insisting (joyntly with some other Worthy Brethren) that I should comply with their request, letting them have it to read, I have been at the pains to Transcribe and now leave it to your Disposal*

I most heartily Congratulate your Happiness, in having in your Advanced Age, a Station for Service,

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for

for which GOD has peculiarly qualified you, which is so much suited to your Inclination, and in which you may be so useful to the Rising Generation.

I cheerfully join with you in Blessing GOD, for the Encouragement you have met with, and the Success your Endeavours have already had: And you have the Concurrence of my Prayers, that the Youth of my Native City may know how to value and improve so great a Blessing; and that many of Good OBADIAH'S Character, may be train'd up under your Instruction and Conduct: And am with great Sincerity,

Reverend SIR,

Your Affectionate Friend,

Brother, and Servant,

EDMUND CALAMY.



I KINGS XVIII. 12.

— *But I, thy Servant, fear
the LORD from my Youth.*

THIS is Good *Obadiah's* Character of himself; his Picture drawn by his own Hand; with great exactness. For the most part (it must be confess'd) there is that Pride and Partiality in Self-Commendations, that they deserve but little regard; whereas this Account of *Obadiah*, claims our Notice, notwithstanding it came out of his own Mouth, and was a Declaration in his own favour. He spake no other than what all that knew him would bear Witness to; at the same time as he could not be insensible that the Person he spake to, could easily have detected him, if he had drop'd a Falshood. He gave this Character of himself to *Elijah*, an Eminent Prophet of the LORD; and tho' it carries an high Encomium in it, yet he kept within Bounds. There are many, who to serve their own Purposes, make nothing of imposing upon GOD's Ministers. They cover themselves

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with

with a false Mask when they make their Applications to them, and use a Variety of Artifices, in hope of procuring their good Opinion, to a degree beyond what they deserve: But it was not so with this holy Man. He was what he pretended. He declar'd himself One that *fear'd* GOD, and 'tis declar'd of him by the Sacred Historian in this Context. That *he fear'd the LORD greatly*. So that this was his proper and genuine Character, notwithstanding it came out of his own Mouth. The Truth of the Character was illustriously evidenc'd by his Actions. That Fear of GOD which was implanted in him in his Youth, was abundantly discover'd as he grew up. An eminent Instance of his Regard to GOD is added. *For it was so, when Jezabel cut off the Prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an Hundred Prophets, and hid them by Fifty in a Cave, and fed them with Bread and Water*. He was One who honour'd GOD's Prophets, because of their Office, and because of their Relation to their Great Master. He hazarded his own Life to save theirs, and screen'd many Scores of them at once from the Fury of Persecutors. Among the Multitudes we meet with that pretend to the Fear of GOD, I fear there would not be many that would be like him in Courage upon a like Tryal. May the Good LORD grant, that if a Tryal of that Nature should come upon us, they may be found to be more in number, than we (from any Circumstances that appear,) could see any Reason to apprehend or expect. BUT

Verse 3.

Ver. 4.

BUT tho' this is pitch'd on as very remarkable, yet was it not a single Instance or Evidence in *Obadiah's* Case, neither. His Fear of GOD, express'd itself in other proper, natural, and becoming Ways: And if it be True and Real, 'twill do the same with others also. Let it begin when it will, 'twill influence the Life and Course of the Actions: But it never appears more illustrious, than when it bears Date from the Youth, as it did in *Obadiah's* Calendar.

SO that we have here before Us a most excellent Character, which deserves our serious Contemplation, cannot but excite Admiration, should provoke to Imitation, and may to all afford Matter of ample Instruction.

THAT our Meditation upon it may be the more Profitable, I propose,

- I. *Briefly to illustrate the Character given, and take a View of its Excellence.*
- II. *To shew the Happiness it bespeaks, and the Blessed Consequence that attend it, to the unspeakable Comfort and Benefit of those to whom it belongs, And,*
- III. *To assist both Younger and Elder Persons, in making a flat able Improvement.*

I. THEN, Let us take a distinct View of this Character, that we may the better discern its Excellence. *I*, says *Obadiah*, *fear the LORD from my Youth*. Let none think this a small Matter; for a greater Commendation could not well be given: Which will be evident enough, if we consider the Subject Matter of the Commendation, it was *Fearing the LORD*: And the Date of it, it was *from his Youth*.

