

## AN ESSAY ON THE VARIOUS FEARS TO WHICH GOD'S PEOPLE ARE LIABLE.

*"Within were fears" - 2 Cor. vii. 5.*

Fear is, properly speaking, that uneasiness of mind, which arises from the apprehension of some impending evil.

Spiritually taken, fear, as it respects God for its object, is of two kinds; legal and evangelical: i. e. law fear, and gospel fear.

Legal fear is an horror, occasioned by the mere expectation of punishment, without any mixture of love to the punisher. Such is the fear of the apostate angels; and such the fear, which agitates reprobate souls, when conscience is let loose, and when the thunderings and lightnings of God's fiery law set themselves in array against the haters of Christ. - On the contrary,

Evangelical fear is peculiar to God's regenerate people; and consists in a melting humiliation for sin; accompanied, at times, especially in secret prayer, with gracious groanings which cannot be uttered; with a degree of self-abhorrence, and of self-renunciation; with a longing for the favour, the resemblance, and the presence of God, in the soul. And all this, not from a mere wish to avoid punishment; but likewise from a concern for having lost the image of God's holiness, for having crucified the Saviour of sinners, and for having grieved and been estranged from the adorable Spirit of grace. It is easy to observe, that here is a strong mixture of love toward all the persons of the Trinity: and it is by this love (though perhaps weak as a burning thread, and small as a grain of mustard-seed) that evangelical fear is chiefly distinguished from legal. The latter is the unaffectionate awe of an indignant slave, who is forced to submit against his will, who hates the hand that strikes, who loves nothing but ease, and dreads nothing but the lash. While the sinner, who experiences the fear which is evangelical, abhors sin for its own sake, as contrary to the nature and command of the blessed God; and abhors himself, for sin's sake, and because he is the subject of that detested principle which sets him at so great distance from the moral likeness of infinite purity and excellence.

Concerning legal fear, we read, that there is no fear [i. e. no fear of that kind] in love: for perfect love casteth out fear: meaning, that the sense of God's love is no sooner shed abroad with full lustre and efficacy in the soul; than legal fear vanishes away, and continues extinct, during the shine of God's Spirit on the conscience. Concerning evangelical fear, we read, Blessed is the man that

feareth always; who is tenderly solicitous to avoid any thing and every thing, which may render him spiritually unlike that holy, glorious, and gracious Being, whom he ardently wishes to resemble, and hold communion with.

But, beside this filial, salutary fear, which is one grand mark of regeneration; a believer, while he sojourns upon earth, is liable to fears of a mixed heterogeneous kind, which seem to be partly legal and partly evangelical. To this head may be referred anxious doubtings, painful misgivings, and the evil surmisings of remaining unbelief. These are occasioned, directly and immediately, by the imperfection of inherent grace below: and remotely, by the permissive appointment of God, who has decreed that perfect happiness must be waited for till we get home to heaven. Were our graces complete, our bliss would be complete too: in which case, we should no longer be men, but angels. For a saint made perfect is an angel of the highest order, and a perfection of grace is glory itself.

In the meanwhile, it is even needful for the Christian traveller to be exercised with a thorn in the flesh; and to be at times in such a state, as may convince him that earth is not his rest, or a mount whereon to pitch tabernacles of continuance; that he must carry his cross, before he receives his crown; that he must combat, before he conquers; and sow in tears, antecedently to his reaping in joy. I believe from scripture, from observation, and from experience, that all God's people do occasionally pass under the cloud, and are baptized unto Christ in the cloud and in the sea of spiritual darkness and distress. Jesus himself, though he had no sin, was thus baptized. All thy waves and storms (said David, in the person of the Messiah, and addressing himself to God the Father) are gone over me. Even from my youth up, thy terrors have I suffered with a troubled mind.

No wonder then that the members should be sprinkled with those waters, which were poured in torrents on the mystic head. And let the suffering members of Christ's elect body remember, to their great and endless comfort, that even tormenting fears are perfectly consistent with the reality of grace. This was the Psalmist's state, and the Psalmist's experience: Though I am sometimes afraid, yet put I my trust in thee.

