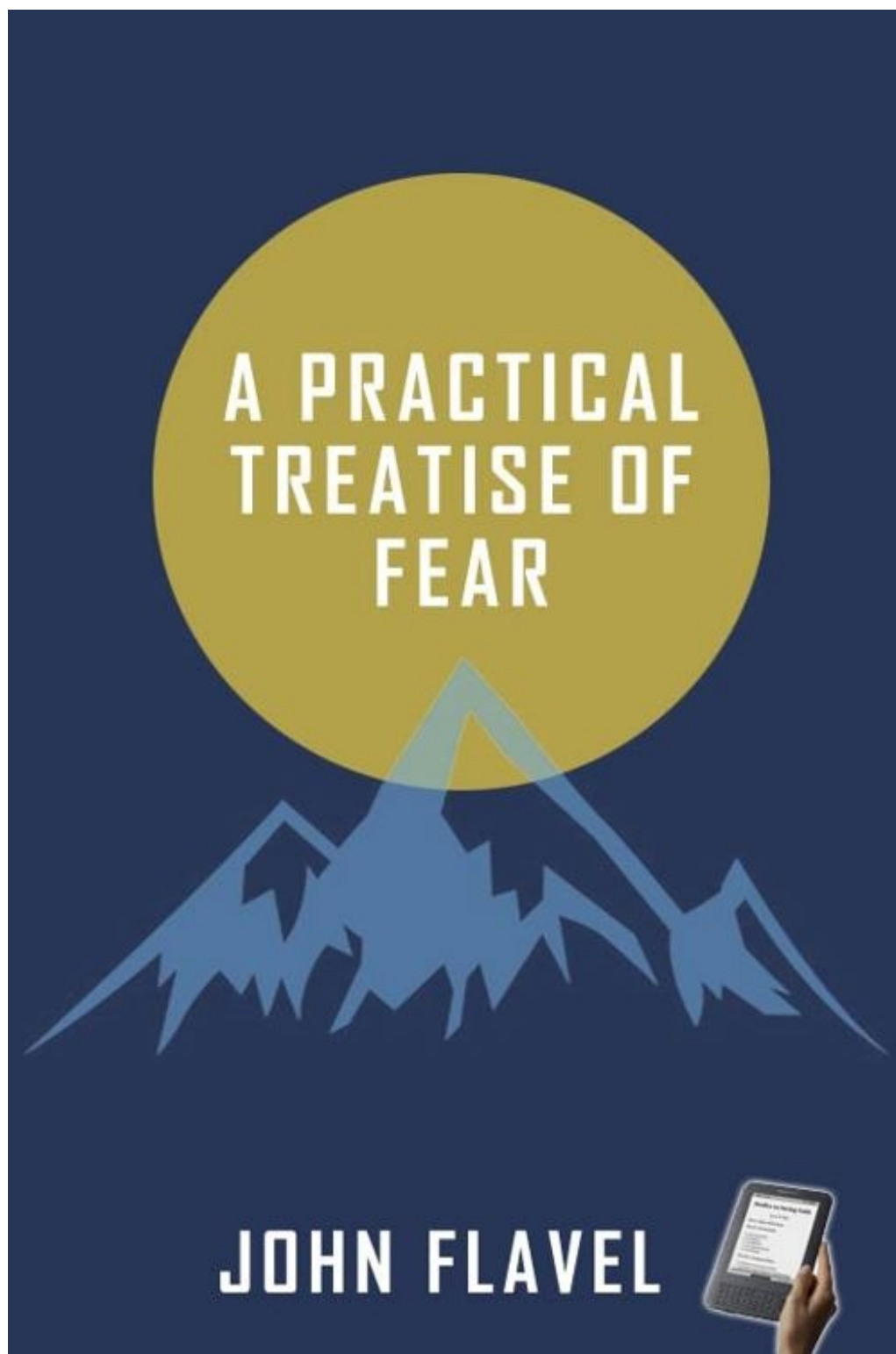


**A PRACTICAL
TREATISE OF
FEAR**

JOHN FLAVEL





A Practical Treatise of Fear

by John Flavel

Wherein the various kinds, uses, causes, effects and remedies thereof are distinctly opened and prescribed, for the relief and encouragement of all those that fear God in these doubtful and distracting times.

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To the Right Worshipful Sir JOHN HARTOP, Knight and Baronet

SIR,

AMONG all the creatures God hath made (devils only excepted) man is the most apt and able to be his own tormentor; and of all the scourges with which he lasheth and afflicteth both his mind and body, none is found so cruel and intolerable as his own fears. The worse the times are like to be, the more need the mind hath of succour and encouragement, to confirm and fortify it for hard encounters; but from the worst prospect, fear inflicts the deepest and most dangerous wounds upon the mind of man, cutting the very nerves of its passive fortitude and bearing ability.

The grief we suffer from evil felt would be light and easy, were it not incensed by fear; reason would do much, and religion more, to demulse and lenify our sorrows, did not fear betray the succours of both. And it is from things to come that this prospecting creature raiseth up to himself vast hopes and fears: if he have a fair and encouraging prospect of serene and prosperous days, from the scheme and position of second causes, hope immediately fills his heart with cheerfulness, and displays the signals of it in his very face, answerable to that fair, benign aspect of things: but if the face of things to come be threatening and inauspicious, fear gains the ascendent over the mind; and unmanly and unchristian faintness pervades it, and, among the many other mischiefs it inflicts, this is not the least, that it brings the evil of to-morrow upon to-day, and so makes the duties of to-day wholly unserviceable to the evils of to-morrow; which is as much as if man having an intricate and difficult business cut out for the next day, which requires the utmost intention, both of his mind and body, and (haply) might be prosperously managed, if both were duly prepared, should lie all the night restless and disquieted about the event, torturing and spending himself with his own presaging fears, so that when the day is come, and the business calls for him, his strength is no way equal to the burden of it, but he faints and fails under it.

There is indeed an excellent use that God makes of our fears, to stimulate our slothful hearts to greater vigilance and preparation for evils; and there is a mischievous use Satan makes of our fears to cast us under despondency and unbecoming pusillanimity: and I reckon it one of the

greatest difficulties of religion, to cut, by a thread here, and so to manage ourselves under threatening or doubtful providences, as to be touched with so much sense of those approaching evils as may prepare us to bear them; and yet to enjoy that constancy and firmness of mind, in the worst times, that may answer the excellent principles we are professedly governed by.

These last times are certainly the most perilous times; great things are yet to be acted upon the stage of this world, before it be taken down; and the *scena antipenultima*, latter-end, I say, not the last, will be a tragedy. There is an *ultima clades adhuc metuenda* a dismal slaughter of the witnesses of Christ yet to be expected: the last bite of the cruel beast will be deadly, and if we flatter not ourselves, all things seem to be disposing themselves in the course of providence towards it.

But, Sir, if our union with Christ be sure in itself, and sure to us also; if faith give us the daily visions and prelibations of the world to come, what well-composed spectators shall we be of these tragedies! Let things be tossed *susque, deque*, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea, yet then the assured Christian may sing his song upon Alamo^{*}, A song composed for God's hidden ones. This so poiseth and steadies the mind, that we may enjoy the comfort and tranquillity of a resigned will, when others are at their wit's end.

With design to promote this blessed frame, in my own and others hearts in these frightful times, I meditated, and now publish this small tract, to which a dear friend (from whom I have often had the fair idea and character of your excellent spirit) hath occasioned the prefixing of your worthy name; I beg pardon for such an unusual presumption, as also your charity in censuring the faults that will appear in it, when it shall come under so exact and judicious an eye; it may be useful though it be not elegant; its seasonableness is its best commendation, and its aim better than its performance. As for you, Sir, I hope faith hath really placed your soul in that serene and happy station where Seneca fancied moral virtue to have placed a good man, *Fatendum est, cacumine Olympi constitutes, supra ventos et procellas, et omnes res humanas*: Above the storms and tempests of this unquiet and distracting world. But there are many gracious persons at this day labouring under their own fears, and

whose hearts are ready to fail with looking for those things that are coming to try them that dwell upon the earth; and possibly somewhat of relief may be administered to many such, by this discourse; some bivious and staggering souls may be established; some discouraged and fainting spirits may be revived; some doubts may be dissolved that have long perplexed gracious hearts. Whatever use it may be to any, I humbly call in the aid of your prayers to my own, for a special blessing upon it, and remain,

Sir,

Yours to honour, love, and serve you,

JOHN FLAVEL.

CHAPTER I

Wherein the text and context are opened, the doctrines propounded, and the general method stated

Say ye not, A confederacy to all them to whom this people shall say a confederacy; neither fear ye [their fear] nor be afraid. 13. Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread; 14. And he shall be for a, sanctuary.— Isa. 8:12, 13. and part of ver.

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THERE is not more diversity found in the outward features, than in the inward tempers and dispositions of men; some are as timorous as hares, and start at every sound or yelp of a dog; others as bold as lions, and can

face dangers without trembling; some fear more than they ought, and some before they ought, and others when they ought not at all. The carnal person fears man, not God; the strong Christian fears God, not man; the weak Christian fears man too much, and God too little.

There is a fear which is the effect of sin springing from guilt, and hurrying the soul into more guilt; and there is a fear which is the effect of grace, springing from our love to God, and his interest, and driving the soul to God in the way of duty. The less fear any man hath, the more happiness, except it be of that fear which is our happiness and our excellency.

It cannot be said of any man, as it is said of Leviathan, Job 41:33 that he is made without fear; those that have most fortitude are not without some fears; and when the church is in the storms of persecution, and almost covered with the waves, the stoutest passengers in it may suffer as much from this boisterous passion within, as from the storm without; and all for want of thoroughly believing, or not seasonably remembering that the Lord high Admiral of all the ocean, and Commander of all the winds, is on board the ship, to steer and preserve it in the storm.

A pregnant instance hereof is furnished to our hands in this context, where you find the best men trembling in expectation of the worst events both on the church in general, and themselves in particular. "Their hearts were moved like the trees of the wood shaken with the wind," chap. 7:2.

And, indeed, if their dangers were to be measured by sense only, their fears were not above the value of the cause, yea, their danger seemed to exceed their fears; for it was the invasion of a foreign and cruel enemy, even the Assyrian, who were to break in upon them, like a breach of the sea, and overflow the land of Immanuel. Ver. 7. "The Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many; even the king of Assyria, and all his glory, and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks." And as the 7th verse resembles the enemy to waters, which quickly drown the country into which they break, so the 8th verse tells you how far they should prevail, and how near it should come to a general and total ruin. "He shall pass through Judah, he shall overflow and go over; he shall reach even to the neck, and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel." All the

body shall be under water, except the capital city, which remained above water.

Having thus described the power and success of the invading enemy, in the 9th and 10th verses, he derides their plots and combinations, assuring them, that although God, for just and holy ends, would permit them, for a time, to afflict his people; yet the issue of all these counsels and cruelties should recoil upon themselves, and end in their own ruin and confusion.

And thereupon Isaiah is commanded to encourage the feeble and trembling hearts of such as feared God in those distracting and frightful times. Ver. 11, 12, 13. "The Lord spake unto me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not a confederacy," &c.

God speaking to the prophet by a strong hand, imports the strong and mighty impression that was made upon his heart, by the spirit of prophecy; wherein the Lord did, as it were, lay his hand upon him, as a man doth upon one to whom he is about to impart some special secret in a familiar way, q. d. Come hither, Isaiah, (drawing him to him at the same instant, with a friendly hand) take deep notice of what I am now to give thee in charge, both with respect to thyself, and my elect people that follow thee; "Say not ye, A confederacy to all them to whom this people shall say a confederacy," i.e. let not these frightful tidings work upon you as they do upon Ahaz, and the common multitude with him, who are so terrified and scared with the approaching dangers, that all their counsels, thoughts, and studies, are taken up in preventing it, by making a confederacy or league with the Assyrian: Hos. 5:13. or if that cannot be, then with some foreign power that may secure them against the Assyrian: but their eyes are not at all to me for protection and deliverance; they expect more from Egypt than from heaven; from a broken reed, than from the rock of ages. Fear not you their fear; their fear drives them from God to the creature; it first distracts them, and then ensnares them.

But, on the contrary, see that thou and all the faithful in the land with thee, do sanctify me in your hearts, and make me your fear and your dread, i.e. rely upon me by faith in this day of trouble, and see that you give me the glory of my wisdom, power, and faithfulness, by relying

entirely upon those my attributes engaged for you in so many tried promises; and do not betake yourselves to such sinful and vain shifts as those do that have no interest in me, nor experience of me. This is the general scope and design of the text, wherein more particularly, you have,

1. An evil practice prohibited.
2. An effectual remedy prescribed.
3. A singular encouragement to apply that remedy.

1. An evil practice prohibited, "Fear not their fear, neither be afraid." This is that sinful principle, which was but too apt to incline them to do as others did, to wit, to say, A confederacy. Sinful fears are apt to drive the best men into sinful compliances and indirect shifts to help themselves.

Their fear may be understood two ways;

1. Subjectively.
2. Effectively.

1. Subjectively, for the self-same fear wherewith the carnal and unbelieving Jews feared; a fear that enslaved them in bondage of spirit, a fear that is the fruit of sin, a sin in its own nature, the cause of much sin to them, and a just punishment of God upon them for their other sins.

2. Effectively, Let not your fear produce in you such mischievous effects as their fear doth; to make you forget God, magnify the creature, prefer your own wits and policies to the Almighty Power and never-failing Faithfulness of God: if you say, but how shall we help it?

2. Why, in the next place, you have an effectual remedy prescribed; but sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear and your dread. The fear of God will swallow up the fear of man, a reverential awe and dread of God will extinguish the slavish fear of the creature, as the sun-shine puts out fire, or as one fire fetches out another; so will this fear fetch out that.

By sanctifying the Lord of hosts himself is meant a due ascription of the glory of his sovereign power, wisdom, and faithfulness, not only in verbal and professed acknowledgments thereof, but especially in those internal acts of affiance, resignation, and entire dependence on him, which, as they are the choicest respects of the creature towards its God, and give him the greatest glory, so they are certainly the most beneficial and comfortable acts we can perform for our own peace and safety in times of danger.

If a man do really look to God in a day of trouble and fear as to the Lord of hosts, i.e. one that governs all the creatures, and all their actions; at whose beck and command all the armies of heaven and earth are, and then can rely upon the care and love of this God, as a child in danger of trouble reposes on, and commits himself with greater confidence to the care and protection of his father: O what peace, what rest, must necessarily follow upon this! Who would be afraid to pass through the midst of armed troops and regiments, whilst he knows that the general of the army is his own father? The more power this filial fear of God obtains in our hearts, the less will you dread the power of the creature. When the Dictator ruled at Rome, then all other officers ceased; and so, in a great measure, will all other fears, where the fear of God is dictator in the heart. This is the remedy.

3. And to enable us to apply this remedy in the worst and most difficult times, we have a singular encouragement proposed: if we will thus sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, by such an acknowledgment of, and child-like dependence on him in times of danger, then he will be to us for a sanctuary, *Asyli loco*, i.e. he will surely protect, defend, and provide for us in the worst times and cases*; then will the Lord "create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud, and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence, and there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time, from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from the storm and from rain." Let the winds roar, the rain beat, the lightnings flash, you are in safety, and have a good roof over your heads. Hence these two points of doctrine offer themselves:

Doct. 1. That the best men are too apt to be overcome with slavish fears,

in times of imminent distress and danger.

Doct. 2. That the fear of God is the most effectual means to extinguish the sinful fear of men, and to secure us from danger.

These two points take in the substance and scope of the text; but because I design to treat, in the following chapters, of the kinds, nature, uses, causes, effects, and remedies of fear, I shall not distinctly prosecute them, but proceed in this order, in the following chapters.

CHAPTER II

Wherein the kinds and nature of fear are opened, and particularly the distracting, slavish fears of creatures

Sect. I. THERE is a threefold fear found in man, viz.

1. Natural.

2. Sinful.

3. Religious fear.

1. Natural fear, of which all are partakers that partake of the common nature, not one excepted.

Natural fear is the trouble or perturbation of mind, from the apprehension of approaching evil, or impending danger.

The word $\varphi\epsilon\theta\omicron\varsigma$ comes from a verb* that signifies flight; this is not always sinful, but it is always the fruit and consequent of sin. Since sin entered into our nature, there is no shaking off fear. No sooner had Adam transgressed but he feared and fled, hiding himself among the trees of the

garden, Gen. 3:8. When he had transgressed the covenant, he presently feared the execution of the curse: first he eats, then he hides; and this afflictive passion is from him transmitted, and derived to all his children.

To this natural fear it pleased our Lord Jesus Christ to subject himself in the days of his flesh; he was afraid, yea, he was sore amazed, Mark 14:33. for though his human nature was absolutely free from sin, yet he came in the "likeness of sinful flesh," Rom. 8:3.

This fear creates great trouble and perturbation in the mind, 1 John 4:18. Fear hath torment; in proportion to the danger, is the fear; and in proportion to the fear, the trouble and distraction of the mind: if the fear be exceeding great, reason is displaced, and can conduct us no farther, as the Psalmist speaks of mariners in a storm, "they are at their wits end," Psal. 107:27. or as it is varied in the* margin, all wisdom is swallowed up. And this is the meaning of Deut. 28:25. that they should go out against their enemies one way, and "flee before them seven ways," i.e. so great shall be the fright and distraction, that they shall attempt now one way, then another, striving every way, but liking none; for fear so far betrays the succours of reason, that their† counsels are always in uncertainty, and at a loss, and the usual voice of a man in this condition is, I know not what to do, I know not which way to turn.

Evil is the object of fear, and the greater the evil is, the stronger the fear must needs be, and therefore the terrors of an awakened and terrified conscience must be allowed to be the greatest of terrors, because in that case a man hath to do with a great and terrible God, and is scared with apprehensions of his infinite and eternal wrath, than which, no evil is or can be greater. You see at what height Christ's conflict wrought with it when it made him sweat as it were, great clots of blood. Of all temporal evils death is the greatest, and therefore Job calls it the King of terrors, Job 18:14. or the most terrible of terribles. Thuanus‡ relates two strange instances of the fear of death: "One of a certain captain who was so terrified with the fear of death, that he poured out a kind of bloody sweat from all parts of his body. Another is of a young man condemned for a small matter by|| Sixtus Quintus, who was so vehemently terrified with the fears of death, that he shed a kind of bloody tears." These are strange and terrible effects of fear, but vastly short of what Christ felt and

suffered, who grappled with a far greater evil than the terrors of death, even the wrath of an incensed God poured out, to the full, and that immediately upon him.

But yet evil, as evil, is rather the object of hatred than of fear, it must be an imminent or near approaching evil, which we see not how to escape or put by, that provokes fear, and rouses this lion. And therefore the saints in glory are perfectly freed from fear, because they are out of the reach of all danger: nor do we, that are here in the midst of evils, fear them till we see them approaching us, and we see not how to avoid them. To hear of fire, plague, or the sword in the Indies, doth not affright us, because the evil is so remote from us; it is far enough off, we are in no danger of it; but when it is in the town, much more when within our own dwellings, we tremble. Evil hurts us not by a simple apprehension of its nature, but of its union; and all propinquity is a degree of union, as a* learned divine speaks. And it is worth observation, that all carnal security is maintained by putting evils at a great distance from us, as it is noted of those secure sensualists, Amos 6:3. "They put far from them the evil day." The meaning is not that they did, or could put the evil one minute farther from them in reality, but only by imagination and fancy: they shut their own eyes, and would not see it, lest it should give an unpleasing interruption to their mirth; and this is the reason why death puts the living into no more fear, because it is apprehended as remote, and at an undetermined distance, whereas if the precise time of death were known, especially if that time were near, it would greatly scar and terrify.

This is the nature of natural fear, the infelicity of nature, which we all groan under the effects of: it is in all the creatures in some degree; but among them all, none suffer more by it than man, for hereby he becomes his own tormentor; nor is any torment greater than this when it prevails in a high degree upon us. Indeed all constitutions and tempers admit not the same degrees of fear; some are naturally courageous and stout, like the lion for magnanimity and fortitude; others exceeding timorous and faint-hearted, like the hare or hart, one little dog will make a hundred of them flee before him. Luther was a man of great courage and presence of mind in dangers,† Melancthon very timorous and subject to despondency. Thus the difference betwixt them is expressed in one of

Luther's letters to him: "I am well nigh a secure spectator of things, and esteem not any thing these fierce and threatening Papists say. I much dislike those anxious cares, which, as thou writest, do almost consume thee." There might be as great a stock of grace in one as in the other, but Melancthon's grace had not the advantage of so stout and courageous a temper of body and mind as Luther's had. Thus briefly of natural fear.

Sect II. There is a fear which is formally and intrinsically sinful, not only our infelicity, but our fault; not our simple affliction and burden, but our great evil and provocation; and such is the fear here dissuaded, called their fear, i.e. the fear wherewith carnal and unbelieving men do fear when dangers threaten them; and the sinfulness of it lies in five things.

1. In the spring and cause of it which is unbelief, and an unworthy distrust of God, when we dare not rely upon the security of a Divine promise, nor trust to God's protection in the way of our duty. This was the very case of that people, Isa. 30:15. "Thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, in returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not. But ye said, no, for we will flee upon horses; therefore ye shall flee: and we will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift. One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one," &c.

