

SERMON XXXII

GOD'S COVENANT WITH HIS PEOPLE, THE GROUND OF THEIR SECURITY

Tobias Crisp

"Fear thou 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." {Is.41:10}

In the former part of this chapter, {which we will speak a little of because it will make way to the discovery of the true scope of this text,} you find the Lord graciously acquainting his people concerning his mind in sending Christ into the world, and what tumults this should raise; how the Lord repelled that outcry; what success he giveth unto Christ, raised up in spite of all the malignity and force against his power and glory.

And it is worthy your observation, beloved, to consider how the Lord manifests this, as a preamble to this very text, in verse 1, he seems to represent unto us the world, under the name of "islands and people," and to present them in such like posture, as Demetrius and his fellows stood in, in Acts 19, upon Paul's setting up of Christ; there was a horrible tumult raised against his doctrine; so it seems, the islands and the people were in such a kind of posture here; therefore the Lord is pleased to call for silence; "Keep silence before me, ye islands;" for such a noise there was, as I may say, that God could not be heard; and therefore, first, he requires silence, and then, instead of that confusion that was among them, in respect of their madness; he desires them to deal somewhat rationally with him, he charges the world to put out all the strength it hath, "bring forth your strong reasons, let them come near, and let us reason together in judgment." Now, that which the Lord speaks, is as intending to hear what they could say for themselves, in their opposition to Christ; for so you see plainly in the 2nd verse, when the Lord had got silence, he pleads the cause of Christ, by way of expostulation; as if he had said, what madness is it in you to set your faces against him! For "who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings?" Why do you contend in this manner? Can you tell who it is that sets him up? If ye did but know against whom ye rise up, it would appear to yourselves to be a vain contention; and therefore, verse 4, he answers the question himself, and therein shows the vanity of their opposing him. "For {saith he} the Lord hath done it, who is the first, and who is the last." If you fight with me, what will you get by it? Be ye sure, I will manage the thing, it is the work of mine own hands; and it is I that raise him up, even to rule over kings; and therefore you do but kick against the pricks, in your contending with me.

The Lord proceeds further, to show the certainty of the prevalency of Christ, and in verse 3, he goes on to let us see, not only the facility, but also the extent of the prevalency of Christ, both how easily, and how far he should prevail. This matter is of excellent consideration, "He shall pursue, {saith the text} and he shall pass on safely," or as it is in the margin, he shall pass on in peace; as much as to say, when Christ takes upon him to set up his own kingdom and glory in the world, every one that sets his face against him, shall be easily destroyed; therefore Christ shall run quietly, and not after them too hastily; there shall be such softness in his pursuit, that the overcoming of the opposers shall seem to be a time of peace; there shall be such little opposition to him.

In verse 5, the Lord goes on, and tells of the fruit of this conquest Christ shall have, when he comes to reign in his church; the first fruit of it, is terror to them that set their faces against his kingdom, "the islands were afraid;" then he shows what an ill use they made of this fear, whereas it should make them stoop to the scepter of Christ, that was too hard for them; like malefactors indeed, when they saw themselves overmastered, they assembled and gathered themselves together; they

hoped to raise up more forces, and then try it out once more with Christ. Besides, you may observe what a politic devilish practice they use; to bring down Christ again, when he was raised; that which hath been the main and grand plot of Satan, even to raise up idols and set them up by Christ, to steal away the hearts of people. It was the policy of Balaam, counseling Balak to lay stumbling-blocks before Israel, to entice them unto the idols of Moab; and it was the counsel of Jeroboam to overthrow the kingdom of Christ, to set up the calves in Dan and Bethel, that so there may not be a going unto Christ. So you have it, verse 7, "the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, &c." Well, the Lord having thus discovered what opposition there would be, at the setting up of Christ, begins to speak somewhat comfortably unto his own people; just so, the opposition indeed of the world never stirs, nor moves God, because he knows well how he can blast every attempt; yet, because he knows that his people have flesh remaining still in them, the appearance of a tumult, and the opposition of the gospel may per-adventure, put them into an affright. The Lord therefore endeavors to hearten them against the frights they might take, in regard of the outward appearance of opposition; and this he doth in the words of the text; "fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God."

Now, lest there should be a mistake to whom the Lord directs this speech; for his intent may be mistaken in the extent of the people to whom he speaks; therefore vs. 8, 9, the Lord shows to whom he speaks such encouragements, "but thou, Israel, art my servant, and Jacob, whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend."