AS for the *Fear of the LORD*, 'tis in the Language of Holy Scripture, and especially of the Old Testament, very commonly expressive of the Whole of Real Religion. It implies a deep, feeling, and governing Sense of GOD's Being, Excellence, and Perfection; of His Unsearchable Majesty and Glory, His Almighty Power, and Infinite Goodness; so warm a Sense hereof, as excites a becoming inward Reverence and Veneration of Him, and a serious Regard to him in the Course and Tenour of the Actions. And by Consequence, it imports an hearty Subjection to GOD's Government, a Patience under his Restraints, an habitual Obedience to his Law, and a faithful Discharge of the Duty that is prescrib'd, in its several Parts and Branches. A few Passages of Holy Writ a little weigh'd, may help to make this abundantly clear.

WHEN *Abraham* was in *Gerar*, a Pagan City, we are told, he said within himself,

self, *Surely the Fear of GOD is not this Place, and they will slay me for my Wife's sake.* He was afraid there was no true Piety in such a Place as that; no serious Regard to GOD, and therefore nothing to keep the People from the grossest Wickedness. And his mentioning the of GOD only in the Case, is a plain Evidence, that he reckon'd that equivalent to Real Religion. So also, when *Joseph in Egypt*, while he was yet conceal'd from his Brethren, desir'd by giving them some Intimation of his real Piety, to quiet their Minds concerning him, and prevent their Suspicion, as if he might be apt to deal cruelly and unjustly with them, he bespeaks them thus; *This do and live; for I fear GOD.* This he intimates was a Guard and a Curb to him. He durst not do any thing knowingly and wilfully to offend the Awful Majesty of Heaven and Earth, upon whom he own'd himself intirely dependent. And he discover'd that thus it was really with him; for when he was assaulted in as violent a manner, and with as assuring a Temptation, as could well be conceiv'd, in the Circumstances which he was in, a serious Regard to GOD was his Preservative. For *how*, says he, *can I do this great Wickedness, and sin against GOD.*

Gen. xx.
11.Gen. xliii.
18.Gen. 39.
9.

SO that the *Fear of GOD* keeps from Sin, and excites all manner of pious Affections and Actions; and therefore it is expressive of signal Piety, not only in my Text,
but

Job i. 1.
Neh. cii.
2.
Acts x. 2.

but in the Character which we find given in our Sacred Volumes, of *Job* and *Hananiah*, and *Cornelius*. They are all said to *fear GOD*, and that's reckon'd sufficient to signify that they were strictly Religious: They were not Persons that liv'd at random, but had given GOD their Hearts, and took care to act like such as were devoted to Him; they were fearful of Sin, and mindful of Duty, and holy in all manner of Conversation.

THIS was the Case of good *Obadiah*; he was One who truly *fear'd GOD*. Sincere Piety was resplendent in him. He had the Thing as well as the Name. He was One that actually set the LORD always before him. And this was more to his Honour, than if it could have been said, That he was the Greatest Man then living, or that ever the Earth bore: And he also seems to have esteem'd it so, when he took notice of it in his own favour, in his Convention with the Prophet.

Eccles. xi.
10.

BUT it gave no small additional Lustre to this Excellent Character, that it bore so early a Date, that he could say, He *fear'd GOD from his Youth*. For it is ever very remarkable, when that Age of Life which as *Solomon* observes is so full of *Vanity*, is season'd with serious Piety. Youth is an Age of great Levity and Rashness, Inconstancy and Indiscretion; it is much for the present, without looking forward; then is the

the first Acquaintance with the Pleasures of this World; and to these there is a very strong Inclination, which is difficultly kept under Government: To have this Age therefore Pliable and Ductile, Provident and Thoughtful, Grave and Serious, may well and justly be admir'd, but is not common. But thus it was with *Obadiah*. He shook off that Vanity which usually prevails in the Morning of Life. He *remember'd his Creator, in the very Days of his Youth*: He began to Fear the LORD betimes: He first set-out with GOD as he made his Appearance in the World; and nigh upon the matter, began as early to Act Religiously, as to Act Rationally.