Thus stood the case: Sennacherib with a mighty host was ready-to invade them; this puts them into a fright; in this distress God assures them, by the mouth of his prophet, that in "returning and rest they should be saved, in quietness and confidence should be their strength." The meaning is, never perplex yourselves with various counsels and projects to secure yourselves under the wings of Egypt or any other Protector, but with a composed, quiet and calm temper of mind, rest upon my power by faith, take my promises for your security, this shall be your salvation and your strength, more effectual to your preservation than armies, garrisons, or any creature-defence in the world; one act of faith shall do you better service than Pharaoh and all his forces can do.

But ye said no, q. d. we dare not trust to that, a good horse will do us more service at such a time than a good promise; Egypt is a better security in their eye than Heaven. This is the fruit of gross infidelity. And

as wicked men do thus forsake God, and cleave to the creature in the time of trouble, so there is found a spice of this distrustfulness of God, producing fear and trouble, in the best of men. It was in the disciples themselves, Matth. 8:26. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" A storm had befallen them at sea, and danger began to threaten them, and presently you find a storm within, their fears were more boisterous than the winds, and had more need of calming than the sea; and it was all from their unbelief, as Christ tells them; the less their faith, the greater their fear. If a man can but rely upon God in a promise, so far as he is enabled to believe, so far he will reckon himself well secured.* Illyricus, in his catalogue of the Witnesses, relates this remarkable passage of one Andreas Prolcs, a godly aged divine, who lived somewhat before Luther, and taught many points soundly, according to his light then. He was called to a Synod at Milan, and afterwards in the Lateran, where, opposing a proposition of the Pope about burdening the church with a new holiday, he was brought into much danger, and escaping very narrowly from Rome, he bought him a bow and weapons: but as he was riding, he began to bethink himself, that the cause was not his but God's, and not to be maintained with sword and bow; and if it were, yet what could such a decrepit old man do with weapons? upon which he threw away his weapons, committed himself, his cause, and his journey to God, relied upon his promises more than sword or bow, and came home safe, and afterwards died quietly in his bed.

2. The sinfulness of fear lies in the excess and immoderacy of it, when we fear more than we ought; for it may be truly said of our fears, as the Philosopher speaks of waters, *difficile suis terminis continentur*, it is hard to keep them within bounds; every bush is a bear, every petty trouble puts us into a fright; our fear exceeds the value and merit of the cause. It is a great sin to love or fear any creature above the rate of a creature, as if they were masters of all our temporal and eternal comforts. Thus when the men of Israel heard of the confederacy and conjunction of their enemies against them, the text saith, "their hearts were moved, as the trees "of the wood are moved with the wind," Isa. 7:1. or as we use to say proverbially, like an aspine leaf: It is a sad sight to behold men shaking and quivering as the trees do on a windy day; yet thus did the house of David, partly through the remembrance of past calamities, but especially

through incredulity in God's protecting care in their present and future dangers; yea, this is too often the fault of good men in creature-fear as well as in creature-love, to transgress the due bounds of moderation. It is noted of Jacob, though a man of much faith, and one that had the sweetest encouragement to strengthen it, both from former experiences, and God's gracious promises to be with him, yet when Esau was come nigh, he was "greatly afraid and distressed," Gen. 32:7. It was but a little before, that God had graciously appeared to him, and sent a royal guard of angels to attend him, even two hosts or armies of angels, ver. 1, 2. and yet as soon as Esau approached him, he was afraid, yea greatly afraid, afraid and distressed, notwithstanding such an encouraging vision as this was.

3. The sinfulness of our fears lies in the inordinacy of them; to fear it more than we ought is bad enough, but to magnify its power above the power of a creature; to exalt the power of any creature by our fears, and give it such an ascendant over us, as it had an arbitrary and absolute dominion over us, or over our comforts, to do with them what it pleased; this is to put the creature out of its own class and rank, into the place of God, and is therefore a very sinful and evil fear.

To trust in any creature, as if it had the power of a God to help us, or to fear any creature, as if it had the power of a God to hurt us, is exceeding sinful, and highly provoking to God: This inordinate trust is taxed and condemned, in Isaiah 31:3. They would needs go down to Egypt for help, and trust in their horses and horsemen, because they were strong; i.e. in their opinion, they were able to secure them against all those dangers the prophet from the Lord's own mouth had threatened them with: but, to take them off from this sinful and inordinate dependence on the creature, he tells them, ver. 3. "Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit: when the Lord "shall stretch forth his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they shall fall together." q. d. It is a sinful and dangerous mistake for one creature to give that trust and dependence to another creature, which is due only to God; to look upon men as if they were gods, and horses as if they were spirits: all creatures, even the strongest, are but as the hop, the vine, or the ivy; if they clasp about the pole, the wall or the oak, they may

be supported, as you may also by leaning upon God; but if they depend and entangle themselves one upon another, as you and the Egyptians do, you shall fail, and fall all together.

And, as one creature is apt inordinately and sinfully thus to trust and lean upon another, so there is as great a profaneness in the creatures inordinately to fear and dread each other, as if the creature feared were rather a god than a man, rather a spirit than flesh; and thus our fear magnifies and exalts the creature, and puts it, as it were, into the room and place of God. This was the sin which God rebuked in his own people, Isa. 51:12, 13. "I, even I, am he that comforteth thee: Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man who shall be made as grass? and forgettest the Lord thy maker," &c. See how fear exalts man, and depresseth God; it thinks upon the noxious power of men so much, that it forgets the saving power of God, as if that stood for nothing: thus a mortal worm, that shall perish as the grass, eclipses the glory of the great God, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth.

And this was the evil against which Christ cautioned his own disciples, in Matth. 10:28. "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;" q. d. Have a care you never fear any man, be he armed with never so much power and rage: as if the power of making or marring you for ever were in his hands, as if you lay at the feet of his will and pleasure to be saved or ruined for ever: fear not him that can only touch your bodies, as if he could damn your souls; invest not any creature with the sovereign and incommunicable power of God.

4. The sinfulness of fear consists in the distracting influence it hath upon the hearts of men, whereby it discomposeth and unfits them for the discharge of their duties.

Fear sometimes puts men into such a hurry, and their thoughts into such disorder, that for the present they have scarce any succour or relief from their graces, or from their reason; for under an extraordinary fear both grace and reason, like the wheels of a watch, wound above its due height, stand still, and have no motion at all. It is rare to find a man of that

largeness and constancy of heart and mind, in a day of fear, that was found in Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. 20:2, 3. "Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea, on this side Syria, and behold they be in Hazazon-Tamar, which is Engedi; and Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord." He set himself, i.e. he composed and fixed his heart for prayer in the time of so great a fright and terrible alarm: but it is rare to find such constancy and evenness of mind as this; in like cases it is with most in great frights, as the prophet describes the condition of the Jews, Isa. 22:2, 3. when the city of Jerusalem was besieged, and the enemy came under the walls of it; that which a little before was the joyous city, or as some read, the revelling city, is now in such a panic fear, that it is full of stirs and tumults, some run up to the tops of the houses, either to hide or bewail themselves, or take a view of the dreadful enemy without; others prevent the sword of the enemy, and die by fear before-hand, their own apprehensions of misery killed them before the sword of any other enemy once touched them; but you read of none that ran into their closets to seek the Lord; the city was full of stirs, but. not of prayers, alas, fear made them cry to the mountains, rather than to God, ver. 5. The best men find it hard to keep their thoughts from wandering, and their minds from distraction, in the greatest calm of peace, but a thousand times harder in the hurries and tumults of fear.

5. The sinfulness of fear consists in the power it hath to dispose and incline men to the use of sinful means to put by their danger, and to cast them into the hands and power of temptation. "The fear of man bringeth a snare," Prov. 29:25. or puts and lays a snare before him: Satan spreads the net, and fear, like the stalking-horse, drives men right into it. It was fear which drew Abraham, that great believer, into the snare of dissimulation, to the great disparagement of religion; for it was somewhat an odd sight to see Abimelech, an Heathen, so schooling an Abraham for it, as he did, Gen. 20:9. And for the same evil you find God chiding his people, in Isa. 57:11. "And of whom hast thou been afraid, or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me?" There is a double lie occasioned by fear, one in words, and another in deeds; hypocrisy is a lie done, a practical lie, and our church history abounds with sad examples of dissimulation through fear: it is Satan's great engine to make his

temptations victorious and successful with men.

Sect. III. There is an holy and laudable fear, a fear which is our treasure, not our torment; the chief ornament of the soul, its beauty and perfection, not its infelicity or sin, viz. the awful filial fear of God; natural fear is a pure and simple passion of the soul; sinful fear is the disordered and corrupt passion of the soul; but this is the natural passion sanctified, and thereby changed and baptized into the name and nature of a spiritual grace. This fear is also mentioned in my text, and prescribed as an antidote against, sinful fears; it devours carnal fears, as Moses' serpent did those of the enchanters. It is one of the sorest judgments to be in the fear of man day and night, Deut. 28:65, 66, 67. and one of the sweetest mercies to be in the fear of God all the day long, Prov. 23:17. The fear of man shortens our days, Isa. 22:24. but the fear of the Lord prolongeth our days, Prov. 10:27. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, Prov. 14:27. But the fear of man a fountain of mischiefs and miseries: By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil, Prov. 16:6. but, by the fear of man men run themselves into evil, Prov. 29:25.

This fear is a gracious habit or principle planted by God in the soul, whereby the soul is kept under an holy awe of the eye of God, and from thence is inclined to perform and do what pleaseth him, and to shun and avoid whatsoever he forbids and hates.

1. It is planted in the soul as a permanent and fixed habit; it is not of the natural growth and production of man's heart, but of supernatural, infusion and implantation, Jer. 32:40. "I will put my fear into their inward parts." To fear man is natural, but to fear God is wholly supernatural.

2. This gracious fear puts the soul under the awe of God's eye, Psal. 119:161. "My heart standeth in awe of thy word." It is the reproach of the servants of men to be eye-servants, but it is the praise and honour of God's servants to be so.

3. This respect to the eye of God inclines them to perform and do whatsoever pleaseth him, and is commanded by him: Hence, fearing God, and working righteousness, are connected and linked together, Acts

10:35. If we truly fear God, we dare not but do the things he commands; and if his fear be exalted in our hearts to an high degree, it will enable us to obey him in duties accompanied with deepest self-denial, Gen. 22:12. "Now I know thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not with-held thy son, thine only son from me."

4. This fear engageth, and in some degree enableth the soul, in which it is, to shun and avoid whatsoever is displeasing to God, and forbidden by him; in this Job discovered himself a true fearer of God, he would not touch what God had forbidden, and therefore was honoured with this excellent character, "He was one that feared God, and eschewed evil," Job 1:3.

And thus of the several kinds of fear.

CHAPTER III

Shewing the various uses of Fear, both natural, sinful, and religious, in the government of the world by Providence

HAVING taken a brief view of the several kinds and sorts of fear that are found among men, our next work will be to open the uses of them in the government of this world: for one way or other they all subserve the most wise and holy purposes of God therein. And we will first enquire into.

1. The use of natural fear

Which if we well consider, it will be found exceeding necessary and useful to make man a governable creature by law; and consequently the order, comfort, and tranquillity of the world necessarily depend upon it. How immorigerous and intractable would the corruptions of man's nature make him, incapable of any moral restraint from the most flagitious and barbarous crimes, had not God planted such a passion as this in his

nature, which, like a* bridle, curbs in the corrupt propensions thereof. If fear did not clap its manacles and fetters upon the wild and boisterous lusts of men, they would certainly bear down all milder motives, and break loose from all ingenious bands of restraint; the world would inevitably be filled with disorders, tumults, rapines, thefts, murders, and all manner of uncleanness and unrighteousness, *nec hospes ab hospite tutus*, i.e. the lodger is not safe from the person entertaining him;* men would become like the fishes of the sea, as the prophet complains, Habak. 1:14. where the greater swallow up a multitude of the smaller fry alive at one gulp; propriety could not be maintained in the world, no man's person could be safe or inviolate; power and opportunity to do mischief would measure out to men their lot and inheritance, and consequently all societies must disband and break up. We say, and the observation is sure, He that fears not his own, may easily be master of another man's life. It is the law and fear of punishment that keeps the world in order: men are afraid to do evil, because they are afraid to suffer it; they see the law hath inseparably linked penal and moral evils together; if they will presume upon the one, they must necessarily pull the other upon them too; and this keeps them in some order and decorum: there would be no order or security without law; but if laws had not annexed penalties to enforce them, and give them their sanction, as good there were no laws; they would have no more power to restrain the corruptions of men's hearts, than the new cords or green withs had to bind Samson. And yet, if the severest penalties in the world were annexed to, or appointed by the law, they could signify nothing to the ends of government without fear. This is that tender, sensible power or passion on which threatenings work, and so brings men under moral government and restraint, Rom. 13:3, 4. "Magistrates are a terror to evil works; wilt thou not then be afraid of the power? But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain." And by this means a world of evils is restrained and prevented in the world.

It was the custom and policy of the Persians, (I cannot say laudable) at the death of their kings, to give every man liberty for the space of five days to do what he would; and such mischiefs were done every-where by the unbridled lusts of men in those days, that it made the people long and pray for the instalment of their next king: it exceedingly endeared

government to them. Blessed be God for law and government, for curbing by this means the raging lusts of the hearts of men, and procuring rest and comfort for us in the world this way.

2. The use of sinful fear

This is formally evil and sinful in its own nature, as well as the fruit of sin, and offspring of sinful nature; yet the Lord knows how to over-rule in his providential government of the world to his own wise and holy purposes. And he doth so,

1. By making it his scourge to punish his enemies. If men will not fear God, they shall fear men; yea, they shall be made a terror to themselves. And indeed it is a dreadful punishment for God to deliver a man up into the hands of his own fears. I think there is scarce a greater torment to be found in the world than for a man to be his own tormentor, and his mind made a rack and engine of torture to his body. We read in 2 Kings 17:25. that God sent lions among the people; but certainly that is not so bad as for God to let loose our own fears upon us. No lion is so cruel as this passion, and therefore David esteemed it so great a deliverance to be delivered-from all his fears, Psal. 34:4. It is a dreadful threatening which is recorded in Deut. 28:65, 66, 67. against the disobedient and rebellious, "Thou shalt find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest, but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind, and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have no assurance of thy life. In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even; and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning, for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see." When fear hath once seized the heart, you may see death's colours displayed in the face. What a dismal life do they live, who have neither any peace by day, nor rest by night, but wearisome days and nights are appointed them! The days of such men are tiresome days; they wish for the night, hoping it may give them a little rest; but their fears go to bed with them, their hearts pant and meditate terror; and then, Oh that it were day again!

2. By fear God punisheth his enemies in hell: it is that flagellum Dei,

terrible scourge of God, by which a great part of the torment of the damned is inflicted on them. Divines use to make this tripartite distinction of hell-torments, and tell us, God punishes the wicked there partly by remembrance of what is past, viz. the mercies and means they once had, but are there irrecoverably lost; partly by the sense of things present, even the wrath of God overlaying soul and body; and partly by the fear of what is to come; and sure this is not the least part of the misery of these wretched cast-aways. Oh that fearful* expectation of fiery indignation! more and more of God's wrath still coming on, as the waves of the sea, thrusting forward one on another; yea, this is that which makes the devils tremble, James 2:19. φορισσουσι, the word signifies such a noise as the roar of the sea, or the roaring of the waves when they break themselves against the rocks, and this is occasioned by the fears which are continually held as a whip over them.

3. Providence makes use of the slavish fears and terrors of wicked men, to dissipate and scatter them, when they are combined, and confederated against the people of God; by these have they been routed, and put to flight, when there hath been no other visible power to do it: it is said Psalm 78:55. God cast out the heathen before his people Israel; and by what means were those mighty nations subdued? Not by the strength of multitudes of the Israelites, but by their own fears; for it is said, Josh. 24:11, 12. "The Lord sent the hornet before them, which drave them out[†]." These hornets were the fears and terrors of their own guilty and presaging minds, which buzzed and swarmed in their own breasts, and stung them to the heart, worse than the swords of the Israelites could do. "‡Theodoret relates a memorable story of Saporet king of Persia, who had besieged many Christians in the city Nisibis, and put them to great straits, so that little hopes of safety were left them; but in the depth of their distress, God sent an army of hornets, and gnats, among their enemies, which got into the trunks of their elephants, and ears, and nostrils of their horses; which so enraged them, that they brake their harness, cast their riders, and put them all to the rout, by which providence the Christians escaped." These hornets were terrible to them, but fears, which are hornets in a figure, are ten thousand times more terrible; they will quell, and sink the very hearts of the stoutest men; yea, they will quickly make those that in their pride and haughtiness, took

themselves rather to be gods, and almighty powers, to know themselves to be but men, as it is, Psal. 9:20. "Put them in fear, O Lord, that they may know themselves to be but men." One fright will scare them out of a thousand fond conceits and idle dreams.

3. The use of religious fear

If God can make such fruit to grow upon such a bramble as the sinful, slavish fear of man is, what may we expect from religious fear, a choice root of his own Spirit's planting? The uses and benefits hereof are innumerable, and inestimable; but I must contract, and will only instance in three special uses of it.

1. By this fear the people of God are excited to, and confirmed in the way of their duty. Eccles. 12:13. "Fear God, and keep his commandments." It is, *custos utriusque tabulæ*, the keeper of both tables, because the duties of both tables are influenced by it. It is this fear of God that makes us have a due respect to all his commands, and it is as powerful to confirm us in, as it is to excite us to our duties. Jer. 32:40. "I will put my fear into their inwards, and they shall not depart from me." Look, as he that soweth doth not regard the winds, but goes on in his labour, whatever weather the face of heaven threatens; so he that fears God, will be found in the way of his duty, let the aspect of the times be never so lowring and discouraging: and, truly, this is no small advantage, in times of frights and distractions. Slavish fear sets a man upon the devil's ground, religious fear upon God's ground: And, how vast an odds is there in the choice of our ground, when we are to endure a great fight of affliction!

2. Another excellent use of this fear is, to preserve the purity and peace of our consciences, by preventing grief and guilt therein, Prov. 16:6. "The fear of the Lord is to depart from evil." See how it kept Joseph, Gen. 39:9. and Nehemiah, chap.5:15. And this benefit is invaluable, especially in a day of outward calamity and distress. Look, in what degree the fear of God prevails in our hearts, answerable thereunto will the serenity, peace, and quietness of our consciences be; and proportionable unto that will our strength and comfort be in the evil day, and our courage and confidence to look dangers in the face.

3. To conclude, a principal use of this fear of God is, to awaken us to make timely provisions for future distresses, that whensoever they come, they may not come by way of surprize upon us. Thus "Noah, being moved with fear, prepared an ark," Heb. 11:7. It was the instrument of his and his family's salvation. Some men owe their death to their fears, but good men, in a sense, owe their lives to their fears; sinful fears have slain some, and godly fears have saved others. "A wise man feareth and departeth from evil, (saith Solomon) but a fool rageth and is confident. His fears give him a timely alarm before the enemy fall into his quarters, and beat them up; by this means he hath time to get into his chambers of security and rest before the storm fall: But the fool rageth, and is confident," he never fears till he begin to feel; yea, most time he is past all hope before he begin to have any fear.

These are some of the uses God makes of the several kinds of fear.

CHAPTER IV

Wherein the spring and causes of sinful fear are searched out, and the evils of such fears thence discovered

Sect. 1. HAVING shewn before, the kinds and uses of fear; it remains, that next we search out the springs from which these waters of Marah are derived and fed. And,

Causes

Cause 1. First, We shall find the sinful fears of most good men to spring out of their ignorance, and the darkness of their own minds; all darkness disposes to fear, but none like intellectual darkness. You read, Cant. 3:8 how Solomon's life-guard had every man his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night. The night is the frightful season, in the dark every bush is a bear; we sometimes smile by day, to see what silly things

those were that scared us in the night. So it is here; were our judgments but duly informed, how soon would our hearts be quieted?

Now there is a five-fold ignorance, out of which our fears are generated:

1. Ignorance of God: Either we know not, or at least do not duly consider his Almighty Power, vigilant care, unspotted faithfulness, and how they are all engaged, by covenant, for his people. This ignorance, and inconsiderateness, lay at the root of their fears, Isa. 40:27, 28. "My way (saith Zion) is hid from the Lord, and my judgment passed over from my God:" Words importing a suspicion that God hath left her out of the account of his providence, and the catalogue of those whom we would look after, and take care for.

But were it once thoroughly understood and believed, what power there is in God's hand to defend us, what tenderness in his bowels to commiserate us, what faithfulness in all the promises, in which they are made over to us, O how quiet and calm would our hearts be! Our courage would quickly be up, and our fears down.

2. Our ignorance of men generate our fears of men; we fear them, because we do not know them; if we understood them better, we would fear them less; we over-value them, and then fright at them. They say the lion is painted more fierce than he is; I am sure our fancy paints out man more dreadful than indeed he is; if wicked men, especially if multitudes of wicked men be confederated against us, our hearts fail, and presently apprehend inevitable ruin. "The floods of the ungodly made me afraid," saith David, i.e. the multitudes of them which he thought, like a flood or mighty torrent of water, must needs sweep away such a straw, such a feather, as he was, before them; but, in the mean time, we know or consider not that they have no power against us, but what is given them from above, and that it is usual with God to cramp their hands, and clap on the bands of restraint upon them, when their hearts are fully set in them to do mischief: did we see and consider them as they are in the hand of our God, we should not tremble at them as we do.