Some will say, it seems then, that in this text, God's speaking comfort, and encouragement, is confined only unto the people of the Jews, that are the children of Jacob, and the seed of Abraham; and therefore, whatever comfort there is in the text, there is little comfort belongs to us.

Consider verse 9, and then it will appear that though God speaks of Jacob, Israel, and the seed of Abraham, yet he doth not speak of the seed according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit; for there you read, "thou whom I have chosen, and taken from the ends of the earth." That Jacob then, and Israel, to whom the Lord speaks these comfortable words are the Jacob and Israel that are called from the ends of the earth. Now, if you would know what is meant by the ends of the earth, the prophet tells you, chapter 43:5-7, "fear not; for I am with thee; I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name; for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." As much as to say, this Israel and Jacob, to whom the Lord speaks, not to fear, are a people gathered from the east, north, south, and west; now the seed of Jacob, naturally considered, is not of that extent, as to overspread the world every way; however, the last clause, that it is "even every one that is called by his name," puts it out of doubt, that it extends also to us Gentiles.

This I note, beloved, that so we may not only have a guess that the comfortable language, frequently mentioned by the prophet, belongeth unto us, as well as the Jews; but that we may see that it is the mind of the Lord he hath revealed, that it indeed extends itself unto us; for by the way, solid comfort will not be raised upon mere guesses, or presumptions, taking things for granted, without a good foundation to bear up such comforts. All the comfort people have, when they run upon guesses, is only abiding with them so long as there is not administered an occasion of discomfort; but all comforts will vanish, that have not some foundation when they are struck at, and when some tempest beats against them, therefore it is good to be established in every truth, wherein comfort may be received

1. From this passage, as it hath reference to the coherence, I may observe unto you, that, whenever the Lord Jesus Christ is set up in glory and beauty, he always meets with strong opposition; I say, the Lord Christ, that righteous man, was never raised up, but a storm was raised with him; there is an everlasting fighting against the glorious light of Christ's gospel, whenever it breaks out. You may see the truth of this, beloved, especially, since Christ's personal coming, at all times; no sooner did the apostles begin to preach him, as raised from the dead, but a madness and a fury grew upon those that thought themselves in authority, as the Scribes and Pharisees; their swords were presently drawn, their prisons set open to clap up those that preached Christ; Herod killed one,

imprisoned another, intending to kill him too; beloved, I need say little of this, your own experience may now be a sufficient witness of that, which perhaps, you feared long before. Now is come the time of reformation, and purging of the church, of getting up the ark, and bringing Dagon down; you see the fruit of this; what combustions this hath raised in the world; let Christ himself be never so peaceable, yet when he comes, men will quarrel with him; therefore, by the way, as it is a truth in general, so it is in particular cases; whenever we, the ministers of the gospel, devote ourselves only to set up Christ, and labour mightily at this work, we must expect to have the world about our ears; and for you, beloved, if you dream of peace and rest in the world, finding friendship, and applause with men, while you endeavour to set up the Lord Christ, you mistake exceedingly; you must look for uproars, tumults, and clamors from the world, and there will be these continually attending you.

2. You may observe, as mad and desperate as the world is, and the enemies of Christ are, in fighting and making opposition against him, yet no weapons, formed in this kind, shall prosper. The Lord hath raised Christ up, {saith the text,} and he shall rule over the heathen, and they shall be as "dust before his sword, and as driven stubble before his bow." {vs.2} "Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded; they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish." {vs.11} I say, this shall come to pass, and therefore, it is no great matter how majestically the world looks, and how mighty it makes itself; for beloved, if all the world should combine against one person that stands for the cause of Christ, rather than Christ should sink, this person should be able to withstand even the whole world. But however, let that person be borne down to the ground, or overborne with the world, Christ shall never be overborne; he shall reign in glory and triumph, not only in heaven, but also in his church; when all comes to all, let them fight never so desperately, Christ shall be the conqueror; he shall pursue, nay, he shall pass on softly; he shall not need to take any great pains, nor toil, to maintain himself, thus set up, and destroy his enemies, he shall do it with ease.

But this is not what I mean either; I come to the text itself, which is a word of encouragement, held forth to those spirits that are subject to faint and droop, in respect of the afflictions that are likely, or at least, seem to be likely to grow upon the church of Christ. "Fear not, be not dismayed, I am thy God, I am with thee."

In the words, there are two generals very observable. I. The temper of spirit that the Lord aims to reduce his people unto. II. The course he takes to reduce them to it.