ALL agree, That the sooner a Beginning is made of any Thing that is truly Comendable, 'tis so much the happier, and the higher Encomium is deserv'd. And therefore if the Fear of GOD in *Obadiah* was really praise worthy, 'twas the more so for its Earliness. Nor will any, I suppose, deny that what in itself is truly valuable, deserves the more Esteem, when it is rare and unusual; and therefore *Obadiah's* beginning to Fear GOD so soon, was the more Remarkable, because it was uncommon. It deserves therefore, our particular Observation, That in that Age of Life when Sense is peculiarly strong and vigorous, and Reason but in its dawn, when the Blood and Spirits are so warm and nimble, and Stayedness is so great a Rarity; then when the Appetite

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is commonly so rampant, and so impatient of Denial, and there is so little Experience to qualify and check it, even then did *Obadiah* begin to fear the LORD, and have a settled Regard to Him in the Course of his Actions, so as to be more sway'd by a Desire to please Him, and Fear of offending Him, than by any Considerations whatsoever. And this he did In a full direct Opposition to the earnest Courtship of the Devil, the impetuous Sollicitations of the Flesh, and strong vicious Inclinations of a deprav'd Nature, the taking Allurements of Familiars, and the Force of prevailing Examples to the contrary. So that if the breaking thro' Difficulties to the Attainment of any Excellency, heightens the Commendation of it, then is *Obadiah* in this Case much to be admir'd. For he had all those Difficulties that are common and usual with others; and he had some also peculiar to himself; but he broke thro', and got over all. He had irregular sinful Inclinations as well as others, and they were often stir'd up by the outward Objects that presented. He had a Mind stock'd with Corruption, which like Tinder was ready to take fire upon the least Spark, especially in that Age of Life. He had as warm Blood, and lively Spirits as are common to others that are Young. He had the same Devil to tempt him, and the same Snares to seduce him, by which others are so commonly led aside; and yet all this was as Nothing. He look'd to GOD, and to Him he devoted, himself, to Him he cleav'd with
Purpose

Purpose of Heart, resolutely stopping his Ears against contrary Solicitations.

NAY, he had some Disadvantages that were peculiar to himself. He was bred up in a Court, which is usually the Center of Vanity and Voluptuousness; in a Court than was Remarkable for Wickedness; and there was he preferr'd, and made Governor of King *Ahab's* House. He was forc'd to comfort all along with such as had no fear of GOD before their Eyes: He had few, if any, to go before him in that which was Good; but had a great many Vicious Examples of the highest Rank continually in view, and was liable to be flouted at, scorn'd and ridicul'd, depriv'd of his Honour, and cloath'd with Disgrace, for attempting to be singular, in heartily minding any Thing that was good. There's scarce One in Ten thousand but what in such Circumstances would have swoom with the Stream: But he without being daunted, endeavours to stem the Tide, lets his Face towards Heaven, and from a Stripling makes Religion his Business, and prefers the Service of GOD, and a strict and holy Life, to all the Pleasures of Sin, which he very well knew, would be only for a season. He, *from his Youth*, in earned declares for serious Piety, and heartily adheres to it in the whole Course of his Life. So that if Religion in the strictness of it, have any Thing that is truly Commendable, *Obadiah* must be own'd to deserve the highest Commendation: If

the Fear of GOD be the highest Endowment, this Character of him in my Text, which ascribes it to him, and that so early, must be one of the most excellent Characters that could have been given.

WHO can forbear crying out, Happy *Obadiah*, who began so soon to be Good! so soon began to look Heavenward! who thus from his Youth gave up himself to the GOD that made him! and Happy they that herein are like him!

I hope, this is the Mind and real Sentiment of many of You that now hear me; and it will be so of all that give way to serious Consideration: 'Tis the promoting and cherishing this Sense, is the grand Aim of my present Discourse; and might I be so far favour'd by GOD's gracious Providence, as that warm Thoughts of this Nature might be stirr'd up in any Young One's Breast, by what I have now to offer to Consideration, I should reckon my Pains very well bestow'd. That I may do what I can towards it in a narrow compass, I proceed

II. TO shew the Happiness which this Character bespeaks, and the blessed Consequences which it may be expected and hop'd it will have attending it, to the inexpressible Comfort and Benefit of those to whom it belongs: Which may be comprehended under the following Particulars.