3. Ignorance of ourselves, and the relation we have to God, creates slavish fears in our hearts, Isa. 51:12. for did believers but thoroughly understand

how dear they are to God, what relations they sustain to him, of what account and value they are in his eyes, and how well they are secured by his faithful promises and gracious presence, they would not start and tremble at every noise and appearance of danger, as they do. God reckoned it enough to cure all Abraham's sinful fears, when he told him how his God stood engaged for his defence. Gen. 15:1. "Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield."

And noble Nehemiah valued himself in times of danger and fear, by his interest in God, as his words import, Neh.6:11. The conspiracy against him was strong, the danger he and the faithful with him at that time were in, was extraordinary; some, therefore advised to flee to the temple, and barricado themselves there, against the enemy: But Nehemiah understood himself better; Should such a man as I flee? And who, being as I am, should flee? saith he, q. d. A man so called of God to this service, a man under such promises, a man of such manifold and manifest experiences, should such a man flee? Let others, who have no such encouragements, flee if they will; for my part, I will not flee. I remember it was an argument used by* Tertullian, to quiet the fears, and stay the flight of Christians in those bloody times: Art thou afraid of a man, O Christian! when devils are afraid of thee, as a prisoner of his judge, and whom the world ought to fear, as being one that shall judge the world. O that we could, without pride and vanity, but value ourselves duly, according to our Christian dignities and privileges, which, if ever it be necessary to count over and value, it is in such times of danger and fear, when the heart is so prone to dejection and sinking fears.

4. Ignorance of our dangers and troubles, causes our frights and terrors, we mistake them, and therefore are frightened at them: we are ignorant of two things in our troubles among others, viz.

1. The comforts that are in them.
2. The outlets and escapes from them.

There is a vast odds betwixt the outward appearance and face of trouble, and the inside of it; it is a lion to the eye at a distance, but open it, and there is honey in its belly. Paul and Silas met that in a prison which made

them to sing at mid-night, and so have many more since their day.

And as we are not ignorant of the comforts that are sometimes found in our troubles, so of the outlets and doors of escape, God can, and often doth open out of trouble; "To God the Lord, belong the issues from death," Psal. 68:20. "He knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation," 2 Pet. 2:9. He can, with every temptation, make a way to escape, 1 Cor. 10:13. the poor captive exiles reckoned upon nothing, but dying in the pit, making their graves in the land of their captivity, Isa. 51:14. for they could think upon none, but the usual methods of deliverance, power, or price, and they had neither; little did they dream of such immediate influences of God upon the king's heart, to make him dismiss them, freely, contrary to all rules of state policy, Isa. 45:12.

5. But especially the fears of good men arise out of their ignorance and inconsiderateness of the covenant of grace. If we were better acquainted with the nature, extent, and stability of the covenant, our hearts would be much freed thereby from these tormenting passions; this covenant would be a panacea, an universal remedy against all our fears, upon spiritual, or temporal accounts, as will be made evident hereafter in this discourse.

Cause 2. Another cause and fountain of sinful fear, is guilt upon the conscience. A servant of sin cannot but, first or last, be a slave of fear; and they that have done evil, cannot chuse but expect evil. No sooner had Adam defiled and wounded his conscience with guilt, but he presently trembles and hides himself: So it is with his children; God calls to Adam, not in a threatening, but gentle dialect; not in a tempest, but in the cool of the day; yet it terrifies him, there being in himself, mens conscia facti, a guilty and condemning conscience, Gen. 3:8. "It is* Seneca's observation, that a guilty conscience is a terrible whip and torment to the sinner, perpetually lashing him with solicitous thoughts and fears, that he knows not where to be secure, nor dare, he trust to any promises of protection, but distrusts all, doubts, and is jealous of all." Of such it is said, Job 15:21. that a dreadful sound is in their ears; noting not only the effects of real, but also of imaginary dangers: His own presaging mind, and troubled fancy, scares him, where no real danger is, suitable to that, Prov. 28:1. The wicked fleeth when none pursues, but the righteous is bold as a lion. Just as they say of sheep, that they are affrighted by the clattering of their

own feet, when once they are set a running; so is the guilty sinner with the noise of his own conscience, which sounds nothing in his ears but misery, wrath, and hell. We may say of all wicked men in their frights as Tacitus* doth of tyrants, "That if it were possible to open their inside, their mind and conscience, many terrible stripes and wounds would be found there:" And it is said, Isa. 33:14. the sinners in Zion are afraid, trembling taketh hold of the hypocrite. Fear and trembling as naturally rise out of guilt, as the sparks do out of a fiery charcoal. Histories abundantly furnish us with sad examples of the truth of this observation. Cataline, that monster of wickedness, would start at any sudden noise, being haunted with the furies of his own evil conscience. Charles IX. after his bloody and barbarous massacre of the Protestants, could neither sleep nor wake without music to divert his thoughts. And our Richard III. after the murder of his two innocent nephews, saw divers images or shapes like devils in his sleep, pulling and hauling him. Mr. Ward tells us of a Jesuit in Lancashire, who being followed by one that had found his glove, out of no other design but to restore it to him, but being pursued by his own guilty conscience also, he leaped over the next hedge, and was drowned. And remarkable is that which Mr. Fox relates of cardinal Crescentius, who fancied the devil was walking in his chamber, and sometimes couching under his table, as he was writing letters to Rome against the Protestants. *Impius tantum metuit, quantum nocuit*: so much mischief as conscience tells them they have done, so much it bids them expect. Wolsius tells us of one John Hofmeister who fell sick with the very terrors of his own conscience in his inn, as he was travelling towards Aspurge in Germany, and was frightened by his own conscience to that degree, that they were fain to bind him in his bed with chains; and all that they could get from him was, I am cast away for ever, I have grievously wounded my own conscience.

To this wounded and trembling conscience is opposed the spirit of a sound mind, mentioned 2 Tim. 1:7. "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind:" A sound mind is, in this place, the same thing with a pure and peaceable conscience, a mind or conscience not infirm or wounded with guilt, as we say a sound or hale body, which hath no disease attending it, such a mind is opposed to the spirit of fear; it will make a man bold as a lion;

— Nil conscire sibi, nulla pallescere culpa,

Hic murus aheneus esto.— Hor. l. 1. cp. 1.

By this thy brazen bulwark of defence,

Still to preserve thy conscious innocence,

Nor e'er turn pale with guilt. —

An evil and guilty conscience foment fears and terrors three ways.

1. By aggravating small matters, and blowing them up to the height of the most fatal and destructive evils; so it was with Cain, Gen. 4:14. "Every one that meets me will slay me." Now every child was a giant in his eye, and any body he met his over-match. A guilty conscience gives a man no sight of his enemy, but through a magnifying or multiplying glass.

2. It begets fears, by interpreting all doubtful cases in the worst sense that can be fastened upon them: *Pessimus in dubiis augur timor*. If the swallows do but chatter in the chimney, Bessus interprets it to be a discovery of his crime, that they are telling tales of him, and saying, Bessus killed a man. Nay,

3. If a guilty conscience hath nothing to aggravate and magnify, nor any doubtful matter to interpret in a frightful sense, it can, and often doth create fears and terrors out of nothing at all: the rules of fear are not like the rules in arithmetic, where many nothings make nothing, but fear can make something out of nothing, yea, many things, and great things out of nothing at all, Psal. 53:5, there were they in great fear where no fear was; here was a great fear raised or created out of nothing at all; had their fear been examined and hunted home to its original*, it would have been found a pure creature of fancy, a chimera having no fundamentum in re, no other foundation but a troubled fancy, and a guilty conscience; thus it was with Pashur, he was a very wicked man, and a bitter enemy to the prophet Jeremiah, and if there be none to fright and terrify him abroad, rather than he shall want it, he shall be a terror to himself, Jer. 20:3, 4. he was his own bugbear, afraid of his own shadow; and truly this is a great

plague and misery; he that is a terror to himself, can no more flee from terrors than he can flee from himself. Oh, the efficacy of conscience! how doth it arrest the stoutest sinners, and make them tremble, when there is no visible external cause of fear! Nemo, se iudice, nocens absolvitur: i.e. No guilty man is absolved, even when himself acts the part of the judge.

Objections

Objection 1. But may not a good man, whose sins are pardoned, be affrighted with his own fancies, and scared with his own imaginations?

Solution. No doubt he may, for there is a twofold fountain of fears, one in the body, another in the soul, one in the constitution, another in the conscience; it is the affliction and infelicity of many pardoned and gracious souls, to be united and married to such distempered and ill-habited bodies, as shall afflict them without any real cause from within, and wound them by their own diseases and distempers; and these wounds can no more be prevented or cured by their reason or religion, than any other bodily disease, suppose an ague or fever, can be so cured. Thus* physicians tell us, when adust choler or melancholy overflows and abounds in the body, as in the hypochondriacal distempers, &c. what sad effects it hath upon the mind as well as upon the body, there is not only a sad and fearful aspect or countenance without, but sorrow, fear, and afflicting thoughts within; this is a sore affliction to many good men, whose consciences are sprinkled with the blood of Christ from guilt, but yet God sees good to clog them with such affliction as this for their humiliation, and for the prevention of worse evils.

Object. 2. But many bold and daring sinners are found, who, notwithstanding all the guilt with which their consciences are loaded, can look danger in the face without trembling, yea, they can look death itself, the king of terrors, in the face, with less fear than better men.

Sol. True, but the reason of that is from a spiritual judgment of God upon their hearts and consciences, whereby they are hardened, and seared as with a hot iron, 2 Tim. 4:2. and so conscience is disabled for the present to do its office; it cannot put forth its efficacy and activity now, when it might be useful to their salvation, but it will do it to purpose hereafter,

when their case shall be remediless.

Cause 3. We see what a forge of fears a guilty conscience is; and no less is the sin of unbelief the real and proper cause of most distracting and afflictive fears; so much as our souls are empty of faith, they are, in times of trouble, filled with fear: We read of some that have died by no other hand but their own fears; but we never read of any that died by fear, who were once brought to live by faith: if men would but dig to the root of their fears, they would certainly find unbelief there, Matth. 8:26. Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith! The less faith, still the more fear: Fear is generated by unbelief, and unbelief strengthened by fear, as in nature there is an observable *κυκλογενησις*, circular generation, vapours beget showers, and showers new vapours; so it is in things moral, and therefore all the skill in the world can never cure us of the disease of fear, till God first cure us of our unbelief? Christ therefore took the right method to rid his disciples of their fear, by rebuking their unbelief. The remains of this sin in God's own people are the cause and fountain of their fears, and more particularly to shew how fear is generated by unbelief, let a few particulars be heedfully adverted to.

1. Unbelief weakens and stumbles the assenting act of faith, and thereby cuts off from the soul, in a great measure, its principal relief against danger and troubles. It is the use and office of faith to realize to the soul the invisible things of the world to come, and thereby encourage it against the fears and dangers of the present world: Thus Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured, as seeing him that is invisible, Heb. 11:27. If this assenting act of faith be weakened or staggered in the soul, if once invisibles seem uncertainties, and visibles the only realities, no wonder we are so scared and frightened when these visible and sensible comforts are exposed and endangered, as they often are and will be in this mutable world. That man must needs be afraid to stand his ground that is not thoroughly persuaded the ground he stands on is firm and good; it is not to be wondered that men should tremble, who seem to feel the ground shake and reel under them.

2. Unbelief shuts up the refuges of the soul in the divine promises,* and by leaving it without those refuges, must needs leave it in the hand of fears and terrors. That which fortifies and emboldens a Christian in evil

times, is his dependence upon God for a protection, Psal. 143:9. I fly unto thee to hide me. The cutting off this retreat (which nothing but unbelief can do) deprives the soul of all those succours and supports which the promises afford, and consequently fills the heart with anxiety and fear.

3. Unbelief makes men negligent and careless in providing for troubles before they come, and so brings them by way of surprise upon them: and the more surprising any evil is, the more frightful it is always found to be: we cannot think that Noah was so affrighted at the flood, when it began to swell above all the hills and mountains, as all the rest of the world were; nor was there any reason that he should, having foreseen it by faith, and made provision for it, Heb. 11:7. By faith Noah, being warned of God, prepared an ark.* Augustine relates a very pertinent and memorable story of Paulinus, bishop of Nola, who was a very rich man both in goods and grace: he had much of the world in his hands, but little of it in his heart; and it was well there was not, for the Goths, a barbarous people, breaking into that city, like so many devils, fell upon the prey; those that trusted to the treasures which they had, were deceived and ruined by them, for the rich were put to tortures to confess where they had hid their monies: This good bishop fell into their hands, and lost all he had, but was scarce moved at the loss, as appears by his prayer, which my author relates thus: Lord, let me not be troubled for my gold and silver: thou knowest it is not my treasure; that I have laid up in heaven, according to thy command. I was warned of this judgment before it came, and provided for it; and where all my interest lies, Lord, thou knowest.

Thus Mr. Bradford, when the keeper's wife came running into his chamber suddenly, with words able to have put the most men in the world into a trembling posture: Oh, Mr. Bradford! I bring you heavy tidings; to-morrow you must be burned, and your chain is now buying: He put off his hat, and said, Lord, I thank thee; I have looked for this a great while, it is not terrible to me; God make me worthy of such a mercy. See the benefit of a prospect of, and preparation for sufferings!

4. Unbelief leaves our dearest interests and concerns in our own hands, it commits nothing to God, and consequently must needs fill the heart with distracting fears when imminent dangers threaten us. Reader, if this be thy case, thou wilt be a Magor Missabib, surrounded with terrors,

whensoever thou shalt be surrounded with dangers and troubles. Believers in this, as well as in many other things, have the advantage of thee, that they have committed all that is precious and valuable to them into the hands of God by faith, to him they have committed the keeping of their souls, 1 Pet. 4:19. and all their eternal concernments, 2 Tim. 1:16. And these being put into safe hands, they are not distracted with fears about other matter of less value, but can trust them where they have entrusted the greater, and enjoy the quietness and peace of a resigned soul to God, Prov. 16:3. But as for thee, thy life, thy liberty, yea, which is infinitely more than all these things, thy soul will lie upon thy hands in the day of trouble, and thou wilt not know what to do with them, nor which way to dispose of them. Oh! these be the dreadful straits and frights that unbelief leaves men in; it is a fountain of fears and distractions. And indeed it cannot but distract and confound carnal men, in whom it reigns, and is in its full strength, when sad experience shews us what fears and tremblings the very remains and reliques of this sin beget in the best men, who are not fully freed from it. If the unpurged reliques of unbelief in them can thus darken and cloud their evidences, thus greaten and multiply their dangers; if it can draw such sad and frightful conclusions in their hearts, notwithstanding all the contrary experience of their lives, as we see in that sad instance, 1 Sam. 27:1. what panic fears and unrelieved terrors must it put those men under, where it is in its full strength and dominion?

Cause 4. Moreover, we shall find many of our fears raised and provoked in us by the promiscuous administrations of providence in this world, when we read in scripture, "that there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, and all things come alike to all," Eccl. 9:2. that when the sword is drawn, God suffers it to cut off the righteous and the wicked, Ezek. 21:3. The sword makes no difference where God hath made so great a difference by grace; it neither distinguishes faces nor breasts, but is as soon sheathed in the bowels of the best as the worst of men. When we read how the same fire of God's indignation devours the green tree and the dry tree, Ezek. 20:47. how the baskets of good figs (the emblem of the best men of those times) were carried into Babylon as well as the bad, Jer. 24:5. how the flesh of God's saints hath been given for meat to the fowls of heaven, and to the beasts of the field, Psal. 97:12. and how the wicked

have devoured the man that is more righteous than himself, as it is Hab. 1:13. I say, when we observe such things in scripture, and find our observations confirmed by the accounts and histories of former and later ages; when we reflect upon the unspeakable miseries and butcheries of those plain hearted and precious servants of Christ, the Albigenses and Waldenses, how they fell as a prey to their cruel adversaries, notwithstanding the convincing simplicity and holiness of their lives, and all their fervent cries and appeals to God; how the very flower of the reformed Protestant interest in France was cut off with more than barbarous inhumanity, so that the streets were washed, and the canals of Paris ran with their precious blood; what horrid and unparalleled torture the servants of God felt in that cruel massacre in Ireland, a history too tragical for a tender-hearted reader to stay long upon; and how, in our own land, the most eminent ministers and Christians were sent to heaven in a fiery chariot in those dreadful Marian days: I say, when we read and consider such things as these, it rouses our fears, and puts us into frights, when we see ourselves threatened with the same enemies and danger; when the feet of them that carried out the dear servants of God in bloody winding-sheets to their graves, stand at the door to carry us forth next, if providence loose their chain, and give them a permission so to do; and our fears, on this account, are heightened, by considering and involving these four things in our thoughts, which we are always more inclined to do, than the things that should fortify our faith, and heighten our Christian courage. As,

1. We are apt to consider, that as the same race and kind of men that committed these outrages upon our brethren, are still in being, and that their rage and malice is not abated in the least degree, but is as fierce and cruel as ever it was. Gal. 4:29. "As then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." So it was then, and just so it is still: the old enmity is entailed upon all wicked men, from generation to generation. *Multi adhuc qui clavum sanguine Abelis rubentem adhuc circumferunt*, Cain's club is to this day carried up and down the world, stained with the blood of Abel, as Bucholtzer speaks. It is a rooted antipathy, and it runs in a blood, and will run as long as there are wicked men, from whom, and to whom it shall be propagated, and a devil in hell, by whom it will not fail to be exasperated and irritated.

2. We know also that nothing hinders the execution of their wicked purposes against us but the restraints of Providence. Should God loose the chain, and give them leave to act forth the malice and rage that is in their hearts, no pity would be shewn by them, or could be rationally expected from them, Psal. 124:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. We live among lions, and them that are set on fire of hell, Psal. 57:4. The only reason of our safety is this, that he who is the keeper of the lions, is also the shepherd of the sheep.

3. We find, that God hath many times let loose these lions upon his people, and given them leave to tear his lambs in pieces, and suck the blood of his saints: how well soever he loves them, yet hath he often delivered them into the hands of their enemies, and suffered them to perpetrate and act the greatest cruelties upon them; the best men have suffered the worst things, and the histories of all ages have delivered down unto us the most tragical relations of their barbarous usage.

4. We are conscious to ourselves how far short we come in holiness, innocency, and spiritual excellency of those excellent persons who have suffered these things; and therefore have no ground to expect more favour from providence than they found: we know also there is no promise in the scriptures to which they had not as good a claim and title as ourselves. With us are found as great, yea, greater sins than in them; and therefore have no reason to please ourselves with the fond imaginations of extraordinary exemptions. If we think these evils shall not come in our days, it is like many of them thought so too; and yet they did, and we may find it quite otherwise. Lam. 4:12. "Who would have thought that the enemy should have entered in at the gates of Jerusalem?" The revolving of these, and such like considerations in our thoughts, and mixing our own unbelief with them, creates a world of fears, even in good men, till, by resignation of all to God, and acting faith upon the promises that assure us of the sanctification of all our troubles, as that Rom. 8:28. God's presence with us in our troubles, as that Psal. 91:15. his moderation of our troubles to that measure and degree, in which they are supportable, Isa. 27:8. and the safe and comfortable outlet and final deliverance from them all at last; according to that in Rev. 7:17. we do, at last, recover our hearts out of the hands of our fears again, and

compose them to a quiet and sweet satisfaction in the wise and holy pleasure of our God.

Cause 5. Our immoderate love of life, and the comforts and conveniences thereof, may be assigned as a proper, and real ground, and cause of our sinful fears, when the dangers of the times threaten the one or the other: did we love our lives less, we should fear and tremble less than we do. It is said of those renowned saints, Rev. 12:11. "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death."

They overcame not only the fury of their enemies without them, but their sinful fears within them; and this victory was atchieved by their mortification to the inordinate and immoderate love of life. Certainly their own fears had overcome them, if they had not first overcome the love of life: it was not, therefore, without very great reason, that our Lord enjoined it upon all his disciples and followers, to hate their own lives, Luke 14:26. not absolutely, but in comparison and competition with him, i.e. to love it in so remiss a degree as to slight and undervalue it, as a poor low thing in such a comparison: he foresaw what sharp trials and sufferings were coming upon them, and he knew if the fond and immoderate love of life were not overcome and mortified in them, it would make them warp and bend under such temptations.

This was it that freed Paul from slavish fears, and made him so magnanimous and undaunted; indeed he had less fear upon his spirits, though he was to suffer those hard and sharp things in his own person, than his friends had, who only sympathized with him, and were not farther concerned, than by their own love and pity: he spake like a man who was rather a spectator than a sufferer. Acts 20:24, 25. "None of these things move me," saith he. Great soul! not moved with bonds and afflictions! how did he attain so great courage and constancy of mind, in such deep and dreadful sufferings! It was enough to have moved the stoutest man in the world, yea, and to have removed the resolutions of any that had not loved Christ better than his own life: but life was a trifle to him, in comparison with Jesus Christ, for so he tells us in the next words, "I count not my life dear unto me," q. d. It is a low-prized commodity in my eyes, not worth the saving, or regarding on such sinful

terms. Oh! how many have parted with Christ, peace, and eternal life, for fear of losing that which Paul regarded not. And if we bring our thoughts closer to the matter, we shall soon find that this is a fountain of fears in times of danger, and that from this excessive love of life we are racked and tortured with ten thousand terrors. For,

1. Life is the greatest and nearest interest men naturally have in this world, and that which wraps up all other inferior interests in itself, Job 2:4. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life." It is a real truth, though it came from the mouth of the father of lies; afflictions never touch the quick, till they touch the life; liberty, estates, and other accommodations in this world receive their value and estimation from hence; if life be cut off, these accidents perish, and are of no account, Gen. 25:32. "Behold, I am at the point to die, (said Esau) and what profit shall this birth-right do to me?"