Hence it is evident, that faith and fear, though not good friends, are sometimes very near neighbours; yea, that they often lodge in one house, i. e. in one and the same heart. Indeed, they seldom appear together: for when the one walks abroad, the other usually keeps close within doors. When faith is alert and active, fear hangs its head and pines. When fear is lively, faith takes to its

bed and languishes. So strong is the antipathy of the two principles, that the sickness of one is the health of the other.

They are perpetually quarrelling and skirmishing. And though fear now and then gives faith an home thrust, faith will most certainly (and sometimes she knows it) get the better at last, and survive her adversary. Yet, though faith will infallibly outlive fear, faith is not immortal. She too must die, and that by God's own hand: for she is so strong, even when weakest, that none can deprive her of existence, but he that gave it. Her death will be a willing and a delightful one. When the hour comes, she herself will not wish to live a moment longer. The soul, in which she dwells, being severed from its body, and taken up to heaven; faith gladly and triumphantly expires, under the meridian blaze of sight. In the meanwhile, there are times, when, brightening into full assurance, she longs for her own annihilation, and is even straightened until it be accomplished. At length, having acted as the believer's companion and guide through the wilderness, she sees him safe to the threshold of heaven: and, the very instant he steps over that threshold, and enters within the vail, she takes her leave of him for ever.

As to fear, though she may, in some believers, keep pace with faith, and even outrun faith, during the greatest part of the earthly race; yet the waters of death (if she die not before) will kill her effectually and finally. The mere prospect of that stream may perhaps give her fresh vivacity and strength; but no sooner does she begin actually to touch that water, than she expires; and the renewed soul, which had been, through her means, all its lifetime subject to bondage, passes the river with courage, serenity, and joy. Holy desire cuts the cable. Faith hoists the flag. Prayer spreads the sail, and God's Spirit breathes the auspicious breeze. All the graces of the heart are in exercise, and ply their oars to the music of hovering angels. The dividing waters present a smooth expanse for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over. All is harmony. All is bliss. And thus does the precious freight, the disembodied soul, land in triumph, on the golden coast; and, hardly staying to take a view of her dead enemies on the opposite shore, makes directly to the presence of God, and to the throne of him that was slain.

Unwillingly I return to earth, and withdrawing my mind from a contemplation of the glory that shall be revealed, descend to consider the various fears to which all God's converted people, and myself among the rest, are subject, while imprisoned in a body of clay.

Within are fears. For that sorceress, whose name is fear, can transform herself into a multiplicity of shapes, though she is in reality, the same identical hag in all.

Sometimes she assumes the mantle of pretended humility; and whispers, that "we must not give absolute credit to God's covenant and promises, nor aspire to the comfort and enjoyment of them, for fear of being presumptuous."

Anon, she wears the mask of caution: "Do not rejoice in God's election, and in Christ's righteousness, for fear of being a self-deceiver." Whereas, in reality, all who can embrace the free favour of God, and all who can lay hold on the righteousness of Christ, have a covenant right to both. And why should not they who have a right to these, rejoice in the God to whose rich and immutable grace they are indebted for it?

At another time, fear accosts us in the garb of affected holiness; "You must bring," says she, "a price in your hand, to God the Father; or Christ's redemption will profit you nothing. Do not undervalue yourself, by supposing that you can do no good work before you are justified. I tell you, that you must work for life and justification. You must do good works, in order to be accepted; and fulfil a string of terms and conditions, seeing you are to be saved for your works, because of your works, yea, according to the merits of your works." But thou, O believer in Christ, flee these abominable doctrines. Harken not to them, as you value the glory of God, the freeness of grace, the riches of Christ, the interests of real holiness, and your own happiness. Remember that the conditions of fallen man's salvation are two, and no more: namely, perfect atonement for sin, and perfect obedience to the law. Both these conditions Christ has completely fulfilled, in the stead, and for the infallible salvation, of every soul that comes to his blood for cleansing, and to his righteousness for clothing. "To what end, then, serves faith?" To let thee into the knowledge, possession, and enjoyment of this free and finished redemption. "And to what end serve good works?" Not to entitle us to God's favour, or even to pave (much less to pay) our way to his kingdom: but to glorify his name, to adorn his gospel, to evidence our adoption, and benefit others on our road to heaven.