I. SUCH

1. SUCH as *fear GOD from their Youth*, do in an high degree honour Him whom they fear, and shall not be without a suitable Return. 'Tis GOD's own Saying by his Prophet, *Them that honour me, I will honour.* Now such as fear GOD betimes exceedingly honour Him; none do it more. By giving Him the flower of their Days, in opposition to contrary Solicitations, they proclaim aloud to all that observe them, that there is no such Master as GOD, and that his Service is truly the best of Employments, in their esteem. This Way, as far as in them lies, they excite Respect in Spectators, and recommend GOD to others. They declare Him truly worthy of the highest Veneration and Regard, and that none can begin too soon to devote themselves to Him. They hereby as it were invite and press others into His Service; and so He is much honour'd. He hath therefore given his Word (which is the best Security, and such as may be safely depended on) that He will honour them in return. He will delight to honour them. Which Way indeed the Honour that is meant shall be deriv'd upon them, is not particularly express'd; but we have no reason to question, but that the Honour which is of GOD's bestowing, shall be such as will become the Giver, and such as will highly dignify the Receiver.

1 Sam. ii.
30.

2. SUCH as *fear GOD front their Youth*, are betimes secur'd from the greatest and

most fatal Dangers. The Children of Apostate *Adam* are no sooner born into the World, than by reason of a Contagion that is Hereditary, they are expos'd to the Wrath of an Holy GOD: No sooner do they enter upon the Stage of Life, than they are liable to be again carry'd off by Death. And if that should befall them, before they are taken off from the old Stock, and ingrafted on a new one, and before the Spirit of Grace has renew'd them, they are liable to be lost, and ruin'd, and undone for ever. But where the Fear of GOD is implanted, his Wrath is avoided. Whoever are expos'd, such as fear the LORD are secur'd of his Favour. The whole Scripture so plainly and fully declares it, that it is altogether needless to go about to prove it. Such most certainly escape that Curse which others are under, and obtain a Blessing: And that the more remarkably, by how much the sooner they begin to fear GOD. There are none so young, but that they are liable to Death's Arrest; and there is no Danger comparable to that of being found at such a Time out of the Divine Favour, but by beginning to fear GOD betimes, this is most effectually prevented: And therefore Death loses its Terror. We read of some, who *through fear of Death, were all their Life time subject to bondage*. This would be the Case of all from their very Cradle, so long as they continu'd unprovided for it, if they were but sensible of the Awfulness of Death, and the Miseries that follow after it. But such

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as fear GOD betimes, need not be afraid of dying. In their Case Death has lost its Sting. And if they are safe as to that, we may well enough conclude that no other Dangers need affright them.

3. SUCH as *fear the LORD from their Youth*, lay the best and surest Foundation for a comfortable, easy, and pleasant Life. The Psalmist asks, *What Man is he that desireth Life, and loveth many Days, that he may see good?* and he intimates that he puts the Question with a design to *teach* those the *Fear of the LORD*, who would have this Desire answer'd. In asking, *Who, and what Man* it is that desires to live happily? he supposes it Natural to all to desire it; and intimates, that none can forbear desiring it. But let us turn our Thoughts as we will, we can no way so effectually compass it, as by fearing the LORD betimes. Hereby is an Intercourse settled with Him, who is the best Guide, and the surest Friend; who is Himself a sufficient Portion, and whose Favour is an abundant Happiness. Hereby shall we approve ourselves to Him, who is a Sun and a Shield, to enlighten and inliven, to protect and defend, and who *will give Grace and Glory, and withhold no good Thing from them that walk uprightly.* And an Interest in Him being once obtain'd, his Wisdom shall guide, his Power protect, his Goodness supply, his Grace assist, and all his Perfections be engag'd for their relief, as their Needs require. This will be their
Case

Ps. xxxiv.
12.

Ps. xxxiv.
11.

Case and their Privilege, in the whole Course of their Lives; and Who then can be so Happy, or pretend to live so comfortably as they?