2. Life being naturally the dearest interest of men in this world, the richest treasure, and most beloved thing on earth, to a natural man; that which strikes at, and endangers life, must, in his eyes, be the greatest evil that can befall him; on this account death becomes terrible to men; yea, as Job calls it, the king of terrors, Job 18:14. The black prince, or the prince of clouds and darkness, as some translate those words: Yea, so terrible is death upon this account, that the very fear of it hath sometimes precipitated men into the hands of it, as we sometimes observe in times of pestilence, the excessive fear of the plague hath induced it*

3. Though death be terrible in any shape, in the mildest form it can appear in; yet a violent and bloody death, by the hands of cruel and merciless men, is the most terrible form that death can appear in; it is now the king of terrors indeed, in the most ghastly representation and frightful form, in its scarlet robes, and terrifying formalities; in a violent death, all the barbarous cruelty that the wit of our enemies can invent, or their malice inflict, is mingled together; in a violent death are many deaths converted into one, and it oftentimes approaches men by such slow and deliberate paces, that they feel every tread of its foot, as it advanceth towards them. *Moriatur, ut sentiat se mori*; Let him so die, (said the tyrant) that he may feel himself to die; yea, and how he dies by inch-meal, or slow, lingering degrees, and this is exceeding frightful,

especially to those that are of most soft and tender nature and temper, who must needs be struck through with the terrors of death, except the Lord arm them against it with the assurance of a better life, and sweeten these bitter apprehensions by the foretastes of it. This is enough to put even sanctified nature into consternation, and make a very gracious heart to sink, unless it be so upheld by divine strength and comfort: And hence come many, very many of our fears and terrors, especially when the same enemies that have been accustomed to this bloody work, shall be found confederating and designing again to break in upon us, and act over again as much cruelty, as ever they have done upon our brethren in times past.

Cause 6. To conclude: many of our sinful fears and consternations flow from the influences of Satan upon our phantasies. They say winds and storms are oft-times raised by Satan, both by sea and land; and I never doubted, but the prince of the power of the air, by God's permission, can, and often doth put the world into great frights and disturbances by such tempests, Job 1:19. He can raise the loftiest winds, pour down roaring showers, rattle in the air with fearful claps of thunder, and scare the lower world with terrible flashes of lightning. And I doubt not but he hath, by the same permission, a great deal of influence and power upon the fancies and passions of men; and can raise more terrible storms and tempests within us, than ever we heard or felt without us: he can, by leave from God, approach our phantasies, disturb and trouble them exceedingly by forming frightful ideas there; for Satan not only works upon men mediately, by the ministry of their external senses, but by reason of his spiritual, angelical nature, he can have immediate access to the internal sense also, as appears by diabolical dreams; and by practising upon that power of the soul, he influences the passions of it, and puts it under very dreadful apprehensions and consternations. Now if Satan can provoke and exasperate the fury and rage of wicked men, as it is evident he can do, as well as he can go to the magazines and store-houses of thunder, lightnings, and storms: O, what inward storms of fear can he shake our hearts withal! and if God give him but a permission, how ready will he be to do it, seeing it is so conducive to his design; for by putting men into such frights, he at once weakens their hands in duty, as is plain from his attempt this way upon Nehemiah, chap. 6:13. and if he prevail there, he drives them into the snares and traps of his temptations, as the

fisherman and fowler do the birds and fishes in their nets, when once they have flushed and frightened them out of their coverts. And thus you have some account of the principal and true causes of our sinful fears.

CHAPTER V

Laying open the sinful and lamentable effects of slavish and inordinate fear, both in carnal and regenerate persons.

Sect. I. HAVING taken a view in the former chapters of the kind and causes of fear, and seen what lies at the root of slavish fear, and both breeds and feeds it, what fruit can we expect from such a cursed plant, but gall and wormwood, fruit as bitter as death itself? Let us then, in the next place, examine and well consider these following and deplorable effects of fear, to excite us to apply ourselves the more concernedly to those directions that follow in the close of this treatise, for the cure of it. And,

Effects

Effect 1. The first effect of this sinful and exorbitant passion is distraction of mind and thoughts in duty: Both Cicero and Quintilian will have the word tumultus, a tumult, to come from timor multus, much fear, it is a compound of those two words; much fear raises great uproars and tumults in the soul, and puts all into hurries and distractions, so that we cannot attend upon any service of God with profit or comfort. It was therefore a very necessary mercy that was requested of God, Luke 1:74. "That we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear." For it is impossible to serve God without distractions, till we can serve him without the slavish fear of enemies. The reverential fear of God is the greatest spur to duty, and choicest help in it, but the distracting fears of men will either wholly divert us from our duty, or

destroy the comfort and benefit of our duties; it is a deadly snare of the devil to hinder all comfortable intercourse with God.

It is very remarkable, that when the apostle was giving his advice to the Corinthians about marriage in those times of persecution and difficulty, he commends them to a single life as most eligible: where it may be without sinful inconveniencies, and that principally for this reason, "That they might attend upon the Lord without distraction," 1 Cor. 7:35. He foresaw what straits, cares, and fears must unavoidably distract those in such times that were most clogged and incumbered with families and relations; when a man should be thinking, O, what shall I do now to get my doubts and fears resolved about my interest in Christ? How may I so behave myself in my sufferings as to credit religion, and not become a scandal and stumbling-block to others? His thoughts are taken up with other cares and fears: O, what will become of my wife and poor little ones? What shall I do with them and for them, to secure them from danger.

I doubt not but it is a great design of the devil to keep us in continual alarms and frights, and to puzzle our heads and hearts with a thousand difficulties, which possibly may never befall us, or if they do, shall never prove so fatal to us as we fancy them, and all this is to unfit us for our present duties, and destroy our comfort therein; for if by frights and terrors of mind he can but once distract our thoughts, he gains three points upon us to our unspeakable loss.

1. Hereby he will cut off the freedom and sweetness of our communion with God in duties, and what an empty shell will the best duties be, when this kernel is wormed out by such a subtle artifice? Prayer, as Damascen aptly expresses it, is Ἀναβασις τοῦ νοῦ the ascension of the mind or soul to God; but distraction clips its wings; he can never offer up his soul and thoughts to God, that hath not possession of them himself: and he that is under distracting fears possesseth not himself. The life of all communion with God in prayer, consists in the harmony that is betwixt our hearts and words, and both with the will of God; this harmony is spoiled by distraction, and so Satan gains that point.

2. But this is not all he gains and we lose by distracting fears; for as they

cut off the freedom and sweetness of our intercourse with God in prayer, so they cut off the soul from the succours and reliefs it might otherwise draw from the promises. We find when the Israelites were in great bondage, wherein their minds were distracted with fears and sorrows, they regarded not the supporting promises of deliverance sent them by Moses, Exod. 6:3. David had an express and particular promise of the kingdom from the mouth of God which must needs include his deliverance out of the hand of Saul, and all his stratagems to destroy him; but yet, when imminent hazards were before his eyes, he was afraid, and that fear betrayed the succours from the promise, so that it drew a quite contrary conclusion, 1 Sam. 27:1. "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul:" And again he is at the same point, Psal. 116:11. "All men are liars," not excepting Samuel himself, who had assured him of the kingdom. This is always the property and nature of fear (as I shewed before) to make men distrust the best security when they are in imminent peril: But oh! what a mischief is this to make us suspicious of the promises, which are our chief relief and support in times of trouble: Our fears will unfit us for prayer, they will also shake the credit of the promises with us; and so great is the damage we receive both ways, that it were better for us to lose our two eyes, than two such advantages in trouble. But,

3. This is not all; by our present fears we lose the benefit and comfort of all our past experiences, and the singular relief we might have from all that faithfulness and goodness of God, which our eyes have seen in former straits and dangers, the present fear clouds them all, Isa. 51:12, 13. Men and dangers are so much minded, that God is forgotten, even the God that hath hitherto preserved us, though our former fears told us, the enemy was daily ready to devour us. All these sweet reliefs are cut off from us by our distracting fears, and that at a time when we have most need of them.

Effect 2. Dissimulation and hypocrisy are the fruit of slavish fear; distraction you see is bad enough, but dissimulation is worse than distraction, and yet as bad as it is, fear hath driven good men into this snare; it will make even an upright soul warp and bend from the rules of that integrity and candour, which should be inseparable at all times from a Christian: of whom (saith God to his Israel) hast thou been afraid, that

thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me? God finds falsehood, and charges it upon fear, q. d. I know it was against the resolutions of my people's hearts thus to dissemble, this certainly is the effect of a fright; who is he that hath scared you into this evil? It was Abraham's fear that made him dissemble to the reproach of his religion, Gen. 20:2, 11. And indeed it was but an odd sight to see an heathen so schooling and reproving great Abraham about it, as he there doth.

It was nothing but fear that drew his son Isaac into the like snare, Gen. 26:7. And it was fear that overcame Peter against his promise, as well as principle, to say concerning his dear Saviour, I know not the man, Matth. 26:69. Had Abraham at that time remembered, and acted his faith freely upon what the Lord said to him, Gen. 17:1. Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield, he had escaped both the sin and the shame into which he fell, but even that great believer was foiled by his own fears; and certainly this is a great evil, a complicated mischief. For,

1. By these falls and scandals, religion is made vile and contemptible in the eyes of the world, it reflects with much reproach upon God and his promises, as if his word were not sufficient security for us to rely upon in times of trouble, as if it were safer trusting to our wit, yea, to sin, than to the promises.

2. It greatly weakens the hands of others, and proves a sore discouragement to them in their trials, to see their brethren faint for fear, and ashamed to own their principles; sometimes it hath this mischievous effect, but it is always improved by Satan and wicked men to this purpose. And,

3. It will be a terrible blow and wound to our own consciences, for such flaws in our integrity we may be kept waking and sighing many a night; O see the mischiefs of a timorous and faint spirit!

Effect 3. Slavish fears of the creature exceedingly strengthen our temptations in times of danger, and make them very efficacious and prevalent upon us, Prov. 29:25. The fear of man brings a snare. Satan spreads the net, but we are not within its reach, till our own fears drive us unto it; the recoiling of our spirits from some imminent dangers may

cause the pulse of a true Christian to intermit and falter, how regular soever it beats at other times: this will cause great trepidation and timidity in men that are sincere and upright, and that is it that brings the snare over their souls. Aaron was a good man, and idolatry he knew to be a great sin, yet fear prevailed with that good man to give too much way to that great evil, Exod. 32:22. Thou knowest the people that they are set upon mischief, saith he, in his own excuse in the matter of the golden calf, q. d. Lord, I durst do no otherwise at that time, the people were violently and passionately set upon it; had I resisted them, it might have cost me dear.

It was fear that prevailed with Origen to yield so far as he did in offering incense to the idol, the consideration of which fact brake his heart to pieces. It was nothing but fear that made David play the fool, and act so dishonourably as he did, 1 Sam. 21:12. Fear is a snare in which Satan hath caught as many souls as in any other of his stratagems and snares whatsoever.

It were easy to give instances, so many and so sad, as would enlarge this head even to tediousness, but I chuse rather to come to the particulars, wherein the danger of this snare of the devil consists. And

1. Herein lies the ensnaring danger of sinful fear, that it drives men out of their proper station, out of their place and duty, beside which there is none to be found, but what is Satan's ground. The subtle enemy of our salvation is aware that we are out of gunshot, beyond his reach, whilst we abide with God in the way of our duty, that the Lord is with us whilst we are with him, and there is no attempting our ruin under the wings of his protection. If ever, therefore, he meaneth to do any thing upon us, he must get us off that ground, and from under those wings; and there is nothing like fear to do this: then we are as the birds that are wandering from their nests, Prov. 27:8. or like Shimei out of his limits.

2. Fear is usually the first passion in the soul that beats a parley with the enemy, and treats with the tempter about terms of surrender; and, as the French proverb is, The castle that parleys is half won. It is fear that consults with flesh and blood, whilst faith is engaged with God for the supply of strength to endure the siege. We have a sad and doleful instance

of this in Spira; he tells us how his own fears betrayed him by parleying with the tempter: for thus Mr. Bacon, in the history of his life, records the occasion of his fall. 'Whilst Spira was tossing upon the restless waves of doubts, without guide to trust to, or haven to flee for succour, on a sudden, God's Spirit assisting, he felt a calm, and began to discourse with himself in this manner:' "Why wanderest thou thus in uncertainties? Unhappy man! cast away fear, put on thy shield of faith; where is thy wonted courage, thy goodness, thy constancy? Remember that Christ's glory lies at the stake, suffer then without fear, and he will defend thee, he will tell thee what thou shalt answer; he can beat down all danger, bring thee out of prison, raise thee from the dead; consider Peter in the dungeon, the martyrs in the fire," &c.

'Now was Spira in reasonable quiet, being resolved to yield to those weighty reasons; yet holding it wisdom to examine all things, he consults also with flesh and blood: thus the battle renews, and the flesh begins in this manner:' "Be well advised, fond man, consider reasons on both sides, and then judge: how canst thou thus overween thine own sufficiency, as thou neither regardest the examples of thy progenitors, nor the judgment of the whole church? Dost thou not consider what misery this day's rashness will bring thee unto? Thou shalt lose all thy substance gotten with so much care and travail, thou shalt undergo the most exquisite torments that malice itself can devise, thou shalt be counted an heretic of all, and to close up all, thou shalt die shamefully. What thinkest thou of the loathsome, stinking dungeon, the bloody ax, the burning faggot? Are they delightful?" &c. Thus through fear he first parleyed with the tempter, consulted with flesh and blood, and at last fainted and yielded.

3. It is fear that makes men impatient of waiting God's time and method of deliverance, and so precipitates the soul, and drives it into the snare of the next temptation, Isa. 51:14. "The captive exilē hasteth to be delivered out of the pit," Any way or means of escape that comes next to hand, saith fear, is better than to lie here in the pit; and when the soul is thus prepared by its own fears, it becomes an easy prey to the next temptation: by all which you see the mischief that comes by fear in times of danger.

Effect 4. Fear naturally produceth pusillanimity and cowardliness in men, a poor, low spirit, that presently faints and yields upon every slight

assault. It extinguisheth all Christian courage and magnanimity wherever it prevails: and therefore you find it joined frequently in the scriptures with discouragement, Deut. 1:21. "Fear not, neither be discouraged; with fainting and trembling." Deut. 20:3. "Let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble;" with dismayedness, Deut. 31:6. and faint-heartedness, Isa. 7:4. these are the effects and consequents of sinful fear. And how dangerous a thing it is to have our courage extinguished, and faintness of heart prevail upon us in a time when we have the greatest need and use of courage, and our perseverance, peace, and eternal happiness rely and depend so much upon it, let all serious Christians judge. It is sad to us, and dishonourable to religion, to have the hearts of women, as it is said of Egypt, Isa. 19:16. when we should play the men, as the apostle exhorts us, 1 Cor. 16:13. We find, in all ages, those that have manifested most courage for Christ in time of trial, have been those whose faith hath surmounted fear, and whose hearts were above all discouragements from this world.

Such a man was Basil, as appears by his answer to Valens the emperor: who tempting him with offers of preferment, received this answer, offer these things, said he, to children: and when he threatened him with grievous sufferings, he replied; Threaten these things to your purple gallants, that give themselves to pleasure, and are afraid to die.

And this was the spirit of courage and magnanimity with which the generality of the primitive Christians were animated; they feared not the faces of tyrants, they shrunk not from the most cruel torments: and it redounded not a little to the credit of Christianity, when one of Julian's nobles, present at the tormenting of Marcus, bishop of Arethusa, told the apostate to his face, We are ashamed, O emperor, the Christians laugh at your cruelty, and grow more resolute by it. So Lactantius also testifies of them, Our women and children, saith he, not to speak of men, overcame their torments, and the fire cannot fetch so much as a sigh from them. If carnal fear once get the ascendant over us, all our courage and resolution will flag and melt away; we may suffer out of unavoidable necessity, but shall never honour Christ and religion by our sufferings.

Effect 5. Carnal fear is the very root of apostasy, it hath made thousands of professors to faint and fall away in the hour of temptation. It is not so

much from the fury of our enemies without, as from our fears within, that temptations become victorious over us. From the beginning of fears, Christ dates the beginning of apostasy, Matt. 24:9, 10. "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake, and then shall many be offended." When troubles and dangers come to an height, then fears begin to work at an height too, and then is the critical hour; fears are high, and faith is low; temptation strong, and resistance weak: Satan knocks at the door, and fear opens it, and yields up the soul to him, except special aid and assistance come in seasonably from heaven; so long as we can profess religion without any great hazard of life, liberty, or estates, we may shew much zeal and forwardness in the ways of godliness: but when it comes to the sharps, to resisting unto blood, few will be found to own and assert it openly in the face of such dangers. The first retreat is usually made from a free and open, to a close and concealed practice of religion; not opening our windows, as Daniel did, to shew we care not who knows we dare worship our God, and are not ashamed of our duties, but hiding our principles and practice with all the art and care imaginable, reckoning it well if we can escape danger by letting fall our profession which might expose us to it: but if the inquest go on, and we cannot be secured any longer under this refuge, we must comply with false worship, and give some open signal that we do so, or else be marked out for ruin; then saith fear, Give a little more ground, and retreat to the next security, which is to comply seemingly with that which we do not allow, hoping God will be merciful to us and accept us, if we keep our hearts for him, though we are forced thus to dissemble and hide our principles. *Eamus ad communem errorem*, said Calderinus, when going to the mass, Let us go to the common error; and, as Seneca adviseth about worshipping the Roman gods, *In animo religionem non habeat, sed in actionis fingat*; let us make a semblance and shew of worshipping them, though our hearts give no religious respect to them. But if still the temptation hunts us farther, and we come to be more narrowly sifted and put to a severer test, by subscribing contrary articles, or renouncing our former avowed principles, and that upon penalty of death, and loss of all that is dear to us in this world; now nothing in all the world hazards our eternal salvation as our own fears will do; this is like to be the rock on which we shall split all, and make an horrible shipwreck both of truth and peace.

This was the case of Cranmer, whose fears caused him to subscribe against the dictates of his own conscience, and cowardly to betray the known truth; and indeed there is no temptation in the world that hath overthrown so many, as that which hath been backed and edged with fear: the love of preferments and honours hath slain its thousands, but fear of sufferings its ten thousands.

Effect 6. Sinful fear puts men under great bondage of spirit, and makes death a thousand times more terrible and intolerable than it would otherwise be to us. You read of some, Heb. 2:16. "who through the fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage," i.e. it kept them in a miserable anxiety and perplexity of mind, like slaves that tremble at the whip which is held over them: thus many thousands live under the lash; so terrible is the name of Death, especially a violent death, that they are not able with patience to hear it mentioned; which gave the ground of that saying, *Præstat semel, quam semper mori*; it is better to die once than to be dying always. And surely there is not a more miserable life any poor creature can live than such a trembling life as this is. For,

1. Such a bondage as this destroys all the comfort and pleasure of life; no pleasure can grow or thrive under the shadow of this cursed plant. *Nil ei beatum cui semper aliquis terror impendat*, saith Cicero*, all the comforts we possess in this world are embittered by it. It is storied of Democles, a flatterer of Dionysius the tyrant, that he told him he was the happiest man in the world, having wealth, power, majesty, and abundance of all things: Dionysius sets the flatterer in all his own pomp at a table furnished with all dainties, and attended upon as a king, but with a heavy sharp sword hanging by a single horse hair right over his head; this made him quake and tremble, so that he could neither eat nor drink, but desired to be freed from that estate. The design was to convince him how miserable a life they live, who live under the continual terrors of impending death and ruin. It was a sore judgment which God threatened against them in Jer. 5:6. "A lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evening shall spoil them; a leopard shall watch over their cities, every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces." What a miserable life must those people live who could not stir out of the city, but they presently were seized by lions, wolves, and leopards, that

watched over them, and lurked in all the avenues to make them a prey! and yet this is more tolerable than for a man's own fear to watch continually over him.

2. And yet I could wish this were the worst of it, and that our fears destroyed no better comforts than the natural comforts of this life: but alas, they also destroy our spiritual comforts which we might have from God's promises, and our own and others' experiences which are incomparably the sweetest pleasures men have in this world: but as no creature-comfort is pleasant, so no promise relishes like itself to him that lives in this bondage of fear; when the terrors of death are great, the consolations of the Almighty are small.

In the written word are found all sorts of refreshing, strengthening and heart-reviving promises prepared by the wisdom and care of God for our relief in the days of darkness and trouble; promises of support under the heaviest burdens and pressures, Isa. 41:10. "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right-hand of my righteousness." A promise able to make the most timorous and trembling soul to shout with the joy of men in harvest, or as they that divide the spoil.

There are found the encouraging promises of defence and protection, Isa. 27:2, 3. and Isa. 33:2. promises that lead us unto the Almighty power of God, and put us under the wings of his care in time of danger.

Promises of moderation and mitigation in the day of sharp affliction, that we may be able to bear it, Isa. 27:8. 1 Cor. 10:13. Promises of deliverance out of trouble, if the malice of man bring us into trouble, the mercy of God will assuredly bring us out, Ps. 91:14, 15. and Psal. 125:3. And, which are most comfortable of all the rest, promises to sanctify and bless our troubles to our good, so that they shall not only cease to be hurtful, but, by virtue of the promise, become exceeding beneficial to us, Isa. 27:9. Rom. 8:28.