Fear very frequently mimics the voice of prudence; and advises us, as a friend, "Not to bring odium and inconveniences upon ourselves, by too strict a moral walk, and by a too resolute assertion of the doctrines of Christ." How bitterly did poor Peter weep for having listened to this syren song! And what rending agonies of heart did he feel for his sham prudence, after the arrow of recovering grace, shot from the eye of Christ, had pierced his inmost soul! O

thou almighty Son of God, save thy people from the fear of man. Not only pray for us, as thou didst for Peter, that our faith fail not (and thy prayer was heard: for his faith itself failed not, though his *(d)* profession of it did); but pray also, in our behalf, that our faith may never even seem to fail.

*(d) Defecit quidem professio in ore, non autem fides in corde. - Augustin*

Fear is sometimes apt to beset those, who, of all persons in the world, should have nothing to do with it, unless to trample it under their feet. I mean, the ministers of God's word. O ye standard-bearers of the Most High, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Good Mrs. Ayscough, who was burned for the protestant faith, when she was offered her pardon at the stake, on condition she would renounce the truth, cried out, with holy indignation, I did not come hither to deny my Lord and master. I desire to remember her words, every time I ascend the pulpit. A mincing, timid, partial declaration of the gospel, is a virtual denial of Christ himself. Rather die, with the gospel standard in your hands, than resign a thread of it to the enemy: like heroic Valasco, the Spanish general, who, when the Havannah was taken by the English, scorned to surrender the national flag, and nobly expired with his colours wrapped round his arm. But there are seasons of personal dryness and darkness, when fear, like an armed man, assaults the faith and liveliness of God's ambassadors. They are perhaps at a loss even for a subject to preach from. All resources seem to be shut up. They flit in their own minds, from text to text, and for a long time, can fix on none. They cry, in secret, Lord, how can we spread the table for thy people, except thou bring the venison to our hands? or, with the disciples of old, whence shall we have bread for the multitude here in the wilderness? "The dear people flock to the word, as doves to their windows; and we, alas, have little or nothing to feed them with." At such times of doubt and barrenness, cast yourself at large upon God, and distribute the word as you are enabled. In all probability, the fishes and the loaves will increase in your hands, and God will administer bread enough and to spare. It is kind and wise in the holy Spirit, to make us feel that we are nothing, and that the excellency of the power is of him and not of us. The lesson of dependence upon his arm of grace alone, is profitable, though not always palatable, to our proud, deceitful hearts. To the glory of the divine faithfulness, I say it, that, for my own part, some of my happiest pulpit opportunities have been, when I have gone up the stairs with trembling knees and a dejected spirit: nay (twice or thrice in my life-time) when I have been so far reduced, as to be unable to fix on a text, till the psalm or hymn was almost over. These are not desirable trials: but they redound, however, to the praise of him, who has said, Without me ye can do nothing; and

whose almighty love can elicit light out of darkness, even out of darkness that may be felt.

On the whole, let all God's people, both ministers and private Christians, come to the Lord by prayer, for deliverance from the fears that do most easily beset them. Bind them up in a bundle, and throw them at the foot of the cross, and implore God's Spirit to shine them away. Be humbled on account of them; but not discouraged. Proclaim eternal hostility against unbelieving fear, in all its branches: but know, that it is God who must teach your hands to war, and your fingers to fight.

No man appears to have been more subject to fears and cares, than David: though he had been enabled to vanquish a lion, and to slay a giant. What course did he take for relief, in his hours of distress and tremor? He prayed to him that is mighty to save. And his success was answerable. I sought the Lord, and he heard me: yea, he delivered me out of all my fears.

Several of the fears to which God's people are exposed, have already been considered. The enumeration of a few more, shall conclude the subject.

1. Weak believers are sometimes apt to be afraid, that they are not in the number of God's elect. They can indeed say with David, "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee:" but they are not clearly satisfied, that this blessedness is theirs.

For my own part, I look upon it as one of the best symptoms of a regenerate state, when a person is ardently desirous to know his election of God. It is an enquiry, which the generality of mankind never trouble themselves about; and which none but a true believer is concerned for in earnest. We read of some, in the Acts of the Apostles, who had never heard of such a person as the Holy Ghost: and, I fear, there are too many who have hardly ever heard whether there be such a thing as eternal, gratuitous, personal, and immutable election. Of those who have, too many set themselves to oppose it: and labour (though blessed be God, they labour in vain) to stop up the very fountain of salvation, and to cut down that tree of life, whose leaves and fruits are for the healing of the nations. A fierce free-will sister in Cornwall was lately heard to say, that she dreaded to open the Bible, for fear of meeting with predestination and election. And it has been affirmed, of a very noted Arminian clergyman, that he should, one day, address his audience as follows: Brethren, many people talk about an electing God. I, on the contrary, assert, that there is no such being. If there is an electing God, why does he not strike me dead before you all? But you see, my brethren, I am not struck dead. Therefore, there is no electing God.