4. SUCH as *fear the LORD from their Youth*, take a Course which prevents much Guilt and Folly, and whereby they escape many Troubles and Sorrows, that are otherwise unavoidable. If Persons are once brought to turn a deaf Ear to divine Admonitions, to listen freely to the Devil and their Lusts, be wedded to Sin by Custom, and contract strong vicious Habits, and be link'd with bad Company, 'tis more than a thousand to one whether ever they be reclaim'd and take up. If such as these are not thoroughly awaken'd and reform'd, they are inevitably lost for ever; and no other can be expected than that they should have their Portion in remediless Wo. And if they ever are recover'd, it is not without the greatest Difficulty imaginable. Should GOD ever awaken them; should He in mercy to their Souls, come and pull them as Brands out of the Fire, 'tis not to be conceiv'd what Torment and Perplexity, and rending Anxiety, and what Pangs and Throbs they must be forc'd to feel and meet with, before the Change is wrought. And when that is over, a considerable part of the remaining Life must be spent in undoing what had been done before, and that with so much eagerness and vehemence, which at best is but uncomfortable. And after all, tho' there

there be an happy Alteration in the State and Temper of such Persons, and tho' the Heart is fix'd right by divine Grace, yet is it not unlikely but there may upon sudden Temptations be returns to some old Sins, nor is it much to be wonder'd, if the Force of confirm'd Habits should appear in occasional Relapses; which tho' they may be such as consist with Sincerity, will yet create much Fear, and Smart, and Sorrow, great Mourning and Lamentation. All this is happily prevented, by an early Fear of GOD, before Sin hath taken root, and Satan hath fix'd Persons in his Vassalage, by Use and Custom.

5. SUCH as *fear the LORD from their Youth*, make the best Provision thar can be, against those Troubles, which are not wholly to be avoided. There are a great many Calamities to which all are at present expos'd. It hath pleas'd GOD in the midst of the many Mercies with which He continually encompasses us, to leave many of the bitter Fruits of Sin remaining, that we may be often minded of our common Apostacy, and stirr'd up to look out for a better Life hereafter, Sickness and Craziness, Pains and Aches, and numberless Bodily Infirmities; worldly Losses and Crosses, Disappointments in Friends and Relatives, together with an unspeakable variety of other afflictive Evils, are now the common Lot of the Children of Men, and there are Scarce any but what have a share, in one or other
respect.

respect, at one part of their Lives or another. In the vigor of Youth indeed, when the Spirits are lively, for want of Personal Observation, and a due regard to the Experience of others, 'tis not uncommon to fancy that we may not drink very deep in these Things, whatever others may have done before us: But nothing can be more weak and foolish, than to expect an intire freedom and exemption. When Evils of this kind come upon us, they are very apt to press and bear hard upon us, to wound and terrify, and sometimes to sink and overwhelm us, and especially as they are aggravated and complicated in particular Circumstances, by Providential Connexions. But even as to these, the early Fear of GOD is the best Remedy that can be provided. For this helps us to a Refuge and Shelter in all the Distresses and Troubles we can meet with: It quiets and composes the Mind, and prevents boisterousness of Spirit, and makes us sedate and calm under all Changes and Difficulties: It intitles us to a peculiar Care of the divine Providence, which can cause all Things of this kind (the worst and severest not being excepted) to work together for our Good: And it secures also of an happy and comfortable Issue at the last, which under the forest Tryals, cannot but be an unspeakable Support. And the more Early Persons are in this Fear of GOD, the more beneficial do they find it in this respect.

6. SUCH

6. SUCH as *fear the LORD from their Youth*, are capable of much more Service than can be expected from other Persons. This is the way for them to excels the desire of which is very agreeable to Nature; and to excell too in that which is most valuable. They who fet-out betimes in the Service of GOD, and from the first, take the right Way to Heaven, may make a much greater advance in true Piety, and bring forth more signal Fruits of Holiness, and be much more Useful in the World, and much greater Blessings in their several Places and Stations, than such as spend a considerable part of their Lives in Loitering, or Triffling, or in a sinful and vicious Course. They may make much more progress in Grace if it pleases GOD they live, and be much fitter for Heaven when they come to die, than such as liv'd long in the service of the Devil, and came not till towards the close of their Days to take up, and grow Serious, and turn to GOD, tho' they were at last in earnest.