All these promises are provided by our tender Father for us against a day of straits and fears; and because he knew our weakness, and how apt our fears would be to make us suspect our security by them, he hath, for the

performance of them, engaged his wisdom, power, care, faithfulness, and unchangeableness, 2 Pet. 2:9. Isa. 27:2, 3. 1 Cor. 16:9. 1 Cor. 10:13. Isa. 43:1, 2. In the midst of such promises so sealed, how cheerful and magnanimous should we be in the worst times! and say as David, Psal. 49:5. "Why should I fear in the day of evil?" Let those that have no God to flee to, no promise to rely upon, let them fear in the day of evil, I have no cause to do so. But even from these most comfortable refuges in the promises our own fears beat us; we are so scared that we mind them not so as to draw encouragement, resolution, and courage from them. Thus the shields of the mighty are vilely cast away.

So for all the choice records of the saints experiences in all former troubles and distresses, God hath, by a singular providence (aiming at our relief in future distresses) preserved them for us; if danger threaten us, we may turn to the recorded experiences his people have left us of the strange and mighty influence of his providence upon the hearts of their enemies to shew them favour, Gen. 31:29. Psal. 16:4–6. Jer. 15:11.

There are also found the ancient rolls and records of the admirable methods of his people's deliverance, contrived by his infinite and unsearchable wisdom for them, when all their own thoughts have been at a loss, and their understandings posed and staggered, Exod. 15:6. 2 Chron. 20:12, 15. 2 Kings 19:3, 7.

There are the recorded experiences of God's unspotted faithfulness, which never failed any soul that durst trust himself in its arms, Micah 6:4, 5. Josh. 7:9.

There are also to be found the records of his tender and most fatherly care for his children, who have been to him as a peculiar treasure in times of danger, Psal. 40:17 Deut. 32:10, 11, 12. Isa. 49:16. Jer. 49:16. and 36:7. 2 Chron. 16:9.

All these and many more supports and cordials are made ready to our hand, and provided for a day of trouble; but alas! to what purpose, if our own fears so transport us, that we can neither apply them, nor so much as calmly ponder and consider them.

3. To conclude; by these fears we are deprived of those manifold advantages we might gain by the calm and composed meditations of our own death, and the change it will make upon us; could we sit down in peace, and meditate in a familiar way upon death: could we look with a composed and well-settled mind into our own graves, and not be scared and frightened with the thoughts of death, and startle whenever we take it (though but in our thoughts) by the cold hand: To what seriousness would those meditations frame us? And what abundance of evils would they prevent in our conversations? The sprinkling of dust upon new writing prevents many a blot and blur in our books or letters: And could we thus sprinkle the dust of the grave upon our minds, it would prevent many a sin and miscarriage in our words and actions. But there is no profit or advantage redounding to us either from promises, experiences, or death itself, when the soul is discomposed and put into confusion by its own fears. And thus you see some of those many mischievous effects of your own fears.

CHAPTER VI

Prescribing the rules to cure our sinful fears, and prevent these sad and woful effects of them.

Sect. I. WE are now come to the most difficult part of the work, viz. the cure of the sinful and slavish fear of creatures in times of danger, which if it might, through the blessing of God be effected, we might live at heart's ease in the midst of all our enemies and troubles, and, like the sun in the heavens, keep on our steady course in the darkest and gloomiest day. But before I come to the particular rules, it will be necessary, for the prevention of mistakes, to lay down three useful cautions about this matter.

Cautions

1 Caution. Understand that none but those that are in Christ are capable to improve the following rules to their advantage. The security of our souls is the greatest argument used by Christ to extinguish our fears of them that kill the body, Matth.10:28. But if the soul must unavoidably perish when the body doth, if it must drop into hell before the body be laid in the grave, if he that kills the body doth, by the same stroke, cut off the soul from all the means and possibilities of mercy and happiness for ever, what can be offered in such a case, to relieve a man against fear and trembling?

2 Caution. Expect not a perfect cure of your fears in this life; whilst there are enemies and dangers, there will be some fears working in the best hearts: If our faith could be perfected, our fears would be perfectly cured; but whilst there is so much weakness in our faith, there will be too much strength in our fears. And for those who are naturally timorous, who have more of this passion in their constitution than other men have, and those in whom melancholy is a rooted and chronical disease, it will be hard for them totally to rid themselves of fears and dejections, though in the use of such helps and means as follow, they may be greatly relieved against the tyranny of them, and enabled to possess their souls in much more tranquillity and comfort.

3 Caution. Whosoever expects the benefit of the following prescriptions and rules, must not think the reading, or bare remembering of them will do the work, but he must work them into his heart by believing and fixed meditation, and live in the daily practice of them. It is not our opening of our case to a physician, nor his prescriptions and written directions that will cure a man, but he must resolve to take the bitter and nauseous potion, how much soever he loath it; to abstain from hurtful diet, how well soever he loves it, if ever he expect to be a sound and healthful man. So it is in this case also. These things premised, the

Rules

1 Rule. The first rule to relieve us against our slavish fears, Is seriously to consider, and more thoroughly to study the covenant of grace, within the

blessed clasp and bond whereof all believers are. I think the clear understanding of the nature, extent, and stability of the covenant, and of our interest therein, would go a great way in the cure of our sinful and slavish fears.

A covenant is more than a naked promise; in the covenant, God hath graciously consulted our weakness, fears, and doubts, and therefore proceeds with us in the highest way of solemnity, confirming his promises by oath, Heb. 6:13, 17 and by his seals, Rom. 6:11. Putting himself under the most solemn ties and engagements that can be, to his people, that from so firm a ratification of the covenant with us, we might have strong consolation, Heb. 6:18. He hath so ordered it, that it might afford strong supports, and the most reviving cordials to our faint and timorous spirits, in all the plunges of trouble both from within and from without. In the covenant, God makes over himself to his people, to be unto them a God, Jer. 31:33. Heb. 8:10. Wherein the Lord bestows himself in all his glorious essential properties upon us, to the end that whatsoever his almighty power, infinite wisdom, and incomprehensible mercy can afford for our protection, support, deliverance, direction, pardon, or refreshment; we might be assured shall be faithfully performed to us in all the straits, fears, and exigencies of our lives. This God expects we should improve by faith, as the most sovereign antidote against all our fears in this world, Isa. 43:1, 2. "Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine; when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee," &c. Isa. 41:10. "Fear not, for I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God."

And if thou, reader, be within the bonds of the covenant, thou mayest surely find enough there to quiet thy heart, whatever the matter or ground of thy fears be: If God be thy covenant-God, he will be with thee in all thy straits, wants, and troubles, he will never leave, nor forsake thee. From the covenant it was that David encouraged himself against all his troubles, 2 Sam. 23:5. "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure; this is all my salvation, and all my desire, though he make it not to grow." He could fetch all reliefs, all comforts, and salvation out of it,

and why cannot we? He desired no more for the support of his heart; this is all my desire; and sure if we understood and believed it as he did, we could desire no more to quiet and comfort our hearts than what this covenant affords us. For,

1. Are we afraid what our enemies will do? We know we are in the midst of potent, politic, and enraged enemies; we have heard what they have done, and see what they are preparing to do again. We tremble to think what bloody tragedies are like to be acted over again in the world by their cruel hands: But O what heroic and noble acts of faith should the covenant of God enable thee to exert amidst all these fears! If God be thy God, then thou hast an Almighty God on thy side, and that is enough to extinguish all these fears, Psal. 118:6 "The Lord is on my side, I will not "fear what man can do unto me." Your fears come in the name of man, but your help in the name of the Lord; Let them plot, threaten, yea, and smite too; God is a shield to all that fear him, and if God be for us, who can be against us?

2. Are we afraid what God will do; fear it not, your God will do nothing against your good: think not that he may forget you, it cannot be; sooner may a tender mother forget her sucking child, Isa. 49:15. no; "He withdraweth not his eye from the "righteous," Job 36:7. His eyes are continually upon all the dangers and wants of your souls and bodies, there is not a danger or an enemy stirring against you, but his eye is upon it, 2 Chron. 16:9.

Are you afraid he will forsake and cast you off? It is true your sins have deserved he should do so, but he hath secured you fully against that fear in his covenant, Jer. 32:40. "I will not turn "away from them, to do them good." All your fears of God's forgetting or forsaking you, spring out of your ignorance of the covenant.

3. Are you afraid what you shall do? It is usual for the people of God to propose difficult cases to themselves, and put startling questions to their own hearts; and there may be an excellent use of them to rouse them out of security, put them upon the search and trial of their conditions and estates, and make preparation for the worst; but Satan usually improves it to a quite contrary end, to deject, affright, and discourage them. O, if

fiery trials should come, if my liberty and life come once to be touched in earnest, I fear I shall never have strength to go on a step farther in the way of religion: I am afraid I shall faint in the first encounter, I shall deny the words of the Holy One, make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience in the first gust of temptation. I can hear, and pray, and profess; but I doubt I cannot burn, or bleed, or lie in a dungeon for Christ. If I can scarce run with footmen in the land of peace, how do I think to contend with horses in these swellings of Jordan?

But yet all these are but groundless fears, either forged in thy own misgiving heart, or secretly shuffled by Satan into it; for God hath abundantly secured thee against fear in this very particular, by that most sweet, supporting, and blessed promise, annexed to the former in the same text, Jer. 32:40. "I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Here is another kind of fear than that which so startles thee, promised to be put into thy heart, not a fear to shake and undermine thy assurance, as this doth, but to guard and maintain it. And this is the fear that shall be enabled to vanquish and expel all thy other fears.

4. Or are you afraid what the church shall do? And what will become of the ark of God? Do you see a storm gathering, winds begin to roar, the waves to swell; and are you afraid what will become of that vessel the church, in which you have so great an interest?

It is an argument of the publicness and excellency of thy spirit, to be thus touched with the feeling sense of the church's sufferings and dangers. Most men seek their own things, and not the things that are Christ's, Phil. 2:21. But yet it is your sin so to fear, as to sink and faint under a spirit of despondency and discouragement, which yet many good men are but too apt to do. I remember an excellent passage in a letter of* Luther's to Melancthon upon this very account. 'In private troubles, saith he, I am weaker, and thou art stronger; thou despisest thy own life, but fearest the public cause: but for the public I am at rest, being assured that the cause is just and true, yea, that it is Christ's and God's cause. I am well nigh a secure spectator of things, and esteem not any thing these fierce and threatening Papists can do. I beseech thee by Christ, neglect not so Divine promises and consolations, where the scripture saith, Cast thy care upon

the Lord, wait upon the Lord, be strong, and he shall comfort thy heart.'† And in another epistle! 'I much dislike those anxious cares, which, as thou writest, do almost consume thee. It is not the greatness of the danger, but the greatness of thy unbelief. John Huss and others were under greater danger than we; and if it be great, he is great that orders it. Why do you afflict yourself? if the cause be bad, let us renounce it; if it be good, why do we make him a liar who bids us be still? as if you were able to do any good by such unprofitable cares. I beseech thee, thou that in other things art valiant, fight against thyself, thine own greatest enemy, that puts weapons into Satan's hand.'

You see how good men may be even overwhelmed with public fears; but certainly if we did well consider the bond of the covenant that is betwixt God and his people, we should be more quiet and composed. For by reason thereof it is, 1. That God is in the midst of them, Psal. 46:1, 2, 3, 4. When any great danger threatened the reformed church in its tender beginning, in Luther's time, he would say, Come let us sing the 46. Psalm; and indeed it is a lovely song for such times: it bears the title of A song upon Alamo, or a song for the hidden ones; God is with them to cover them under his wings. 2. And it is plain matter of fact, evident to all the world, that no people under the heavens have been so long and so wonderfully preserved as the church hath been; it hath over-lived many bloody massacres, terrible persecutions, subtle and cruel enemies; still God hath preserved and delivered it, for his promises obliged him to do it, amongst which those two are signal and eminent ones, Jer. 30:11. Isa. 27:3. And it is obvious to all that will consider things, that there are the self-same motives in God, and the self-same grounds and reasons before him, to take care of his church and people, that ever were in him, or did ever lie before him from the beginning of the world. For (1.) The relation is still the same. What though Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, those renowned believers, be in their graves, and those that succeed be far inferior to them in grace and spiritual excellency; yet saith the church, doubtless thou art our Father. There is the same tie and bond betwixt the Father and the youngest weakest child in the family, as the eldest and strongest. (2.) His pity and mercy is still the same, for that endures for ever: his bowels yearn as tenderly over his people in their present, as ever they did in any past afflictions or straits. (3.) The rage and malice of his

and his people's enemies is still the same, they will reflect as blasphemously and dishonourably upon God now, should he give up his people, as ever they did. Moses' argument is as good now as ever it was, What will the Egyptians say? and so is Joshua's too, What wilt thou do unto thy great name? Oh! if these things were more thoroughly studied and believed, they would appease many fears.

2. Rule. Work upon your hearts the consideration of the many mischiefs and miseries men draw upon themselves and others, both in this world and that to come, by their own sinful fears.

1. The miseries and calamities that sinful fear brings upon men in this world are unspeakable: this is it that hath plunged the consciences of so many poor wretches into such deep distresses: this it is that hath put them upon the rack, and made them roar like men in hell among the damned. Some have been recovered, and others have perished in these deeps of horror and despair. "*In the year 1550 there was at Ferrara in Italy one Faninus, who by reading good books was by the grace of God converted to the knowledge of the truth, wherein he found such sweetness, that by constant reading, meditation, and prayer, he grew so expert in the scriptures, that he was able to instruct others; and though he durst not go out of the bounds of his calling to preach openly yet by conference and private exhortations he did good to many. This coming to the knowledge of the pope's clients, they apprehended and committed him to prison, where he renounced the truth, and was thereupon released: but it was not long before the Lord met with him for it; so as falling into horrible torments of conscience, he was near unto utter despair; nor could he be freed from those terrors before he had fully resolved to venture his life more faithfully in the service of Christ."

Dreadful was that voice which poor Spira seemed to hear in his own conscience, as soon as ever his sinful fears had prevailed upon him to renounce the truth. "Thou wicked wretch thou hast denied me, thou hast renounced the covenant of thine obedience, thou hast broken thy vow; hence, apostate, bear with thee the sentence of thine eternal damnation." Presently he falls into a swoon, quaking and trembling, and still affirmed to his death, "That from that time he never found any ease or peace in his mind:" but professed, "that he was captivated under the revenging hand

of the Almighty God: and that he continually heard the sentence of Christ, the just Judge against him; and that he knew he was utterly undone, and could neither hope for grace, or that Christ should intercede for him to the Father."

In our dreadful Marian days, Sir John Cheek, who had been tutor to King Edward VI. was cast into the tower, and kept close prisoner, and there put to this miserable choice, either to forego his life, or that which was more precious, his liberty of conscience; neither could his liberty be procured by his great friends at any lower rate than to recant his religion: This he was very unwilling to accept of, till his hard imprisonment, joined with threats of much worse in case of his refusal, at last wrought so upon him, whilst he consulted with flesh and blood, as drew from him an abrenunciation of that truth which he had so long professed, and still believed: Upon this he was restored to his liberty, but never to his comfort; for the sense of his own apostasy, and the daily sight of the cruel butcheries exercised upon others for their constant adherence to the truth, made such deep impressions upon his broken spirit, as brought him to a speedy end of his life, yet not without some comfortable hopes at last.

Our own histories abound with multitudes of such doleful examples.

Some have been in such horror of conscience that they have chosen strangling rather than life; they have felt that anguish of conscience that hath put them upon desperate resolutions and attempts against their own lives to rid themselves of it. This was the case of poor Peter Moon, who being driven by his own fears to deny the truth, presently fell into such horror of conscience, that seeing a sword hanging in his parlour, would have sheathed it in his own bowels. So Francis Spira, before-mentioned, when he was near his end, saw a knife on the table, and running to it, would have michiefed himself, had not his friends prevented him; thereupon he said, O! that I were above God, for I know that he will have no mercy on me. He lay about eight weeks (saith the historian) in a continual burning, neither desiring or receiving any thing but by force, and that without digestion, till he became as an anatomy; vehemently raging for drink, yet fearing to live long; dreadful of hell, yet coveting death; in a continual torment, yet his own tormentor; and thus

consuming himself with grief and horror, impatience and despair, like a living man in hell, he represented an extraordinary example of God's justice and power, and so ended his miserable life.

Surely it were good to fright ourselves by such dreadful examples out of our sinful fears; is any misery we can fear from the hands of man like this? O, reader! believe it, "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God." Hadst thou ever felt the rage and efficacy of a wounded and distressed conscience, as these poor wretches felt it, no fears or threats of men should drive thee into such an hell upon earth as this is.

2. And yet, though this be a doleful case, it is not the worst case your own sinful fears will cast you into, except the Lord overcome and extinguish them in you by the fear of his name, they will not only bring you into a kind of hell upon earth, but into hell itself for evermore; for so the righteous God hath said in his word of truth, Rev. 21:8. "but the fearful and unbelieving, &c. shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Behold here the martial law of heaven executed upon cowards and renegadoes, whose fears make them revolt from Christ in the time of danger. Think upon this, you timorous and faint-hearted professors: you cannot bear the thoughts of lying in a nasty dungeon, how will you lie then in the lake of fire and brimstone? You are afraid of the face and frowns of a man that shall die, but how will you live among devils? Is the wrath of man like the fury of God poured out? Is not the little finger of God heavier than the loins of all the tyrants in the world? Remember what Christ hath said, Mat.10:33. "But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Reader, the time is coming when he that spake these words shall break out of heaven with a shout, accompanied with myriads of angels, and ten thousands of his saints, the heavens and the earth shall be in dreadful conflagrations round about him; the last trump shall sound, the graves shall open, the earth and sea shall give up the dead that are in them. Thine eyes shall see him ascend the awful throne of judgment, his faithful ones that feared not to own and appear for him in the face of all enemies and dangers, sitting on the bench, as assessors with him; and then to be disclaimed and renounced for ever by Jesus Christ, in the face of that great assembly, and proclaimed a

delinquent, a traitor to him, that deniedst his name and truths, because of the frowns of a fellow-creature, long since withered as the grass. Oh how wilt thou be able to endure this! Now put both these together, in thy serious consideration, think on the terrors of conscience here, and the desperate horror of it in hell; this is a par-boiling, that as a roasting in the flames of God's insufferable wrath: these as some scalding drops sprinkled before-hand upon thy conscience, that tender and sensible part of man; that as the lake burning for ever with fire and brimstone. Oh! who would suffer himself to be driven into all this misery, by the fears of these sufferings which can but touch the flesh; and for their duration, they are but for a moment!

Think, and think again upon those words of Christ, Mark 8:35. "He that will save his life shall lose it." It may be a prolonging of a miserable life, a life worse than death, even in thine own account; a life without the comfort or joy of life; a life ending in the second death; and all this for fear of a trifle, compared with what thou shalt afterwards feel in thine own conscience, and less than a trifle, nothing, compared with what thou must suffer from God for ever.

Rule 3. He that will overcome his fears of sufferings, must foresee and provide before-hand for them.

The fear of caution is a good cure to the fear of distraction; and the more of that, the less of this; this fear will cure that, as one fire draws forth another, Heb. 11:7. "Noah being moved with fear, prepared an ark." In which he provided as much for the rest and quiet of his mind, as he did for the safety of his person and family. That which makes evils so frightful as they are, is their coming by way of surprize upon us. Those troubles that find us secure, do leave us distracted and desperate. Presumption of continued tranquillity proves one of the greatest aggravations of misery. Trouble will lie heavy enough when it comes by way of expectation, but it is intolerable when it comes quite contrary to expectation. It will be the lot of Babylon to suffer the unexpected vials of God's wrath, and I wish none but she and her children may be so surprized. Rev. 18:7. Oh! it were well for us, if, in the midst of our pleasant enjoyments, we would be putting the difficultest cases to ourselves, and mingle a few such thoughts as these with all our earthly enjoyments and comforts.

I am now at ease in the midst of my habitation, but the time may be at hand when my habitation shall be in a prison. I see no faces at present but those of friends, full of smiles and honours; I may see none shortly but the faces of enemies, full of frowns and terrors. I have now an estate to supply my wants, and provide for my family; but this may shortly fall as a prey to the enemy, they may sweep away all that I have gathered, reap the fruits of all my labours.—Impius has segetes. I have yet my life given me for a prey; but oh! how soon may it fall into cruel and blood-thirsty hands! I have no better security for these things than the martyrs had, who suffered the loss of all these things for Christ's sake. A double advantage would result to us from such meditations as these, viz. the advantage,

1. Of acquittance with

Troubles

2. Of preparation for

1. Hereby our thoughts would be better acquainted with these evils; and the more they are acquainted with, the less they will start and fright at them. We should not think it strange concerning the fiery trial, as it is, 1 Pet. 4:12. It is with our thoughts as it is with young colts; they start at every new thing they meet; but we cure them of it, by bringing them home to that they start at, and making them smell to it; better acquaintance cures this startling humour. The newness of evil*, saith a late grave and learned divine, is the cause of fear, when the mind itself hath had no preceding encounter with it, whereby to judge of its strength, nor example of another man's prosperous issue, to confirm its hopes in the like success; For, as I noted before out of the Philosopher†, experience is instead of armour, and is a kind of fortitude, enabling both to judge, and to bear troubles; for there are some things which are *μορμολυκεια και προσωπεια*, scare-crows and vizors, which children fear only out of ignorance; as soon as they are known they cease to be terrible.