Very different are the ideas of Christ's humbled, awakened servants. When a ray of God's everlasting love shines in upon their hearts, they cry out, with the royal and devout predestinarian of ancient Israel, "How dear are thy counsels," i.e. thy purposes and decrees, "to me, O God! Oh, how great is the sum," i. e. how inestimable is the value "of them! If I should declare them, or speak of them, they are more than I am able to express." The Lord has some, yea, many names, even in our Sardis, who not only profess to believe the scriptures of truth, but also make good their profession, by believing, and by practically adoring, the truths of the scriptures. Such enlightened persons will ever be desirous not barely to admit those truths, in a mere doctrinal way alone; but to experience the efficacy of them, and to be feelingly interested in the blessings themselves.

Granting, however, that thousands of converted people have not attained to those heights of exalted consolation, as to be able to say, with an unfaltering tongue, "Thou hast chosen me, and not cast me away:" yet is there some secret comfort even in waiting upon God for the joy of his salvation, in seeking the light of his countenance, and in crediting the truths and promises of the gospel at large. To those who are by grace, led thus far, I would beg leave to propose the following questions, without presuming to wade more deeply into the sacred profound of those decrees which lie hid in God, than his written word permits. By way then, of combating your fears, let me ask:

Art thou desirous of choosing God in Christ to be thy Father, thy portion, and thy covenant God, here and ever? If you are, it is one happy proof that God has chosen thee to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. You could not choose him, if he had not first chosen you.

Is love to God, in any measure, kindled in thy heart? Or, if you are in any doubt as to this, do you wish to love him? Would you be glad to receive him, to embrace him, and to hold him fast, as your chief and only good? Take courage. Wishing is a degree of love. No man ever wished for the thing which he altogether hated. A wisher for Christ, is a lover of Christ. And you could not love him, if he had not first loved you. Wishing is a fruit of the Father's drawings.

Is the law of God written on thy mind? That is, can you say with the apostle, that "to will is present with you," and that you "delight in the law of God, after the inner man?" Would it make you easy and happy, and would you have the supreme desire of your heart, were you to be holy as God is holy, and pure as Christ is pure? Then you may add, as the apostle does, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ." The Lord would not thus have written his law (however

imperfectly at present) upon thy heart, if the pen of his own free grace had not first written thy name in the book of life.

This is a blessed consideration: and as sure as it is blessed. Yet, stop not here: but pray for the witness of the holy Spirit, to bear unclouded testimony to thy spirit, that thou art a child of God. Say, as the Psalmist did, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest to thy own people! O visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice with the gladness of thy nation, and give thanks with thine inheritance." Wait the appointed time: and God will set that promise, as a seal, upon thy heart; "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee: I have called thee by thy name: thou art mine."

2. Saints are subject to another fear: viz. that they are not truly converted, and that their spot is not the spot of God's children. Nor do I wonder, that, when grace is not in lively exercise, they are liable to apprehensions of this kind: when I consider man's absolute unworthiness, even in his best estate; and that astonishing mixture of good and evil, which is more or less visible in saints below.

Though I am by no means an advocate for doubting; I am yet of opinion, that, through the alchymy of divine wisdom, even doubts and fears, though not desirable in themselves, are ultimately subservient to the advantage of God's chosen: just as in the material world, not a thorn is without its use, and every bramble has its value.

Spiritual distresses and misgivings have a tendency, through grace, to keep us sensible of our sinfulness and helplessness (as Paul's temptations clipt the wings of his pride, and restrained him from being exalted above measure). They conduce to make us watchful and circumspect; to make us feel the pulse of our souls, by frequent and severe self-examination; to kindle longing aspirations after God and communion with him; to lay us low at the footstool of Jehovah's sovereignty; to endear Christ's blood, righteousness, and intercession; and put us upon looking up to the holy Spirit in prayer, for the support of his presence, and for the unction of his comforts, which alone are able to enlighten and to chase away the darkness of our minds.