6. SUCH as *fear the LORD from their Youth*, have a good and satisfactory Evidence of their Sincerity. The want of this is to many a very great hindrance in Religion; having had affecting Experience of the strange Deceitfulness of their Hearts, and often return'd to Folly after they seem'd most heartily to renounce it, they find it hard to get the Satisfaction they desire, that they are

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at length upright with GOD, and stedfast in his Covenant: And so are forc'd to spend a great part of that Time, which would be much better employ'd in improving their Grace, and glorifying GOD, in troublesome Doubts and Fears about their State, and questionings of their own Sincerity. It must be own'd, in a Case where there is so much depending, the utmost Caution is needful to prevent Mistakes: But upon a comparative view of Things, it will appear plain and beyond denial, That they that *fear GOD from their Youth*, have the best of Evidences of their Integrity. If such as are come to Maturity or advanc'd in Years, can find upon looking back, that they betimes were afraid of Sin, and made Conscience of Duty; that in their early Days and from the first, they had a serious Regard to GOD in their whole Course and Deportment, made it their Business to approve themselves to Him, and allow'd themselves in nothing of which He discover'd his dislike; that they convers'd with Him Day after Day, and that not superficially neither, but with warmth and vigor; acknowledg'd Him in all their Ways, and made his Glory the End, and his Law the Rule of their Lives: If I say, they upon looking back, can find it thus with them, they have the best of Evidences, and are plainly unreasonable, if they with anxiety call their own Sincerity in question. And the earlier is the Date which they find this bears, the more Comfort may
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it be expected it should afford them. And this also is a great Blessing.

8. AND Lastly, Such *as fear the LORD from their Youth*, are furnish'd with a good and strong Argument in Prayer, if they live to a declining Age: An Argument which others are uncapable of using. I have often been affected with that Prayer of *David*, which he put up to GOD towards the close of his Life, when he found he stood in need of peculiar Supports and Comforts: *O GOD, says he, thou hast taught me from my Youth: Now also when I am old and Grey-headed, O GOD, forsake me not.* Methinks, there is great Strength in the Plea a wonderful Force in the Argument. Old-age, (which is of itself a Distemper) hath a great many Infirmities naturally attending it, as they that live to it generally find by experience. Now if we should live till, as *Solomon* very elegantly expresses it, *the Almond-tree should flourish, and the Grasshopper should be a burden,* and should be scarce able to bear ourselves; yet if then we can look up seriously to the Blessed GOD, and tell Him, that He that knows all Things, knows that He hath been our GOD from our Youth up, it will put new life and vigor into our Spirits; and we may draw a comfortable Conclusion from it, that He will not then forsake us; will not deny us any needful Aid or Support. For certainly, He that began so early to be gracious to us, and carry'd us on so far, will not leave us at

Psal. lxxi.
17, 18.

Eccl. xii.
5.

the closing Point; but will go on to be gracious, till He has perfected that which concerneth us. And this also is an unspeakable Comfort, which others are mere Grangers to.

THESE are some of the happy Consequences, which any may hope will attend their *fearing the LORD from their Youth*. But I can safely say, the half has not been told you. For many Houts would not be sufficient to illustrate this Matter fully; tho' I apprehend, enough has been said to make it evident, That a more admirable and excellent Character could not be given of any Man, than good *Obadiah* gives of himself in my Text. All that I shall farther aim at, will be to give both younger and elder Persons a little Assistance, in order to the improving a Meditation of this nature. And,