I know our minds naturally reluctate and decline such harsh and unpleasant subjects: It is hard to bring our thoughts to them in good

earnest, and harder to dwell so long as is necessary to this end upon them. We had rather take a pleasant prospect of future felicity and prosperity in this world; of multiplying our days as the sand, and at last dying quietly in our nest, as Job speaks. Our thoughts run nimbly upon such pleasant fancies, like oiled wheels, and have need of triggings; but when they come into the deep and dirty ways of suffering, there they drive heavily, like Pharaoh's chariots dismounted from their wheels. But that which is most pleasant is not always most useful and necessary; our Lord was well acquainted with griefs, though our thoughts be such great strangers to them; he often thought and spake of his sufferings, and of the bloody baptism with which he was to be baptized, Luke 12:50. and he not only minded his own sufferings before-hand, but when he perceived the fond imaginations and vain fancies of some that followed and professed him, deluding them with expectations of earthly prosperity and rest, he gave their thoughts a turn to this less pleasing, but more needful subject, the things they were to suffer for his name; instead of answering a foolish and groundless question, of sitting on his right and left hand, like earthly grandees, he rebukes the folly of the Questionist, and asks a less pleasing question, Mat. 20:22. "But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask; are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I shall be baptized with? q. d. You do but abuse yourselves with such fond and idle dreams, there is other employment cut out for you in the purposes of God; instead of sitting upon thrones and tribunals, it would become you to think of being brought before them as prisoners to receive your doom and sentence to die for my sake; these thoughts would do you a great deal more service.

2. As such meditations would acquaint us better, so they would prepare us better to encounter troubles and difficult things when they come. Readiness and preparation would subdue and banish our fears; we are never much scared with that for which our minds are prepared. There is the same difference in this case, as there is betwixt a soldier in complete armour, and ready at every point for his enemy; and one that is alarmed in his bed, who hath laid his clothes in one place, and his arms in another, when his enemy is breaking open his chamber door upon him. It was not therefore without the most weighty reason, that the apostle presses us so earnestly, Eph. 6:13, 14. "Take unto you the whole armour

of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." We see the benefit of such provisions and provisions for suffering, in that great example of courage and constancy, Acts 21:13. "I am ready, (saith Paul) not only to be "bound, but to die at Jerusalem." And the same courage and constancy remained in him, when he was entering the very lists, and going to lay his very neck upon the block, 2 Tim. 4:6. "I am ready to be offered up, the time of my departure is at hand." The word σπενδομαι, properly signifies a libation or drink-offering, wherein some conceive he alluded to the very kind of his own death, viz. by the sword; his heart was brought to that frame, that he could with as much willingness pour out his blood for Christ, as the priests used to pour out drink-offerings to the Lord. It is true, all the meditations and preparations in the world, made by us, are not sufficient in themselves to carry us through such difficult services; it is one thing to see death as our fancy limns it out at a distance, and another thing to look death itself in the face. We can behold the painted lion without fear, but the living lion makes us tremble: but yet, though our suffering-strength comes not from our own preparations or forethoughts of death, but from God's gracious assistance; yet usually that assistance of his is communicated to us in and by the conscientious and humble use of these means; let us therefore be found waiting upon God for strength, patience, and resolutions to suffer as it becomes Christians, in the daily serious use of those means whereby he is pleased to communicate to his people.

Rule 4. If ever you will subdue your own slavish fears, commit yourselves, and all that is yours into the hands of God by faith.

This rule is fully confirmed by that scripture, Prov. 16:3. "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established." The greatest part of our trouble and burden, in times of danger, arises from the unsettledness and distraction of our own thoughts; and the way to calm and quiet our thoughts is to commit all to God. This rule is to be applied for this end and purpose, when we are going to meet death itself, and that in all its terrible formalities, and most frightful appearances, 1 Pet. 4:19. "Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of

their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." And if this committing act of faith be so useful at such a time, when the thoughts must be supposed to be in the greatest hurry, and fears in their full strength; much more will it establish the heart, and calm its passions in lesser troubles. You know what ease and relief it would be to you, if you had a trial depending in law for your estates, and your hearts were overloaded and distracted with cares and fears about the issue of it: if one whom you know to be very skilful and faithful, should say to you at such a time, trouble not yourself any farther about this business, never break an hour's sleep more for this matter; be you an unconcerned spectator, commit it to me, and trust me with the management of it; I will make it my own concernment, and save you harmless. O what a burden, what an heavy load would you feel yourselves eased of, as soon as you had thus transferred and committed it to such a hand! then you would be able to eat with pleasure and sleep in quietness: much more ease and quietness doth your committing the matter of your fears to God give, even so much more as his power, wisdom, and faithfulness is greater than what is to be found in men. But to make this rule practicable and improveable to peace and quietness of heart in an evil day, it will be necessary that you well understand,

1. What the committing act of faith is.

2. What grounds and encouragements believers have for it.

1. Study well the nature of this committing act of faith, and what it supposes or implies in it; for all men cannot commit themselves to God, it is his own people only that can do it: nor is it every thing they can commit to God; they cannot commit themselves to his care and protection in any way but only in his own ways. Know more particularly,

- 1st, That he who will commit himself to God, must commit himself to him in well doing, as the apostle limits it in 1 Pet. 4:19. and in things agreeable to his will; else we would make God a patron and protector of our sins: Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing. We cannot commit our sins, but our duties to God's protection; God is so great a friend to truth and righteousness, that in such a case he will not take your part, how dear

soever you be to him, if truth be found on your enemies part, and the mistake on yours. Think not to entitle God to your errors and failings, much less to any sinful designs; you may commit a doubtful case to him to be decided, but not a sinful case to be protected. It is in vain to shelter any cause of your own under his wings, except you can write upon it, as David did, Psal. 74:22. Thine own cause, O Lord, as well as mine. Lord, plead thine own cause.

2dly, He that commits his all to God supposes and firmly believes that all events and issues of things are in God's hands; that he only can direct, over-rule, and order them all as he pleaseth. Upon this supposition the committing acts of faith in all our fears and distresses are built: I trusted in thee, O Lord, I said, Thou art my God, my times are in thy hand, deliver me from the hands of my enemies, and from them that persecute me. His firm assent to this great truth, That his times were in God's hands, was the reason why he committed himself into that hand. If our times, or lives, or comforts were in our enemies' hands, it were to little purpose for us to commit ourselves into God's hands. And here the contrary senses and methods of faith and unbelief are as conspicuous as in any one thing whatsoever: unbelief persuades men that their lives and all that is dear to them is in the hands of their enemies, and therefore persuades them the best way they can take to secure themselves, is by compliance with the will of their enemies, and pleasing them: but faith determines quite contrary, it tells us, We and all that is ours, is in God's hand, and no enemy can touch us, or ours, till he give them a permission; and therefore it is our duty and interest to please him, and commit all to him.

3. The committing ourselves to God implies the resignation of our wills to the will of God, to be disposed of as seems good in his eyes: So David commits to God the event of that sad and doubtful providence, which made him fly for his life, from a strong conspiracy, 2 Sam. 15:25. "And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation: but, if he thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good to him;" q. d. Lord, the conspiracy against my life is strong, the danger great, the issue

exceeding doubtful; but I commit all into thy hand; if David may be yet used in any farther service for his God, I shall see this city and thy lovely temple again; but if not, I lie at thy foot, to be disposed either for life or death, for the earthly or the heavenly Jerusalem, as seemeth best in thine eyes. This submission to Divine pleasure is included in the committing act of faith. Christian, what sayest thou to it? Is thy will content to go back, that the will of God may come on, and take place of it? It may be thou canst refer a difficult case to God, provided he will determine and issue it according to thy desires; but, in truth, that is no submission or resignation at all, but a sinful limiting of, and prescribing to God. It was an excellent reply that a choice Christian once made to another, when a beloved and only child lay in a dangerous sickness at the point of death, a friend asked the mother, What would you now desire of God in reference to your child? would you beg of him its life or its death, in this extremity that it is now in? The mother answered, I refer that to the will of God. But, said her friend, if God would refer it to you, what would you chuse then? Why truly, said she, if God would refer it to me, I would even refer it to God again. This is the true committing of ourselves and our troublesome concerns to the Lord.

4. The committing act of faith implies our renouncing and disclaiming all confidence and trust in the arm of flesh, and an expectation of relief from God only. If we commit ourselves to God, we must cease from man, Isa. 2:22. To trust God in part, and the creature in part, is to set one foot upon a rock, and the other upon a quicksand. Those acts of faith that give the entire glory to God, give real relief and comfort to us.

2. Let us see what grounds and encouragements the people of God have to commit themselves and all the matters of their fears to God, and so to enjoy the peace and comfort of a resigned will; and there are two sorts of encouragements before you, let the case be as difficult and frightful as it will, you may find sufficient encouragement in God, and somewhat from yourselves, viz. your relation to him, and experiences of him.

1. In God there is all that your hearts can desire to encourage you to trust him over all, and committ all into his hands. For,

1. He is able to help and relieve you: let the case be never so bad, yet "let

Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is plenteous redemption," Psal. 130:7, 8. Plenteous redemption, i.e. all the stores of power, choice of methods, plenty of means, abundance of ways to save his people, when they can see no way out of their troubles: therefore hope, Israel, in Jehovah.

2. As his power is almighty, so his wisdom is infinite and unsearchable; "He is a God of judgment, blessed are all they that wait for him," Isa. 30:18. When the apostle Peter had related the wonderful preservation of Noah in the deluge, and of Lot in Sodom, one in a general destruction of the world by water, and the other in the overthrow of those cities by fire; he concludes, and so should we, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation," 2 Pet. 2:9. Some men have much power, but little wisdom to manage it, others are wise and prudent, but want ability; in God there is an infinite fulness of both.

3. His love to, and tenderness over his people, is transcendent and unparalleled: and this sets his wisdom and power both at work for their good: hence it is, that his eyes of providence run continually throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose hearts are perfect, i.e. upright towards him, 2 Chron.16:9. Thus you see how he is every way fitted as a proper object of your trust.

2. Consider with yourselves, and you shall find encouragements to commit all to God. For,

1. You are his children, and to whom should children commit themselves in dangers and fears but to their own father? Doubtless thou art our Father, saith the distressed church, Isa. 63:15, 16. yea, Christian, Thy Maker is thy husband, Isa. 54:5. Is not that a sufficient ground to cast thyself upon him? What! a child not trust its own father? a wife not commit herself to her own husband?

2. You have trusted him with a far greater concern already than your estates, liberties, or lives; you have committed your souls to him, and your eternal interests, 2 Tim. 1:12. Shall we commit the jewel, and dispute the cabinet; trust him for heaven, and doubt him for earth?

3. You have ever found him faithful in all that you trusted him with, all your experiences are so many good grounds of confidence, Psal. 9:10. Well then, resolve to trust God over all, and quietly leave the disposal of every thing to him: he hath been with you in all former straits, wants, and fears, hitherto he hath helped you, and cannot he do so again, except you tell him how? Oh! trust in his wisdom, power, and love, and lean not to your own understandings. The fruit of resignation will be peace.

Rule 5. If ever you will get rid of your fears and distractions, get your affections mortified to the world, and to the inordinate and immoderate love of every enjoyment in the world.

The more you are mortified, the less you will be terrified: it is not the dead, but the living world, that puts our hearts into such fears and tremblings; if our hearts were once crucified, they would soon be quieted. It is the strength of our affections that puts so much strength into our afflictions. It was not therefore without great reason that the apostle compares the life of a Christian to the life of a soldier, who, if he mean to follow the camp, and acquit himself bravely in fight, must not entangle himself with the affairs of this life, 2 Tim. 2:4. Sure there is no following Christ's camp, but with a disentangled heart from the world; for, proportionable to the heat of our love, will be the strength and height of our fears about these things; more particularly, if ever you will rid yourselves of your uncomfortable and uncomely fears, use all God's means to mortify your affections to the exorbitant esteem and love of,

1. Your estates. 2. Your liberty. 3. Your lives.

1. Get mortified and cooled hearts to your possessions and estates in the world. The poorest age afforded the richest Christians and noblest martyrs. Ships deepest laden are not best for encounters. The believing Hebrews took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and enduring substance, Heb. 10:34. They carried it rather like unconcerned spectators, than the true proprietors; they rejoiced when rude soldiers carried out their goods, as if so many friends had been bringing them in. And whence was this but from an heart fixed upon heaven, and mortified to things upon earth? Doubtless, they esteemed and valued their estates, as the good

providences of God for their more comfortable accommodation in this world; but it seems they did, and O that we could look upon them as mercies of the lowest and meanest rank and nature. The substance laid up in heaven was a better substance, and as long as that was safe, the loss of this Did not afflict them.

They could bless God for these things which for a little time did minister refreshment to them, but they knew them to be transitory enjoyments, things that would make to themselves wings and flee away, if their enemies had not touched them; but the substance laid up for them in heaven, that was an enduring substance. So far as those earthly things might further them towards heavenly things, so far they prized and valued them, but if Satan would turn them into snares and temptations to deprive them of their better substance in heaven, they could easily slight them, and take the spoiling of them joyfully. In a stress of weather, when the ship is ready to sink and founder in a storm, all hands are readily employed to throw the richest goods overboard; no man saith it is pity to cast them away, but reason dictates to a man in that case, Better these perish, than I perish with and for them. These be the wares that some will not cast overboard, and therefore they are said to drown men in perdition, 1 Tim. 6:9. Demas would rather perish than part with these things, 2 Tim. 4:10. But, reader, consider seriously what comforts they can yield thee, when thou must look upon them as the price for which thou hast sold heaven, and all the hopes of glory; even as much as the price of blood yielded Judas; and so they will ensnare thee, if thy unmortified heart be overheated with the love of them as his was.

2. Be mortified to your liberty, and take heed of placing too great an esteem upon it, or necessity in it. Liberty is a desirable thing to the very birds in the air; accommodate them the best you can in your cages, feed them with the richest fare, they had rather be cold and hungry with their liberty in the woods, than fat and warm in your houses. But yet, as sweet as it is, there may be more comfort and sweetness in parting with it, than in keeping it, as the case may stand. The doors of a prison may lock you in, but they cannot lock the Comforter out. Paul and Silas lost their liberty for Christ, but not their comfort with it; they never were so truly at liberty, as when their feet were made fast in the stocks, they never fared

so deliciously as when they fed upon prisoner's fare. God spread a table for them in the prison, sent them in a rich feast, yea, and they had music at their feast too, and that at midnight, Acts 16:25.

Patmos was a barren island, and a place designed for banished persons; it lay in the Egean sea, not far from the coast of the Lesser Asia*: it was inhabited by none, because of the exceeding barrenness of it, but such who were appointed to it for their punishment; so that here John could meet with no more earthly refreshment than what the barren rocks, or wild and desperate persons condemned to live upon it, could afford. Ay, but there, there it was, that Christ appeared to him in inexpressible glory; there it was that he had those ravishing visions, and saw the whole scheme of Providence in the government of this world; there he saw the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, as a bride prepared for her husband. This made a Patmos become a Paradise; never did any place afford him such comfort as this did. So that Christians may not think there is so strict and necessary a connexion betwixt liberty and comfort, that he that takes away the first, must needs deprive them of the other.

Again, Suppose we should be so fond of our liberty as to exchange truth and a good conscience for it; cannot God so imbitter it to you, yea, hath he not so imbittered it to many, that they were quickly weary of it, and glad of an opportunity to change it for a prison. Our own Martyrology furnishes us with many sad examples of it. Oh, what will you do with your bitter, dear-bought liberty, when your peace is taken away from the inward man? when God shall clap up your souls in prison, and put your consciences into his bonds and fetters, then will you say as the martyr did, "I am in prison till I be in prison."

3. Be mortified to the inordinate and fond love of life, as ever you expect relief against the fears of death. Reason thyself into a lower value of thy life. Methinks you have arguments enough to cure your fondness in this point. Have you found it such a pleasant life to you, for so much of it as is past? You know how the apostle represents it, 2 Cor. 5:4. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burthened." And is a burthened and a groaning life so desirable? You know also, as he speaks in the next verse, that "whilst you are at home in the body, you are absent from the Lord."

And is a state of absence from Jesus Christ so desirable to a soul that loves him? Can you find much pleasure so far from home? You may fancy what you will, but, upon serious recollection, you will never be out of the reach of Satan's temptations, never freed from your own indwelling corruptions, these conflicts cannot have an end till life be ended. You also stand convinced, that till you be dead, your souls cannot be satisfied, nor your desires be at rest, have what comforts soever from God in the way of faith and course of duties, your hearts are still off the centre, and will still gravitate and gasp heavenward. You also know that die you must, and the time of your departure is at hand; and of all deaths, if you might have your choice, none is more honourable to God, or like to be so evidential and comfortable to you, as a violent death for Christ; therein you come to him by consent and choice, not by necessity and constraint; therein you give a public testimony for Christ, which is the highest use that ever our blood can be put to, or honoured by; and for the pain and torment, as the martyr said, He that takes away from my torment, takes away from my reward. But even in that point God can make it easier to you than a natural death would be; he will be with you in your extremity, and administer such reviving cordials as other men must not look to taste, at least not ordinarily, they being prepared and reserved for such, against such an hour.

Oh then, work out the inordinate love of life, by working in such mortifying considerations upon your own hearts; and if once you gain but this point, you will quickly find all your pains and prayers richly answered in the ease and rest of your hearts, in the most scaring and frightful times.

Rule 6. Eye the encouraging examples of those that have trod the path of sufferings before you, and strive to imitate such worthy patterns.

Behold the cloud of witnesses encompassing you round about: a cloud like that over the Israelites to direct you; yea, a cloud for multitude of excellent persons to animate and encourage you, Heb. 12:1. "Oh take them for an ensample in suffering affliction and patience," James 5:10. Examples of excellent persons that have broken the ice, and beaten the path before us, are of excellent use to suppress our fears, and rouse our courage in our own encounters.

The first sufferers had the hardest task; they that first entered the lists for Christ, wanted those helps to suppress fear which they have left unto us. Strange and untried torments are most terrible, for *magnitudinem rerum consuetudo subducit*, trial and acquaintance abates the formidable greatness of evils; they knew not the strength of that enemy they were to engage, but we fight with an enemy that hath been often beaten and triumphed over by our brethren that went before us. Certainly we that live in the last times have the best helps that ever any had to subdue their fears; we have heard of the courage and constancy of our brethren, in as sharp trials of their courage as ever we can be called to; we have read with what Christian gallantry they have triumphed over all sorts of sufferings and torments, how they have been strengthened with all might in the inner man unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness, Col. 1:11. how they have gone away from the courts that censured and punished them, rejoicing that they were honoured to be dishonoured for Christ, as the strict reading of that text is, Acts 5:41*. counting the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, Heb. 11:26. which at that time was the magazine of the world for riches: You read what "trials they have had of cruel mockings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments; how they were stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword, wandered about in sheep's skins, and goat's skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, Heb.11:36, 37. In all which they obtained a good report; they came out of the field with triumphant faith and patience; and this was not the effect of an over-heated zeal at the first outset, but the same spirit of courage was found among Christians in after ages, who have put off their persecutors with a kind of pleasant scorn and contempt of torments.

So did Basil, truly surnamed the Great, when Valens the emperor in a great rage threatened him with banishment and tortures; as to the first said he,[†] I little regard it: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; and as for tortures, what can they do upon such a poor thin body as mine, nothing but skin and bone? And at another time[‡], when Eusebius, governor of Pontus, told him in a great rage, he would tear his very liver out of his bowels: Truly, said Basil, you will do me a very good turn in it, to take out my naughty liver; which inflames and diseaseth my

whole body. Their enemies have professed the Christians put them to shame, by smiling at their cruelties and threatenings. Ignatius's love to Christ had so perfectly overcome all fears of sufferings, that when he was going to be thrown for a prey among the lions and leopards, he professed he longed to be among them, and, said he, if they will not dispatch me the sooner, I will provoke them, that I may be with my sweet Jesus. And if we come down to later ages, we shall find as stout champions for Christ. The courage and undauntedness of Luther is trumpeted abroad throughout the Christian world, it would swell this small tract too much, but to note the most eminent instances of his courage for Christ: the last he gave was by his sorrow in his last sickness, that he must carry his blood to the grave. The like heroic spirit appeared in divers persons of honour and eminence, who zealously espoused the same cause of reformation with him. Remarkable to this purpose is that famous epistle written by Ulricus ab Hutten, a German knight, in defence of Luther's cause against the cardinals and bishops assembled at Worms. 'I will go through (said he) with what I have undertaken against you, and will stir up men to seek their freedom: such as yield not to me at first, I will overcome with importunity; I neither care nor fear what may befall me, being prepared for either event; either to ruin you, to the great benefit of my country, or myself to fall with a good conscience; therefore that you may see with what confidence I contemn your threats, I do profess myself to be your irreconcilable enemy, whilst ye persecute Luther and such as he is. No power of yours, no injury of fortune shall alter this mind in me; though you take away my life, yet this well-deserving of mine towards my country's liberty, shall not die. I know that my endeavour to remove such as you are, and to place worthy ministers in your room, is acceptable to God; and in the last judgment, I trust it will be safer for me to have offended you, than to have had your favour.'