There is likewise another particular, which ought to encourage the mourners in Zion: namely, that it is impossible for any, who have not been spiritually quickened from above, to pant for God as a thirsty land; to grieve, evangelically, from a heart-felt sense of sin; and to be pained, after a godly sort. A good man, of the last century, somewhere observes, that "He who cries out, I am dead; proves himself by that very cry, to be alive." Can a dead person feel?

Can a dead man complain? A believer may lament his deadness; but he cannot lament his death, without his lips refuting themselves. There must be spiritual life, or there could be no spiritual sensibility, no spiritual motion, no spiritual breathings. The pregnant woman that longs, must be alive. If the Lord had not drawn you, you would not follow hard after him. Nor could you say, "The desire of my soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee;" unless God's Spirit had awakened that desire in your heart. If you was not truly converted, you would not be so anxious about the truth of your conversion. It is not the untamed bird of prey, that pours the plaintive strain. No: it is the dove that mourns: it is the nightingale that sings with her breast against a thorn.

However, though a weeping state is a safe one, and not without its advantages; yet there is a still more excellent way. The diffident should be encouraged: but diffidence itself should not. Covet earnestly the best gifts. Aspire to the choicest attainments. Pray for unclouded manifestations. Cultivate spiritual fellowship with God, in all the means of grace, both private and public. Endeavour to drink deep into holiness, and to be fruitful in every good word and work. Conversation with experienced Christians operates frequently as a step to gracious improvements. God's people are sometimes blessed to the rubbing off the rust of unbelief, and to the mutual elision of light and heat from each other. - Lay hold on Christ, as well as you can, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: committing yourself, for better for worse, to his grace, which worketh all in all. Thus it would be evident, that you are indeed planted in the Lord's house, and belong to that invisible church which he purchased with his own blood. Nay, you will gradually flourish in the courts of God, grow as the lily, and cast forth the root as Lebanon. Your conversion will be made clear to you. You will see your tokens. You will no longer have reason to doubt, whether the good work of grace is begun in you: but your path, like a burning light, will shine more and more (in general) to the perfect day.

3. Believers are sometimes prone to fear, that they have no real covenant interest in Christ; or, that they are not in a state of pardon and justification. "Oh," says the doubting Christian, "if I could but know that I have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of my sins; that Christ undertook for me, in the eternal covenant of grace, and that he is the Lord my righteousness; I should be happy indeed: but, alas! such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me; I cannot attain unto it." Be it so, that you cannot attain to it: God is not the less able to give it. He can, as the apostle expresses it, not only grant you, but even fill you with "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." Therefore, if you want assurance of salvation, ask it at the throne. But ask it with submission, and with a reserve to

the will of God. Do not let your ultimate desires terminate in any thing short of God himself; nor so hang upon comforts, as to overlook the Comforter. Assurances are the brightest bridal jewels of a soul that is married to Christ: but the bridegroom himself is better than the jewels he gives; nor does he in general, allow his bride to shine in them every day. He keeps them under his own key, and lets her wear them when he pleases. At worst, remember that he is your husband still, and the God who changes not. Venture yourself, therefore, on board his blood and righteousness, as a mariner trusts himself to the vessel in which he embarks. Do this, and you shall be carried safe to the haven where you would be. You may be shaken on your passage, but not forsaken; tost, but not lost. The mediation of Christ, the faithfulness of your covenant Father, and the never failing love of the Holy Ghost, will bear you up, and bear you home. No man ever suffered final shipwreck, who ventured his soul, his salvation, his all, on that bottom. If you cannot wrap yourself up in the mantle of Christ's righteousness, with an assured faith; yet, if you touch but the hem of his garment, with a weak faith, with a faith of longing and desire, or even (if I may so speak) with the very tip of faith's little finger; you have a capital evidence of interest in him. "As an infirm hand," says an excellent person, "can tie the marriage-knot; so a weak faith can lay hold on a strong Christ."

4. The Lord's people are frequently harrassed with a fear, that the work of sanctification, in their souls, is either not begun, or at a dead stand: that they do not increase with the increase of God, nor resemble him in holiness more and more.