1. I shall apply myself to such of You as are Young, in the Morning of your Days, and but entring upon Action on the Stage of the World. To You I come with a Message from the Great GOD: A Message that is plain and serious, and of the last Concernment: And I beseech you, let not what I say, be disregarded. The LORD invites, and desires, and charges you to Fear Him, and to do it from your Youth. I bespeak you then for GOD, the GOD that made you, and to whom you owe all that you are or have. You are born in his House, and
his

his Bonds are upon you: How dare you then offer to serve the Devil? I entreat you to take Good *Obadiah* for your Pattern. He *feared the Lord from his Youth*. Go you and do likewise. And have you not abundant Encouragement? Does not what you have now heard, deserve to be consider'd? Are not the Consequences that it has been intimated will attend the Course which I have recommended, exceeding comfortable and highly desirable? Can you take any other Course, can you take the opposite and contrary Course, with the like or as good a prospect? I hope, you don't think you can. And why may not I hope to prevail with some of you to comply with my motion? If you have any true and prudent love to yourselves, you cannot refuse. For this would be your certain Safety; whereas the contrary, would be the high way to Ruin. Take you but care to *fear the LORD from your Youth*, and He will take care of you, to own and bless you all your Days after. I doubt not but you would willingly be of some significance in the World as you grow up: At least you would be provided for, and have wherewith to live comfortably. Behold, there's no better way to it than that which I propose to you. Consider then often and seriously of those memorable Words that came out of his Mouth who was Truth itself, *Seek ye first the Kingdom of GOD and his Righteousness, and all these Things shall be added unto you*. Do but Fear GOD betimes, and his special Presence shall attend you
from

Mat. vi.
33.

Prov. viii.
27.

from one Stage of Life to another. And can you desire any Thing that is better than his Presence? Without it all the World is as nothing; but with it, every State is comfortable, and every Place delightful. Do but now Fear GOD, and you'll secure all the inestimable Blessings which Serious Religion has attending it once for all. For 'tis expressly declar'd, *They that seek me early shall find me.* And they that find GOD, and obtain Wisdom from Him, cannot be to seek for any Thing that is necessary to their Happiness. Do you expect to find less of variety in the Course of your Lives than others have done before you? Do you think you shall not have your mixtures of Trouble, in the several Changes you pass thro'? Would not any such Expectation be vain, and weak, and groundless? Why then should you give way to it? Were it not better and safer to provide against Trouble and Sorrow? That was certainly very wise Advice of King Solomon, let me entreat you to follow it; *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, while the evil Days come, nor the Years drain nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*

Ecc. xii.
1.

OR do any of you that are as yet but young and tender, give indications of the Fear of GOD, I beseech you hold on. In this Course you have the fairest Prospect, the most abundant Encouragement, and the most ample Hopes. Yet give me leave to warn you to expect to be Assaulted, to pre-
pare

pare for Temptations, and look upwards for Strength to resist them. Take warning from such as you have known or heard of, that after fair beginnings have made Shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience. There have been many in and about this City, who in their Youth have promis'd well, that have afterwards sadly degenerated, and pour'd contempt on their Pious Education, and striven to out-do others in Wickedness. Seeing and knowing how it has been with others; be you the more Watchful, since serious Piety is in a very declining state, do you stand upon your Guard. Save yourselves from this untoward Generation, who have little of the fear of GOD before their Eyes. And tho' in a strictly Religious course and walk, you should have but few Companions, yet be not discourag'd. What tho' you are by some accounted singular, yet remember 'tis a Glory and Honour to be singular in an Excellency, tho' it is a weakness to affect to be so in a Trifle. What tho' the most are against you, yet let not that abate your Resolution, unless you could be content to fare with the most at last, which I hope you are sensible would make you but a very poor amends, for having your Portion in endless Misery and Woe. What tho' you find a strict Conscientiousness is attended with difficulties? when you have the Prospect of so ample a Reward, both here and hereafter, it may make you easy. Continue you to walk in GOD's fear, and he will still stand by, and assist you

you now, and your future Reward shall be both sure and certain.

But I would not wholly overlook those of the opposite Stamp, who are young but fearless, mindless of GOD and their Soul affairs. I would enquire of such, Whether they don't think in their Consciences, that Persons of *Obadiah's* Temper are by far the most excellent; and that to be like him is most definable? Should they return a Negative Answer, they would be far gone indeed; and Scourges and Scorpions must be their Instructors, if ever they come to any good. But if they do think his Temper the happiest, and his Course the safest, I would fain know why they won't choose it for themselves? I would beg of such, that they would turn the Matter in their Thoughts 'till they are convinc'd it is a most dreadful thing to be without the Fear of GOD. The want of other things may be a thousand times better dispens'd with. 'Twere better by far to be without Food or Raiment, without Friends or sensible Comforts, than without the Fear of God in your Hearts and Souls? And can any of you be content and easy under this Want? Content to live without any serious regard to GOD! Why, what would become of you, if He should forbear regarding you? What miserable Creatures would his with-holding but his cherishing influence from you render you in a Moment! How many other Fears do you give way to that are not so needful?