It was also a brave heroic spirit by which John duke of Saxony was acted to defend the reformation, who despising all the favours and offers of the court, and of Rome, and the terrors of death itself; appeared, as my author speaks, in its behalf against all the devils, and the pope*, in three public imperial assemblies, saying openly to their faces, I must serve God, or the world; and which of these two do ye think is the better? And as soon as Luther's sermons were forbidden, he hasted away, saying, I will

not stay there, where I cannot have my liberty to serve God.

And now reader, thou hast a little taste of the courage and zeal of those worthies who are gone before thee in defence of that cause for which thou fearest to suffer. Most men, saith Chrysostom, that read or hear such examples, are like the spectators of the Roman gladiators, who stood by and praised their courage, but durst not enter the lists to do what they did. If ever thou wilt get like courage for Christ, thus improve such famous examples.

1. Make use of them to obviate the prejudice of singularity; you see you have store of good company, the same things you are like to suffer for Christ, have been accomplished in the rest of your brethren in the world, 1 Pet. 5:9.

2. Improve them against the prejudice of all that shame that attends sufferings, here you may see the most excellent persons in the world reckoning it their glory to suffer the vilest things for Jesus Christ, Acts 5:31. Heb. 11:26.

3. Improve them against the conceit of the insupportableness of sufferings. Lo here, poor weak creatures which have been carried honourably and comfortably through the cruelest and difficultest sufferings for Christ. Our women and children, not to speak of men, (saith Tertullian) overcome their tormentors, and the fire cannot fetch so much as a sigh from them.

4. Improve them against thine own unbelief and staggerings at the faithfulness of God in that promise, Isa. 43:2. "When thou passest through the fire, I will be with thee," &c. Lo here you have the recorded and faithful testimonies of such as have tried it, with one voice witnessing for God, Thy word is truth, thy word is truth.

5. Improve them against the sensible weakness of your own graces; are you afraid your faith, love, and patience are too weak to carry you through great trials? Why doubtless so were many of them too, they were men of like fears, troubled with a bad heart and a busy devil as well as you, they also had their clouds and damps as you have; yet the almighty

power of God supported them; and out of weakness they were made strong: despond not therefore, but get a judgment satisfied, Psal. 44:22. a conscience sprinkled, 2 Tim. 1:7. and a call cleared, Dan. 6:10. Exercise faith also with respect to Divine assistances and everlasting rewards as they did: and doubt not but the same God that enabled them to finish their course with joy, will be as good to you as he was to them. Consider, Christ hath done as much for you as he did for any of them, and deserves as much from you as from any of them; and hath prepared the same glory for you that he prepared for them: O that such considerations might provoke you to shew as much courage and love to Christ as any of them ever did.

Rule 7. If ever you will get above the power of your own fears in a suffering day make haste to clear your interest in Christ, and your pardon in his blood before that evil day come.

The clearer this is, the bolder you will be; an assured Christian was never known to be a coward in sufferings; it is impossible to be clear of fears till you are cleared of the doubts about interest in, and pardon by Christ. Nothing is found more strengthening to our fears than that which clouds our evidences; and nothing more to quiet and cure our fears than that which clears our evidences. The shedding abroad of God's love in our hearts will quickly fill them with a spirit of glorying in tribulations, Rom. 5:5. When the believing Hebrews once came to know in themselves that they had an enduring substance in heaven, they quickly found in themselves an unconcerned heart for the loss of their comforts on earth, Heb. 10:34. and so should we too. For,

1. Assurance satisfies a man that his treasure and true happiness is secured to him, and laid out of the reach of all his enemies; and so long as that is safe he hath all the reason in the world to be quiet and cheerful, "I know (saith Paul) whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day," 2 Tim. 1:12. And he gives this as his reason why he was not ashamed of Christ's sufferings.

2. The assured Christian knows that if death itself come, (which is the worst men can inflict) he shall be no loser by the exchange; nay he shall

make the best bargain that ever he made since he first parted with all his afflictions, to follow Christ. There are two rich bargains a Christian makes; one is, when he exchanges the world for Christ in his first choice at his conversion, in point of love and estimation: the other is, when he actually parts with the world for Christ at his dissolution: both these are rich bargains, and upon this ground it was the apostle said, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," Phil. 1:21. The death of a believer in Christ, is gain unspeakable, but if a man would make the utmost gain by dying, he shall find it in dying for Christ, as well as in Christ: and to shew you wherein the gain of such a death lies, let a few particulars be weighed, wherein the gain will be cast up in both; he that is assured he dies in Christ, knows,

1. That his living time is his labouring time, but his dying time is his harvest time; whilst we live we are plowing and sowing in all the duties of religion, but when we die, then we reap the fruit and comforts of all our labours and duties, Gal. 6:8, 9. As much therefore as the reaping time is better than the sowing and plowing time, so much better is the death than the life of a believer.

2. A believer's living time is his fighting time, but his dying time is his conquering and triumphing time, 1 Cor. 15:55, 56. The conflict is sharp, but the triumph is sweet; and as much as victory and triumph are better than fighting, so much is death better than life to him that dieth in Jesus.

3. A believer's living time is his tiresome and weary time, but his dying time is his resting and sleeping time. Isa. 57:2. Here we spend and faint, there we rest in our beds, and as much as refreshing rest in sleep is better than tiring and fainting, so much is a believer's death better than his life.

4. A believer's living time is his waiting and longing time, but his time of dying is the time of enjoying what he hath long wished and waited for, Phil. 1:23. here we groan and sigh for Christ, there we behold and enjoy Christ, and so much as vision and fruition are better and sweeter than hoping and waiting for it; so much is a believer's death better than his life.

2. As the advantage a believer makes of death is great to him by dying

only in Christ; so it is much greater, and the richest improvement that can be made of death, to die for Christ as well as in Christ: for compare them in a few particulars, and you shall find,

1. That though a natural death hath less horror, yet a violent death for Christ hath more honour in it. To him that dies united with Christ, the grave is a bed of rest; but to him that dies as a martyr for Christ, the grave is a bed of honour. "To you (saith the apostle) it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe but also to suffer for his sake," Phil. 1:22. To you it is granted as a great honour and favour to suffer for Christ; all that live in Christ have not the honour to lay down their lives for Christ. It was the great trouble of Ludovicus Marsacus*, a knight of France, to be exempted because of his dignity from wearing his chain for Christ, as the other prisoners did: and he resented it as a great injury. "Give me (saith he to his keeper) my chain as well as they, and create me a knight of that noble order."

2. By a natural death we only submit ourselves to the unavoidable consequence of sin, but in dying a violent death for Christ, we give our testimony against the evil of sin, and for the precious truths of Jesus Christ. The first is the payment of a debt of justice due by the fall of Adam; the second is the payment of a debt of thankfulness and obedience due to Christ, who redeemed us with his own blood. Thus we become witnesses for God, as well as sufferers, upon the account of sin: in the first, sin witnesseth against us, in this we witness against it; and indeed it is a great testimony against the evil of sin: we declare to all the world that there is not so much evil in a dungeon, in a bloody ax, or consuming flames, as there is in sin: that it is far better to lose our carnal friends, estates, liberties, and lives, than part with Christ's truths and a good conscience, as[†] Zuinglius said, "What sort of death should not a Christian chuse, what punishment should he not rather undergo; yea, into what vault of hell should he not rather chuse to be cast, than to witness against truth and conscience."

3. A natural death in Christ may be as safe to ourselves, but a violent death for Christ will be more beneficial to others; by the former we shall come to heaven ourselves, but by the latter we may bring many souls thither. The blood of the martyrs is truly called the seed of the church.

Many waxed confident by Paul's bonds, his sufferings fell out to the furtherance of the gospel, and so may ours: in this case a Christian like Samson, doth greater service against Satan and his cause, by his death, than by his life.

If we only die a natural death in our beds, we die in possession of the truths of Christ ourselves: but if we die martyrs for Christ, we secure that precious inheritance to the generations to come, and those that are yet unborn shall bless God, not only for his truths, but for our courage, zeal, and constancy, by which it was preserved for them, and transmitted to them.

By all this you see that death to a believer is great gain, it is great gain if he only die in Christ, it is all that, and a great deal more added, if he also die for Christ: and he that is assured of such advantages by death either way, must needs feel his fears of death shrink away before such assurances; yea, he will rather have life in patience, and death in desire; he will not only submit quietly, but rejoice exceedingly to be used by God in such honourable employment*. Assurance will call a bloody death a safe passage to Canaan through the Red sea. It will call Satan that instigates these his instruments, and all that are employed in such bloody work by him, so many Balaams brought to curse, but they do indeed bless the people of God, and not curse them. The assured Christian looks upon his death as his wedding-day, Rev. 19:7. And therefore it doth not much differ whether the horse sent to fetch him to Christ be pale, or red, so he may be with Christ, his love, as Ignatius called him.

He looks upon death as his day of enlargement out of prison, 2 Cor. 5:8. and it is not much odds what hand opens the door, or whether a friend or enemy close his eyes, so he have his liberty, and may be with Christ.

O then, give the Lord no rest, till your hearts be at rest by the assurance of his love, and the pardon of your sins; when you can boldly say the Lord is your help, you will quickly say what immediately follows, I will not fear what man can do unto me, Heb. 13:6. And why, if thy heart be upright, mayest thou not attain it? Full assurance is possible, else it had not been put into the command, 2 Pet. 1:10. The sealing graces are in you, the sealing Spirit is ready to do it for you, the sealing promises belong to you;

but we give not all diligence, and therefore go without the comfort of it. Would we pray more, and strive more, would we keep our hearts with a stricter watch, mortify sin more thoroughly, and walk before God more accurately; how soon may we attain this blessed assurance, and in it an excellent cure for our distracting and slavish fears.

Rule 8. Let him that designs to free himself of distracting fears, be careful to maintain the purity of his conscience, and integrity of his ways, in the whole course of his conversation in this world.

Uprightness will give us boldness, and purity will yield us peace. Isa. 32:17. "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and "the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." Look as fear follows guilt and guile, so peace and quietness follow righteousness and sincerity, Prov. 28:1. The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion. His confidence is great, because his conscience is quiet, the peace of God guards his heart and mind. There are three remarkable steps by which Christians rise to the height of courage in tribulations, Rom. 5:1, 2, 3, 4. First they are justified and acquitted from guilt by faith, ver. 1. Then they are brought into a state of favour and acceptation with God, ver. 2. Thence they rise one step higher, even so a view of heaven and the glory to come, ver. 3. and from thence they take an easy step to glory in tribulations, ver. 4.

I say, it is an easy step; for let a man once obtain the pardon of sin, the favour of God, and a believing view and prospect of the glory to come; and it is so easy to triumph in tribulation, in such a station as that is, that it will be found as hard to hinder it, as to hinder a man from laughing when he is tickled.

Christians have always found it a spring of courage and comfort, 2 Cor. 1:12. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." Their hearts did not reproach them with by-ends in religion: their consciences witnessed that they made not religion a cloak to cover any fleshly design, but were sincere in what they professed: and this enabled them to rejoice in the midst of sufferings. An earthen vessel set empty on the fire will crack and

fly in pieces, and so will an hypocritical, formal, and mere nominal Christian: but he that hath such substantial and real principles of courage as these within him, will endure the trial, and be never the worse for the fire.

The very Heathens discovered the advantage of moral integrity, and the peace it yielded to their natural consciences in times of trouble.

Nil conscire tibi, nulla pallescere culpa,

Hic murus ahcneus esto.—*

It was to them as a wall of brass. Much more will godly simplicity, and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon our consciences secure and encourage our hearts. This atheistical age laughs conscience and purity to scorn; but let them laugh, this is it which will make thee laugh when they shall cry. Paul exercised himself, or made it his business, "To have always a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards man," Acts 24:16[†]. And it was richly worth his labour, it re-paid him ten thousand fold in the peace, courage, and comfort it gave him in all the troubles of his life, which were great and many.

Conscience must be the bearing shoulder on which the burden must lie, beware therefore it be not galled with guilt, or put out of joint by any fall into sin, it is sad bearing on such a shoulder; instead of bearing your burdens, you will not be able to bear its pain and anguish. To prevent this carefully, observe these rules.

1. Over-awe your hearts every day, and in every place with the eye of God. This walking as before God will keep you upright, Gen. 17:1. If you so speak and live as those that know God sees you, such will be your uprightness, that you will not care if all the world see you too. An artist came to Drusius, and offered to build him an house, so contrived, that he might do what he would within doors, and no man see him: Nay, said Drusius, so build it that every one may see.

2. Do no action, undertake no design, that you dare not preface with prayer; this is the rule, Phil. 4:6. Touch not that you dare not pray for a

blessing upon; if you dare not pray, dare not to engage; if you cannot spend your prayers before, be confident, shame and guilt will follow after.

3. Be more afraid of grieving God, or wounding conscience, than of displeasing or losing all the friends you have in the world besides; look upon every adventure upon sin to escape danger to be the same thing as if you should sink the ship to avoid one that you take to be a pirate; or as the fatal mistake of two vials, wherein there is poison and physic.

4. What counsel you would give another, that give yourselves when the case shall be your own; your judgment is most clear, when interest is least felt. David's judgment was very upright when he judged himself in a remote parable.

5. Be willing to bear the faithful reproofs of your faults from men, as the reproving voice of God; for they are no less when duly administered. This will be a good help to keep you upright, Psal. 135:23, 24. "Let the righteous smite me, &c. It is said of Sir Anthony Cope, that he shamed none so much as himself in his family-prayers, and desired the ministers of his acquaintance not to favour his faults; but tell me, said he, and spare not.

6. Be mindful daily of your dying-day, and your great audit-day, and do all with respect to them. Thus keep your integrity and peace, and that will keep out your fears and terrors.

Rule 9. Carefully record the experiences of God's care over you, and faithfulness to you in all your past dangers and distresses, and apply them to the cure of your present fears and despondencies.

Recorded experiences are excellent remedies, Exod. 17:14. "Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua." There were two things in that record; the victory obtained over Amalek, and the way of obtaining it by incessant prayer: and there are two things to be done to secure this mercy for their use and benefit in future fears, it must be recorded and rehearsed, preserved from oblivion, and seasonably produced for relief.

There are two special assistances given us against fear by experience.

1. It abates the terror of sufferings.

2. It assists faith in the promises.

1. Experience greatly abates the terror of sufferings, and makes them less formidable and scaring than otherwise they would be. Fear saith, they are great waters, and will drown us; experience saith, they are much shallower than we think, and are safely fordable; others have, and we may pass through the Red sea, and not be over-whelmed. Fear saith, the pains of death are unconceivable, sharp, and bitter, the living little know what the dying feel; and to lie in a stinking prison in continual expectation of a cruel death, is an unsupportable evil: Experience contradicts all these false reports which make our hearts faint, as the second spies did the daunting stories of the first; and assures us prisons and death are not, when we come home to them for Christ, what they seem and appear to be at a distance. O what a good report have those faithful men given, who have searched and tried these things! who have gone down themselves into the valley of the shadow of death, and seen what there is in a prison, and in death itself, so long as they were in sight and hearing, able by words or signs to contradict our false notions of it. Oh what a sweet account did Pomponius Algerius give of his stinking prison at Lyons in France! dating all his letters whilst he was there, From the delectable orchard of the Leonine prison; and when carried to Venice, in a letter from the prison there, he writes thus to his Christian friend; I shall utter that which scarce any will believe, I have found a nest of honey in the entrails of a lion, a paradise of pleasure in a deep dark dungeon, in a place of sorrow and death, tranquillity of hope and life. Oh! here it is that the Spirit of God and of glory rests upon us.

So blessed Mr. Philpot, our own martyr, in one of his sweet encouraging letters: 'Oh how my heart leaps (saith he) that I am so near to eternal bliss! God forgive me my unthankfulness and unworthiness of so great glory. I have so much joy of the reward prepared for me, the most wretched sinner, that though I be in the place of darkness and mourning, yet I cannot lament, but am night and day so joyful, as though I were under no cross at all; in all the days of my life I was never so joyful, the

name of the Lord be praised.'

Others have given the signals agreed upon betwixt them and their friends in the midst of the flames, thereby, to the last, confirming this truth, that God makes the inside of sufferings quite another thing to what the appearance and outside of them is to sense. Thus the experience of others abates the terrors of sufferings to you; and all this is fully confirmed by the personal experience you yourselves have had of the supports and comforts of God, wherein soever you have conscientiously suffered for his sake.

2. And this cannot but be a singular assistance to your faith; your own and others experiences, just like Aaron and Hur, stay up the hands of faith on the one side and the other, that they hang not down, whilst your fears, like those Amalekites, fall before you. For what is experience, but the bringing down of the divine promises to the test of sense and feeling? It is our duty to believe the promises without trial and experiments, but it is easier to do it after so many trials; so that your own and others experiences, carefully recorded and seasonably applied, would be food to your faith, and a cure to many of your fears in a suffering day.

Rule 10. You can never free yourself from sinful fears, till you thoroughly believe and consider Christ's providential kingdom over all the creatures and affairs in this lower world.

Poor timorous souls! is there not a King, a supreme Lord, under whom devils and men are? Hath not Christ the reins of government in his hands? Mat. 28:18. Phil 2:9, 10, 11, 12. John 17:2. Were this dominion of Christ, and dependence of all creatures on him, well studied and believed, it would cut off both our trust in men, and our fear of men; we should soon discern they have no power either to help us or to hurt us, but what they receive from above. Our enemies are apt to over-rate their own power, in their pride, and we are as apt to over-rate it too in our fears. Knowest thou not (saith Pilate to Christ) that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to release thee? q. d. Refusest thou to answer me? dost thou not know who and what I am? Yes, yes, saith Christ, I know thee well enough to be a poor impotent creature, who hast no power at all but what is given thee from above; I know thee, and therefore do not fear

thee. But we are apt to take their own boasts for truth, and believe their power to be such as they vainly vogue it to be; whereas in truth all our enemies are sustained by Christ, Col. 1:17. they are bounded and limited by Christ, Rev. 2:10. Providence hath its influences upon their hearts and wills immediately, Jer. 15:11. Psal. 106:46. so that they cannot do whatever they would do, but their wills as well as their hands are ordered by God. Jacob was in Laban's and in Esau's hands; both hated him, but neither could hurt him. David was in Saul's hand, who hunted for him as a prey, yet is forced to dismiss him quietly, blessing instead of slaying him. Melancthon and Pomeron both fell into the hands of Charles V. than whom Christendom had not a more prudent prince, nor the church of Christ a fiercer enemy; yet he treats these great and active reformers gently, dismisseth them freely, not once forbidding them to preach or print the doctrine which he so much opposed and hated.

Oh Christian! if ever thou wilt get above thy fears, settle these things upon thy heart by faith.

1. That the reins of government are in Christ's hands; enemies, like wild horses, may prance and tramp up and down the world, as though they would tread down all that are in their way; but the bridle of providence is in their mouths, and upon their proud necks, 2 Kings 19:28. and that bridle hath a strong curb.

2. The care of the saints properly pertains to Christ; he is the head of the body, Eph. 1:22, 23. our consulting head; and it were a reproach and dishonour to Christ, to fill our heads with distracting cares and fears, when we have so wise an head to consult and contrive for us.

3. You have lived all your days upon the care of Christ hitherto; no truth is more manifest than this, that there hath been a wisdom beyond your own, that hath guided your ways, Jer. 10:23. a power above your own, that hath supported your burdens, Psal. 73:26. a spring of relief out of yourselves that hath supplied all your wants, Luke 23:35. He hath performed all things for you.

4. Jesus Christ hath secured his people by many promises to take care of them, how dangerous soever the times shall be, Eccl. 8:12. Psal. 76:10.

Amos 9:8, 9. Rom. 8:28. Oh! if these things were thoroughly believed and well improved, fears could no more distract or afflict our hearts, than storms or clouds could trouble the upper region: but we forget his providences and promises, and so are justly left in the hands of our own fears to be afflicted for it.

Rule 11. Subject your carnal reasonings to faith, and keep your thoughts more under the government of faith, if ever you expect a composed and quiet heart in distracting evil times.

He that layeth aside the rules of faith, and measures all things by the rule of his own shallow reason, will be his own bugbear; if reason may be permitted to judge all things, and to make its own inferences and conclusions from the aspects and appearances of second causes, your hearts shall have no rest day nor night: this alone will keep you in continual alarms.

And yet how apt are the best men to measure things by this rule, and to judge of all God's designs and mysterious providences by it! In other things it is the judge and arbiter, and therefore we would make it so here too; and what it concludes and dictates we are prone to believe, because its dictates are backed and befriended by sense, whence it gathers its intelligence and information. O quam sapiens argumentatrix sibi videtur ratio humana? How wise and strong do its arguments and conclusions seem to us! saith Luther. This carnal reason is the thing that puts us into such confusions of mind and thoughts. It is this that,

1. Quarrels with the promises, shakes their credit, and our confidence in them, Exod. 5:22, 23.

2. It is this that boldly limits the divine power, and assigns it boundaries of its own fixing, Psal. 78:20, 41.

4. It is carnal reason that draws desperate conclusions from providential appearances and aspects, 1 Sam. 27:1. and prognosticates our ruin from them.

4. It is this carnal reason that puts us upon sinful shifts and indirect

courses to deliver and save ourselves from danger, which do but the more perplex and entangle us, Isa. 30:15, 16.

5. It is mostly from our arrogant reasonings that our thoughts are discomposed and divided; from this fountain it is that they flow into our hearts in multitudes when dangers are near, Psal. 94:16. and 42:1.