If any fear may be called a good fear, this may: supposing it do not flow from a principle of legality, and be not carried too far. It is a blessed sign, when we mourn under a sense of our short-comings, and burn with intense desire to rise higher into the likeness of God. For this also, seek unto him. He is also to accomplish in you all the good pleasure of his will, and the work of faith with power. If he give you grace, to put yourself as a blank into his hand; his Spirit will delineate his sacred image upon your soul, and, in the article of death, heighten the outlines, and finish the sketch, into his own perfect likeness. Be diligent to use all the appointed means of sanctification, which providence favours you with. Be careful to shun all evil, and the very appearance of it. Walk in the path of duty, marked out by the written word. Nor need you fear God's making good his covenant of promise, by making you such as he would have you to be. Be not discouraged, but rather excited to hope, to pray, and to believe, by the sense of your remaining corruptions. "The field," as one says, "that has millions of weeds in it, may be a corn-field. One rose upon a bush,

though but a little one, and though not yet blown, proves that which bears it to be a true rose-tree." Despise not then, the day of small things; but pray God to enlarge them. - Bless him even for the grain of mustard-seed: but, at the same time, beg his Spirit to water and increase it.

5. The fear of temptation keeps many of God's people in bondage. And happy are we, if we so fly from it, as to shut our eyes and ears and hearts against it. We know not what we are, nor what we are capable of, if left to ourselves. Yet do not let the fear of what may be, cast a damp upon your present comforts, nor abate your confidence in the Lord. Prudent fear is wisdom; but much fear is unbelief. A believer cannot trust in himself too little; and, blessed be God, he cannot trust too much in the all-sufficiency of divine grace. If, therefore, you are cast down, by a sense of your liableness to temptations, and of your proneness to fall by them; bring your temptations and your weakness together to God the holy Spirit; and beseech him to get himself the victory in you, over you, and for you. Let watchfulness and prayer thus set a guard upon the outworks; and Jesus will throw in the succours of grace, and preserve the citadel from being taken by the enemy. He is faithful, and will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear. He will either hide you in his pavilion, and keep you from the fiery trial; or, if he bring you into the field, he will save you from being overpowered. The archers may sorely grieve you, and shoot at you; yet shall your bow abide in strength, and the arms of your hands be made strong by the mighty God of Jacob.

But, should the enemy of souls be even permitted to gain some advantage over you for a season, yet, cast not away your confidence; but look to the hills of covenant love, from whence cometh your help. Christ will deliver you, as at the first; and restore you, as at the beginning. What was prophesied concerning Gad (Gen 49:19) shall be spiritually fulfilled in you: a troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last.

6. A sixth fear occasions no small uneasiness to weak believers: namely, a fear lest they should not be faithful unto death, nor hold on in grace to the end. But if God has given thee good evidences of thy being truly regenerated, and of thy being his child through faith in Christ Jesus; thou mayest, upon the strength of thy adoption, be as certain of thy final perseverance, as if thy warfare was actually accomplished, and the crown of glory set upon thy head.

The invisible, or elect church, consists of only one and the same innumerable family; part of which is in heaven, and part on earth (Eph 3:15.) Every individual member of this family, whether militant below, or triumphant above, is equally safe in the hands of Christ. Saints in glory are, indeed, happier than

saints on earth: but saints on earth are no less eventually secure of salvation, than saints in glory. The spirits of just men made perfect might as soon fall from their state of heavenly blessedness, as a sanctified person here fall from a state of grace. The names of both are in the book of life. They are alike interested in God's everlasting and unalterable covenant. What the Father's love has given to the glorified, will be also given to them that are yet behind: for to this end Christ died and rose again, that he might gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad; (John 2:52) and by the single offering of himself, he has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Saints are not their own keepers; and it is well for them that they are not; they would be sorrily kept, if they were. Adam was his own keeper; and what did he get by it? The fallen angels were their own keepers. Peter kept himself; but how long? God's chosen are not thus finally left in the hand of their own counsel, nor trusted to their own management. All his saints are in thy hand, i. e. in the hand of Christ, Deut 33:3, from whence none can pluck them, John 10. Which general promise of the perseverance of God's elect, taken as a collective body, ascertains and ensures the perseverance of each believer in particular. For the whole necessarily includes every part; and, where any individual part is absent, it destroys the entireness of the whole; just as the human body is not complete, if only one limb, or even a single finger, or so much as a piece of a finger be wanting. The philosophic integrity vanishes from that instant: for, *posito toto, ponuntur partes*; and *sublata parte, tollitur totum*. So that what is affirmed concerning the aggregate, is equally affirmed concerning the constituent members respectively, of which that aggregate consists: otherwise the affirmation would be essentially untrue; which to charge Christ with, were blasphemy.