Are

Are you not afraid of Men, and the Mischief they might do you, when they appear set against you, and have nothing to restrain them? And will you not fear that God that can cast both Soul and Body into Hell, and will do so in a little time, if you continue in wilful Sin without Repentance; I beg of such for GOD's sake, and for their own Souls sake, that they would not make a light Matter of this, but take up in time. If this be thy Case Friend, let me perswade thee to retire, and think soberly with thy self, what a Wretch thou art to be without the Fear of GOD: Think seriously, how Happy they are that are of *Obadiah's* Temper, while thou art Miserable, and incapable of coming to good, for want of Fearing Him, of whom the whole Creation expresses a sort of Veneration: And throw thy self upon thy Knees before Him, earnestly begging that He will put his Fear into thy Heart, and cause thee to walk in his Ways. Say not, thou wilt do this some time hence, tho' not now: Thou know'll not thou shalt live to any future Time thou mightst pitch upon, while the present Time is neglected. Thou mayst die to Morrow, and to be forever lost and undone, if thou beginnest not to fear the LORD to Day. For who can tell what a Day may bring forth? Be not so foolish, as to depend upon an hereafter, which may never come. Be assur'd, the longer thou delayest, the more wilt thou be harden'd, and the less dispos'd wilt thou grow: And deferring much longer, thou

Prov. i
24, 25, 26,
27, 28, 29,
30, 31.

may'st be incurably stupify'd, and irrecoverable. There is a Portion of Scripture, that may justly make thee tremble; it runs thus; *Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my Counsel and would none of my Reproof: I also will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your Fear cometh; when your Fear cometh as Desolation, and your Definition cometh as a Whirlwind; when Distress and Anguish cometh upon you; then shall they call upon me but I not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated Knowledge, and did not choose the Fear of the LORD. They would none of my Counsel; they despis'd all my Reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the Fruit of their own Way, and be filled with their own Devices.* There is no small danger, that this describ'd will be thy very Case, if thou persistest: Be persuaded therefore to take up and be Wise an time. But then,

2. YOU also that are advanc'd in Years, have fair scope for making a good Improvement of a Subject of this Nature. For upon Reflexion, you may either find that you *Feared the LORD* as Obadiah *from your youth*, or you did not. If you have done so, you have great reason to be thankful and to bless the LORD. You must resolve it into the influence of his Grace, and ought to give him the intire Glory. Make Conscience of recommending your Experience of the comfortable tendency of the Fear of
 GOD

GOD to others, especially such as are young, and coming up after you, in order to their ex-citation. If you did not *fear the Lord from your Youth*, be humbled upon that Consideration. Be humbled to think, that you should deny to the Blessed GOD, and should give to the the Devil, your worst Enemy, the flower of your Days, and the very best season of your Lives. Think how justly GOD might have left you to yourselves, since you would not choose his Fear; and what would have become of you then?

IT will moreover deserve your serious Consideration, Whether after so many Years as you have liv'd in the World, and so many Helps as you have had, you yet truly fear the LORD to this very Day. If you cannot say as *Obadiah*, yet don't despond, but be thankful that your Case as yet admits of a Remedy. Bless God that you have been under the Dews of Heaven, and yet continue so. The more Time you have lost, endeavour to be the more careful to lose no more. And remember and consider. That tho' such as *fear GOD from their Youth*, are the happiest Persons; yet *the Eye of the LORD is upon them that fear Him*, at any time, *upon them that hope in his Mercy*.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

PAGE 1. l. 9, 10. for *Commendation*, read *Commendations*, p. 19. in the last line but three, add *an* before *unspeakable*, p. 27. l. 22. between *'tis* and *Glory*, add *a* and in the same Page, line the last, between *and* and *still*, add *he will*.