All these mischiefs owe themselves to the exorbitant actings and intrusions of our carnal reasons; but these things ought not to be so, this is beside rule. For,

1. Though there be nothing in the matters of faith or providence contrary to right reason, yet there are many things in both, quite above the reach, and beyond the ken of reason, Isa. 55:8. And,

2. The confident dictates of reason are frequently confuted by experience all the world over: it is every day made a liar, and the frights it puts us into, proved to be vain and groundless, Isa. 51:13.

Nothing can be better for us, than to resign up our reason to faith, to see all things through the promises, and trust God over all events.

Rule 12. To conclude, exalt the fear of God in your hearts, and let it gain the ascendant over all your other fears.

This is the prescription in my text for the cure of all our slavish fears, and indeed all the fore-mentioned rules for the cure of sinful fears run into this, and are reducible to it. For,

1. Doth the knowledge and application of the covenant of grace cure our fears? The fear of God is both a part of that covenant, and an evidence of our interest in it, Jer. 32:40.

2. Doth sinful fear plunge men into such distresses of conscience? Why, the fear of God will preserve your ways clean and pure, Psal. 19:9. and so those mischiefs will be prevented.

3. Doth foresight and provision for evil days prevent distracting fears when they come? Nothing like the fear of God enables us to such a

prevision and provision for them, Heb. 11:7.

4. Do we relieve ourselves against fear by committing all to God? Surely it is the fear of God that drives us to him as our only asylum and sure refuge, Mal. 3:16. They feared God, and thought upon his name, i.e. they meditated on his name, which was their refuge, his attributes their chambers of rest.

5. Must our affections to the world be mortified before our fears can be subdued? This is the instrument of mortification, Neh. 5:15.

6. Do the worthy examples of those that are gone before us, tend to the cure of our cowardice and fears? Why, the fear of God will provoke in you an holy self-jealousy, lest you fail of the grace they manifested, and come short of those excellent patterns, Heb. 12:15.

7. Is the assurance of interest in God, and the pardon of sin such an excellent antidote against slavish fear? Why, he that walks in the fear of God, shall walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost also, Acts 9:31.

8. Is integrity of heart and way such a fountain of courage in evil times? Know, reader, no grace promotes this integrity and uprightness more than the fear of God doth, Prov. 16:6. and 23:17.

9. Do the reviving of past experiences suppress sinful fears? No doubt this was the subject which the fear of God put them upon, for mutual encouragement, Mal. 3:16.

10. Are the providences of God in this world such cordials against fear? The fear of God is the very character and mark of those persons over whom his providence shall watch in the difficultest times, Eccles. 8:12.

11. Doth our trusting in our own reason, and making it our rule and measure, breed so many fears? Why, the fear of God will take men off from such self-confidence, and bring them to trust the faithful God with all doubtful issues, and events, as the very scope of my text fully manifests. Fear not their fear: their fear, moving by the direction of carnal reason, drove them not to God, but to the Assyrian for help. Follow

not you their example in this. But how shall they help it? Why, sanctify the Lord of Hosts, and make him your fear.

CHAPTER VII

Answering the most material pleas for slavish fears, and dissolving the common objections against courage and constancy of mind in times of danger.

THE pleas and excuses for our cowardly faintness in the day of trouble are endless, and so would his task be that should undertake particularly to answer them all. It is but the cutting off an Hydra's head, when one is gone, ten more start up; what is most material I will here take into consideration. When good men (for with such I am dealing in this chapter) see a formidable face and appearance of sharp and bloody times approaching them, they begin to tremble, their hearts faint, and their hands hang down with unbecoming despondency, and pusillanimity; their thoughts are so distracted, their reason and faith so clouded by their fears, that their temptations are thereby exceedingly strengthened upon them, and their principles and professions brought under the derision and contempt of their enemies: and if their brethren, to whom God hath given more courage and constancy, and who discern the mischief like to ensue from their uncomely carriage, admonish and advise them of it: they have abundance of pleas and defences for their fears, yea, when they reason the point of suffering in their own thoughts, and the matter is debated (as in such times it is common) betwixt faith and fear, O what endless work do their fears put upon their faith, to solve all the buts and ifs which their fears will object or suppose.

Some of the principal of them I think it worth while here to consider, and endeavour to satisfy, that, if possible, I may prevail with all gracious persons to be more magnanimous. And first of all.

Pleas

Plea 1. Sufferings for Christ are strange things to the Christians of this age, we have had the happy lot to fall into milder times than the primitive Christians did, or those that struggled in our own land in the beginning of reformation; and therefore we may be excused for our fears, by reason of our own unacquaintedness with sufferings in our times.

Answer 1. One fault is but a bad excuse for another, why are sufferings such strangers to you? Why did you not cast upon them in the days of peace, and reckon that such days must come? Did you not covenant with Christ to follow him whithersoever he should go, to take up your cross, and follow him? And did not the word plainly tell you, that "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution," 2 Tim. 3:12. "And that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God," Acts 14:22. Did we fall asleep in quiet and prosperous days, and dream of halcyon days all our time on earth? that the mountain of our prosperity stood strong, and we should never be moved? That we should die in our nest, and multiply our days as the sand; Babylon's children indeed dream so, Rev. 18:7. but the children of Sion should be better instructed. Alas! how soon may the brightest day be overcast? The weather is not so variable, as the state of the church in this world is; now a calm, Acts 9:31. and then a storm, Acts 12:1, 2. You could not but know what contingent and variable things all things on earth are; why then did you delude yourselves with such fond dreams? But as a learned man* rightly observes, *Mundus senescens patitur phantasias*. The older the world grows, the more drowsy and dotting it still grows, and these are the days in which the wise as well as the foolish virgins slumber. Sure it is but a bad plea, after so many warnings from the word, and from the rod to say, I did not think of such times, I dreamed not of them.

2. Or if you say, though you have conversed with death and sufferings by speculation, yet you lived not in such times wherein you might see (as other sufferers did) the encouraging faith, patience and zeal of others set before your eyes in a lively pattern and example. Sufferings were not only familiarized to them by frequency, but facilitated also by the daily examples of those that went before them.

But think you indeed that nothing but encouragement and advantage to followers, arose from the trials of those that went before? Alas, there were sometimes the greatest damps and discouragements imaginable; the zeal of those that followed have often been inflamed by the faintings of those that were tried before them. In the seventh persecution under Decius, anno 250, there were standing before the tribunal, certain of the warriors or knights, viz. Amnion, Zenon, Ptolomeus, Ingenuus, and a certain aged man called Theophilus, who all standing by as spectators when a certain Christian was examined, and there seeing him for fear, ready to decline, and fall away, did almost burst for sorrow within themselves: they made signs to him with their hands, and all gestures of the body to be constant; this being noted by all the standers by, they were ready to lay hold upon them; but they preventing the matter, pressed up of their own accord, before the bench of the judge, professing themselves to be Christians, insomuch that both the president and the benchers were all astonished, and the Christians which were judged, the more encouraged. Such damping spectacles the Christians of former ages had frequently set before them.

And it was no small trial to some of them, to hear the faintings and abnegation of those that went before them, pleaded against their constancy; as in the time of Valens, it was urged by the persecutors; Those that came to their trial before you, have acknowledged their errors, begged our pardon, and returned to us: and why will you stand it out so obstinately? But the Christians answered, *Nos hac potissimum ratione viriliter stabimus*, For this very reason we will stand to it the more manfully, to repair their scandal, by our greater courage for Christ. These were the helps and advantages they often had in those days, therefore lay not so much stress upon that; their courage undoubtedly flowed from an higher spring and better principle, than the company they suffered with.

3. And if precedents and experiences of others to break the ice before you, be so great an advantage, surely we that live in these latter times have the most and best helps of that nature that ever any people in the world had. You have all their examples recorded for your encouragement, and therefore think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, as though some strange thing had happened to you, as the apostle speaks, 1 Pet. 4:12. This

plea is weighed, and no great weight found in it.

Plea 2. But my nature is soft and tender, my constitution more weak and subject to the impressions of fear than others: some that have robust bodies, and hardy stout minds, may better grapple with such difficulties than I can, who by constitution and education, am altogether unfit to grapple with those torments, that I have not patience enough to hear related; my heart faints and dies within me, if I do but read, or hear of the barbarous usages of the martyrs, and therefore I may well be excused for my fears and faint-heartedness, when the case is like to be my own.

Answer 1. It is a great mistake to think that the mere strength of natural constitution, can carry any one through such sufferings for Christ, or that natural tenderness and weakness divinely assisted, cannot bear the heaviest burden that ever God laid upon the shoulders of any sufferer for Christ. Our suffering and bearing abilities are not from nature, but from grace. We find men of strong bodies and resolute daring minds, have fainted in the time of trial. Dr. Pendleton, in our own story, was a man of a robust and massy body, and a resolute daring mind; yet when he came to the trial, he utterly fainted and fell off. On the other side, what poor feeble bodies have sustained the greatest torments, and out of weakness have been made strong! Heb. 11:34. The virgin Eulalia, of Emerita in Portugal, was young and tender, but twelve years old, and with much indulgence and tenderness brought up in an honourable family, being a person of considerable quality; yet how courageously did she sustain the most cruel torments for Christ! When the judge fawned upon her with this tempting language, "Why wilt thou kill thyself, so young a flower, and so near those honourable marriages and great dowries thou mightest enjoy?" Instead of returning a retracting or double answer, Eulalia threw down the idol, and spurned abroad with her feet the heap of incense prepared for the censers; and when the executioner came to her, she entertained him with this language:* "Go to, thou hangman, burn, cut, mangle thou these earthly members; it is an easy matter to break a brittle substance, but the inward mind thou shalt not hurt." And when one joint was pulled from another, she said, "Behold what a pleasure it is for them, oh Christ! that remember thy triumphant victories, to attain unto those high dignities." So that our constitutional strength is not to be made the

measure of our passive fortitude: God can make the feeblest and tenderest persons stand, when strong bodies, and blustering, resolute, and daring minds faint and fall.

2. Are our bodies so weak, and hearts so tender, that we can bear no suffering for Christ? Then we are no way fit to be his followers. Christianity is a warfare, and Christians must endure hardships, 2 Tim. 2:3. Delicacy and tenderness is as odd a sight in a Christian, as it is in a soldier; and we cannot be Christ's disciples, except we deliberate the terms, and having considered well what it is like to cost us, do resolve, in the strength of God, to run the hazard of all with him and for him. It is in vain to talk of a religion that we think not worthy the suffering and enduring any great matter for.

3. And if indeed, reader, thy constitution be so delicate and tender, that thou art not able to bear the thoughts of torments for Christ, how is it that thou art not more terrified with the torments of hell, which all they that deny Christ on earth must feel and bear eternally? Oh, what is the wrath of man, in comparison with the wrath of God? but as the bite of a flea to the rendings of a lion. This is the consideration propounded by Christ, in Matth. 10:28. "Fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." The infinite and insupportable wrath of the great and terrible God, should make our souls shrink and shake at the thoughts of it, rather than the sufferings of the flesh, which are but for a moment.

4. Know that the wisdom and tenderness of thy Father will proportion the burden thou must bear to thy back that must bear, it; he will debate in measure, and not overload thy feeble shoulders: thou shalt find those things easy in trial, that now seem insupportable in the terrible prospect; a way of escape or support will certainly be opened, that thou mayest be able to bear it.

Plea 3. But others plead the sad experiences they have had of their own feebleness and weakness in former trials and exercises of an inferior nature, in which their faith and patience hath failed them: and how can they imagine they shall ever be able to stand in the fiercest and most fiery trial? If we have run with the footmen, and they have wearied us in the

land of peace, how shall we then contend with horses in the swellings of Jordan, Jer. 12:5.

Answer 1. We are strong or weak in all our trials, be they great or small, according to the assisting grace we receive from above; if he leave us in a common and light trial to our own strength, it will be our over-match, and if he assist us in great and extraordinary trials, we shall be more than conquerors. At one time Abraham could offer up his only son to God with his own hand; at another time he is so afraid of his life, that he acts very unsuitably to the character of a believer, and was shamefully rebuked for it by Abimelech. At one time David could say, Though an host encamp against me, I will not fear; at another time he feigns himself mad, and acted beneath himself, both as a man, and as a man enriched with so much faith and experience. At one time Peter is afraid to be interrogated by a maid; at another time he could boldly confront the whole council, and own Christ and his truths to their faces. In extraordinary trials we may warrantably expect extraordinary assistances, and by them we shall be carried through the greatest, how often soever we have failed in smaller trials.

2. The design and end of God's giving us experience of our own weakness in lesser troubles, is not to discourage and daunt us against we come to greater, (which is the use Satan here makes of it,) but to take us off from self-confidence and self-dependence; to make us see our own weakness, that we may more heartily and humbly betake ourselves to him in the way of faith and fervent supplication.

Plea 4. But some will object that they cannot help their fears and tremblings when any danger appears; because fear is the disease, at least the sad effect and symptom of disease, with which God hath wounded them: a deep and fixed melancholy hath so far prevailed, that the least trouble overcomes them; if any sad afflictive providence befall, or but threaten them, their fears presently rise, and their hearts sink, sleep departs, thoughts tumultuate, the blood boils, and the whole frame of nature is put into disorder. If therefore the Lord should permit such great and dreadful trials to befall them, they can think of nothing less than dying by the hand of their own fears, before the hand of any enemy touch them; or, which is a thousand times worse, be driven by their own fears

into the net of temptation, even to deny the Lord that bought them.

Answer. This I know is the sad case of many gracious persons, and I have reason to pity those that are thus exercised: O it is a heavy stroke, a dismal state, a deep wound indeed: but yet the wisdom of God hath ordered this affliction upon his people for gracious ends and uses; hereby they are made the more tender and watchful, circumspect and careful in their ways, that they may shun and escape as many occasions of trouble as they can, being so unable to grapple with them. I say not but there are higher and nobler motives that make them circumspect and tender, but yet the preservation of our own quietness is useful in its place, and it is a mercy if that or any thing else be sanctified to prevent sin, and promote care of duty. This is your clog to keep you from straying.

2. And when you shall be called forth to greater trials, that which you now call your snare, may be your advantage, and that in divers respects.

1. These very distempers of body and mind serve to imbitter the comforts and pleasures of this world to you, and make life itself less desirable to you than it is to others; they much wean your hearts from, and make life more burdensome to you than it is to others, who enjoy more of the pleasure and sweetness of it than you can do. I have often thought this to be one design and end of providence, in permitting such distempers to seize so many gracious persons as labour under them; and providence knows how to make use of this effect to singular purpose and advantage to you, when a call to suffering shall come; this may have its place and use under higher and more spiritual considerations, to facilitate death, and make your separation from this world the more easy to you*; for though it be a more noble and raised act of faith and self-denial to offer up to God our lives, when they are made most pleasant and desirable to us upon natural accounts, yet it is not so easy to part with them as it is when God hath first imbittered them to us. Your lives are of little value to you now, because of this burdensome clog you must draw after you, but if you should increase your burden by so horrid an addition of guilt, as the denying Christ or his known truths would do, you would not know what to do with such a life; it would certainly lie upon your hands as a burthen. God knows how to use these things in the way of his providence to your great advantage.

2. Art thou a poor melancholy and timorous person? Certainly if thou be gracious as well as timorous, this will drive thee nearer to God; and the greater thy dangers are, the more frequent and fervent will thy addresses to him be: thou feelest the need of everlasting arms underneath thee to bear thee up under, and to carry thee through smaller troubles, that other persons make nothing of, much more in such deep trials, that put the strongest Christians to the utmost of their faith and patience.

And 3dly, What if the Lord will make an advantage out of your weakness, to display more evidently his own power in your support? You know what the apostle saith, 1 Cor. 12:9, 10. "And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness: most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me—for when I am weak then am I strong." If his infirmities might serve as a foil to set off the grace of God with a more bright and sparkling lustre, he would rejoice in his infirmities, and so should you: Well then, let not this discourage you, the infirmity of nature you complain of may make death the less terrible; it served to that purpose to blessed Basil, (as you heard before) when his enemy threatened to tear out his liver, he thought it a kindness to have that liver torn out, that had given him so much trouble. It may drive thee nearer to God, and minister a fit opportunity for the display of his grace in the time of need.

Plea 5. But what if God should hide his face from my soul in the day of my straits and troubles, and not only so, but permit Satan to buffet me with his horrid temptations and injections, and so I should sail like the ship in which Paul sailed, betwixt these two boisterous seas; what can I suspect less than a shipwreck of my soul, body, and all the comforts of both, in this world and in that to come?

Answer 1. So far as the fears of such a misery awaken you to pray for the prevention of it, it may be serviceable to your souls, but when it only works distraction and despondency of mind, it is your sin and Satan's snare. The prophet Jeremiah made a good use of such a supposed evil by way of deprecation, Jer. 17:17. "Be not a terror unto me, thou art my hope in the day of evil." q. d. in the evil day I have no place of retreat or refuge,

but thy love and favour; Lord, that is all I have to depend on, and relieve myself by: I comfort myself against trouble with this confidence, that if men be cruel, yet thou wilt be kind; if they frown, thou wilt smile; if the world cast me out, thou wilt take me in; but if thou shouldest be a terror to me instead of a comforter, if they afflict my body, and thou affright my soul with thy frowns too; what a deplorable condition shall I be in then! Improve it to such an end as he did, to secure the favour of God, and it will do you no harm.

2. It is not usual for God to estrange himself from his people in trouble, nor to frown upon them when men do. The common evidence of believers stands ready to attest and seal this truth, that Christians never find more kindness from God than when they feel most cruelty from men for his sake; consult the whole cloud of witnesses, and you will find they have still found the undoubted verity of that tried word, in 1 Pet. 4:14. That "the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon sufferers." The expression seems to allude to the dove that Noah sent forth out of the ark, which flew over the watery world, but could not rest herself any where till she returned to the ark. So the Spirit of God is called here the Spirit of glory, from his effects and fruits, viz. his cheering, sealing, and reviving influences which make men glory and triumph in the most afflicted state. The Spirit of God seems, like that dove, to hover up and down, to flee hither and thither, over this person and that, but resteth not so long upon any, as those that suffer for righteousness sake; there he commonly takes up his abode and residence.

3. And what if it should fall out in some respect according to your fears, that heaven and earth should be both clouded together? Yet it will not be long before the pleasant light will spring up to you again, Psal. 112:4. "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." You shall have his supporting presence till the Comforter do come. When Mr. Glover came within sight of the stake, he suddenly cries out, Oh Austin! he is come! he is come.

Plea 6. Oh! but what if my trial should be long, and the siege of temptations tedious? Then I am persuaded I am lost; I am no way able to continue long in a prison, or in tortures for Christ, I have no strength to endure a long siege, my patience is too short to hold out from month to

month, and from year to year as many have done. Oh! I dread the thoughts of long continued trials, I tremble to think what must be the issue.

Answer 1. Cannot you distrust your own strength and ability, but you must also limit God's? What if you have but a small stock of patience? Cannot the Lord strengthen you with all might in the inner-man, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness, according to his glorious power, Col. 1:11. And is it not his promise to confirm you to the end? 1 Cor. 1:8. You neither know how much, nor how long you can bear and suffer. It is not inherent, but assisting grace, by which your suffering abilities are to be measured. God can make that little stock of patience you have to hold out as the poor widow's cruse of oil did, till deliverance come; he can enable your patience unto its perfect work, i.e. to work as extensively to all the kinds and sorts of trials, as intensively to the highest degree of trial, and as protensively to the longest duration and continuance of your trials as he would have it: if this be a marvellous thing in your eyes, must it be so in God's eyes also?

2. The Lord knows the proper season to come in to the relief of your sliding and fainting patience, and will assuredly come in accordingly in that season; for so run the promises, "The Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants when he seeth that their power is gone, and that there is none shut up or left," Deut. 32:36. Cum duplicantur lateres venit Moses; in the mount of difficulties and extremities it shall be seen. "The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity," Psal. 125:3. Ubi definit humanum, ibi incipit divinum auxilium; God's power watches the opportunity of your weakness.

Plea 7. But what if I should be put to cruel and exquisite tortures, suppose to the rack, to the fire, or such most dreadful sufferings as other Christians have been? What shall I do? Do I think I am able to bear it? Is my strength the strength of stone, or are my bones brass, that ever I should endure such barbarous cruelties? Alas! Death in the mildest form is terrible to me: how terrible then must such a death be?

Answer. Who enabled those Christians you mention to endure these

things? They loved their lives, and sensed their pains as well as you, they had the same thoughts and fears, many of them, that you now have; yet God carried them through all, and so he can you. Did not he make the devouring flames a bed of roses to some of them? Was he not within the fires? Did he not abate the extremity of the torment, and enable weak and tender persons to endure them patiently and cheerfully? Some singing in the midst of flames, others clapping their hands triumphantly, and to the last sight that could be had of them in this world, nothing appeared but signs and demonstrations of joy unspeakable. Ah friends! we judge of sufferings by the out-side and appearance, which is terrible; but we know not the inside of sufferings which is exceeding comfortable. Oh! when shall we have done with our unbelieving ifs and buts, our questionings and doubtings of the power, wisdom, and tender care of our God over us, and learn to trust him over all. Now the just shall live by faith; and he that lives by faith shall never die by fear. The more you trust God, the less you will torment yourselves. I have done; the Lord strengthen, stablish, and settle the trembling and feeble hearts of his people, by what hath been so seasonably offered for their relief by a weak hand. Amen.

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