Let the follower of Christ, therefore, dismiss all slavish fear as to his continuance in grace; and, in well-doing, leave the care of that to God. They who belong to him are kept, and will be kept, by his power through faith, unto salvation itself: and may sing, with him that was caught up into the third heavens, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Neither life nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, shall ever be able to do it. There is no being disinherited of the blessings entailed by God's covenant, and bequeathed in Christ's last will and testament, signed with his own blood, and sealed by his own spirit. Saving grace is the good part, which shall not be taken away. Whatever you lose, it is impossible for you to lose that. It is bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God, and hid with Christ in him. And when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall ye also, who have believed, appear with him in glory.

7. I shall mention one other fear common to many of God's redeemed, viz. the fear of death. Some true believers are apt to cry out (as the human nature of Christ himself did) Father, save me from this hour.

But why are you so dismayed at the prospect of getting home? Are you afraid of dying, or of what you may suffer in your last conflict? Turn again to your rest; for the Lord will deal bountifully with you, and be better to you than your fears.

*"Who can take  
Death's portrait true?  
Fear shakes the pencil: Fancy loves excess:  
Dark ignorance is lavish of her shades;  
And these the formidable picture draw.  
Man forms a death that nature never made;  
Then on the point of his own fancy falls,  
And feels a thousand deaths in fearing one."*

None returns from the grave to tell us what it is to die. Some happy believers have indeed sung in their last moments, "O death, where is thy once imagined sting? Can this be termed dying?" And, very probably, the passage is both sweeter and smoother than living imagination is apt to suppose. I lost an excellent parishioner in the year 1765. Though he had not the least doubt of his salvation, but, as far as spiritual and eternal things were concerned, lay for many weeks triumphing in the full assurance of faith; he still dreaded the separation of soul and body, from an apprehension of what nature must endure in the parting stroke. Some little time before the knot was actually untied, God was pleased to indulge him with a foretaste of death. He was, for near an hour, quite gone in appearance: and his family began to conclude, that the final struggle was over. By degrees, however, he came to himself: and on my asking him how he did, he answered, that God had given him a specimen of death, and he found it not so terrible as he apprehended. From that period, all his dread of dying vanished away; and he continued without any shadow of fear, filled with the peace which passeth all understanding, until his disimprisoned spirit flew to the bosom of God. Oh! then, whoever thou art, that art troubled in like manner, cast thy burden on the Lord. You have found him faithful in other things, and you may safely trust him for this. He has delivered you in six troubles, and in the seventh he will be nigh unto you. The water-floods shall not overflow thee, neither shall the deep swallow thee up. The rock of ages lies at the bottom of the brook; and God will give you firm footing all the way through.

Or, are you afraid of the consequences of death, and what will come after? Throw yourself upon God in Christ, and you are safe. "Christ's righteousness is law-proof, death-proof, and judgment-proof."

Are you fearful what may become of your family when God calls you away? Make your family over to him. Nominate Jehovah for their guardian and trustee. Cast anchor upon that comfortable promise: Leave thy fatherless children; I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me.

Do you dread the buffetings of satan? God will not let him take advantage of your weakness. You shall overcome, yea, you shall be more than conquerors, through the blood of the Lamb and the word of his testimony.

Are you apprehensive lest your faith be small, and your sanctification imperfect? Christ will be praying for you, that your faith fail not: and the Holy Ghost will take care not to leave his work of grace upon thy soul unfinished.

You tremble, perhaps, at the thought of laying aside your weak, sinful, mortal, body. But you will receive it again: not such as it now is, frail, defiled, and perishable; but bright with the glory, and perfect in the image of God. The body is that to the soul, which a garment is to the body. When you betake yourself to repose at night, you lay aside your clothes until morning; and resume them, when you rise. What is the grave, but the believer's wardrobe, of which God is the door-keeper? In the resurrection morning, the door will be thrown open, and the glorified soul shall descend from heaven to put on a glorified robe, which was indeed folded up and laid away in dishonour; but shall be taken out from the repository, enriched and beautified with all the ornaments of nature and of grace.

Are you loth to bid a long adieu to your Christian friends? The adieu will not be a long one. They will soon follow, to the place of rest. And, in the meantime, you will be with Christ, and with all the saints who have been gathered home before you: which is far better.

Should I be asked, What is the grand remedy against undue fear, of every possible kind? I answer, in one word: Communion with God. "He," says good Dr. Owen, "who would be little in temptation, must be much in prayer." Ply the mercy seat. Eye the blood of Christ. Cry mightily to the Spirit of God. To which I add: Wait at the footstool, in holy stillness of soul. Sink into nothing, before the uncreated Majesty. If he shine within, you will fear nothing from without. What made the martyrs fearless? Their souls were filled with Christ.

Jesus lifted up the beams of his love upon their minds, and they smiled at all the fires which man could kindle.

To enjoy communion with God, you must be found in the way of duty. If you play the truant, no wonder you are afraid of being whipped. "Those trees," says the excellent Mr. Gurnall, "bear the sweetest fruit, which stand most in the sun." Take heed to the thing which is right: for that shall bring a man peace at the last. The meaning of which text is, that by virtue of the wise connection which infinite wisdom hath established between antecedents and consequents, holy walking is the high road to holy comforts.

Your walk, perhaps, is strict and conscientious: and yet, it may be, you complain of doubts and darkness notwithstanding. Here, examine yourself: 1. Whether you do not work from legal principles, and to legal ends? If so, no wonder, that, like a slave with the lash at his shoulders, you toil all day and take nothing. Christ alone is the righteousness of them that believe. God will never set the seal of his gracious presence to the broken Sinai covenant. Whoever enjoys, or thinks he enjoys, comfort and peace from the works of his own hands, and from the duties he performs, is blinded and deluded into a fool's paradise, by the god of this world. The Lord meets his people in the way of duty, but not for it: as a father, who meets his son on a journey, at some appointed house, meets him in that house, but not for the sake of the house. Live upon what Christ is made to you of God, and you will find comfort. But if you seek happiness and establishment from yourself, or from any thing wrought by yourself, you will receive no solid nourishment from the breast of that sham consolation.

Or, 2. Christ may be all your hope, and yet your fears may continue to run high. Look narrowly into your own heart. See that there be no Achan in the camp, no beloved lust in the tent. I dare not say, that the sense of God's love is always connected with the actings of faith, and with the concomitant exercise of holiness. But I suppose that faith and sanctification are the usual correlatives of joy in the Holy Ghost. Art thou melted by grace, into a filial fear of God? Go on to fear, to love, and to obey, whether the Lord gild thy path with sunshine, or darken it with gloom. He is the sovereign dispenser of his own comforts; and may withhold, or confer them, as seemeth good in his sight. But it is thy indispensable duty to follow the Lamb, and to do his will, whether he cheers you with his consolations, or not. Certain it is, from the infallible word of his grace, that to you who look unto Jesus, all the sweet privileges of the gospel belong: and joy is one of them. Though it tarry, wait for it; for it will not deceive thy expectation; it will surely arrive at the appointed season, and will not linger a moment beyond. O ye of fearful hearts, be strong! Your God will

come with a recompence, he will come and save you. Your prayers may not be answered immediately; but they are all strung on the file of his remembrance, and shall be answered after many days. Your fears are in his file. Your groans are noted in his book. Delight thou in the Lord, and he will give thee thy heart's desire; hold thee still in the Lord, and abide patiently for him. Commit thy way to the Lord; put thy trust in him, and he shall bring it to pass.

I knew a most valuable Christian, who died in the year 1760; and in her last illness was greatly exercised with darkness of soul: which, however, did not finally continue. While God was leading her through the wilderness of mental distress, she still anchored on the promises, though she had lost sight of the promiser: and, as a proof of her absolute dependance on the faithfulness of a withdrawing God, she directed, that (instead of the usual inscription of name and age) the following text should be engraven (and engraven it was) on the plate of her coffin: - Deal with me, O God, according to thy name, for sweet is thy mercy. Thus, as the great Dr. Manton long ago expressed it, "Faith accepts God's bond, and patience waits for payment."