The temper of spirit that the Lord desires to reduce his people unto, is delivered in a double expression, "fear not, be not dismayed;" they are both one, saving that dismayedness is the highest extremity of fear; so then, the temper that he endeavors to reduce them unto, is a quietness, settledness and undauntedness of spirit.

The course that God takes to bring them to this temper of spirit is a proposal of motives and arguments of sufficient effect and prevalency to pull down vain fear out of the heart. "Fear not, for I am thy God, I am with thee," and so forth. The result of the text is briefly this; they need never be afraid, nor dismayed at anything, though it appear ever so hideous, who have God for their God, and present with them, and a help unto them. Beloved, these are times, {as I hinted before,} that require such a cordial as this; for now, in a more eminent way than ever, is the glory of the kingdom of Christ contested, and attempted to be thrown down to the dust. Now, when we hear of evils, our hearts are subject to be dismayed, and especially when we see them with our eyes; the sword is drawn, nay, blood is drawn; the hearts of men are full of faintings, and many almost at their wits ends; many begin to suspect what will become of things, out of the fainting and suspicion of their spirits; and, therefore now, it is time to bring forth, out of the treasures of the Lord, that which may stay the spirits of his people; that is, such an encouragement as he himself gives which will be the best way to establish our hearts, namely, when God will say to a soul, "fear not, be not dismayed; for I am thy God;" it is a cup of consolation indeed; and that we may draw it forth to you, with the better advantage to drink of it, let us take these particulars into consideration.

1. What it is, not to fear, nor to be dismayed. 2. What it is, that we must not fear and be dismayed at. 3. What the fruit of fear or dismay is; or what prejudice or disadvantage fear and dismay

bring along with them. 4. We shall then consider the motives of the Lord, to take us off from these distempers of fear and dismay; namely, because God is our God; and in that we shall consider.

1. What it is for God to be thy God. 2. What strength there is in this argument, how this takes off fear and dismay. 3. And, seeing there is such strength in it, we shall consider how God becomes the God of men, that so you may see the way to enter into this privilege to have God for your God, and so to be secured from fear and dismay.

What it is for a person not to fear, nor be dismayed. I have observed, concerning all the passions and affections of men, that the sense of them far better opens their nature, than any discourse possibly can. When a fit of fear, especially when the height of it, seizes upon a spirit, that spirit may read a plainer lecture to itself of that passion, than all the rhetoric of men can express; I mean, fear is such a passion, as everyone knows better, by those experiments they have of it, what it is, than another is possibly able to describe. It is a very distracting, disturbing, confounding passion; it is a kind of besotting passion, that makes men lose themselves, especially if it be in the extremity of fear; it arises from an apprehension of some unavoidable, insupportable evil, growing upon a person, and occasioned, either by some symptoms of that evil, or by some messenger or other relating it, or by some foresight of it in the eye. Now, as evil appears greater or less, and more or less tolerable, so the passion of fear is more or less in persons. I will give you a touch of the nature of this passion, in the words of the psalmist, where he sets it forth, by its contrary, by what it is not to be afraid or dismayed, "he shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies." {Psa.112:7-8} Mark the phrases, and in them, you have a full lecture of a heart not afraid, nor dismayed. First, it is a heart that is not moved nor stirred; suppose evil grows on, it may be the sword, the enemy appears bigger and bigger; still the dangers are greater and greater; what is it now not to be afraid? It is, not to be moved at all at any time; so far forth as the appearance of danger moves the heart, or turns it, so far he is afraid; so the other phrase imports, "his heart is fixed." You know, that fear in the heart, is often times expressed by the shaking and trembling of it; and therefore, the Holy Ghost expresses it also by the shaking of the tops of trees; it causeth an un-stedfastness of spirit. Now, saith the psalmist, "they shall not be afraid, whose hearts are fixed;" that is, as a post that is set deep in the ground, and rammed in, stands fast, so that if you thrust against it, it stirs not, it is fixed; so, when anything beats against the heart to shake and overthrow it, when the heart of a man stirs not at it, it is a fixed heart, and is not afraid. And so the phrase that follows, "his heart is established," signifies that it is made stable and firm, that it cannot be shaken. In brief, to have a heart not afraid, nor dismayed, is to have a heart calm, that looks with a regardless eye, {as I may say,} upon evils when they grow out. You shall see, beloved, this affection or temper of spirit, "not to be afraid," in the sense I mention, excellently described in Daniel 3:16, and there, whenever you would know whether you be afraid or no, you shall find always, as in a lecture, the thing discovered unto you. You know what danger was in the eyes of those three children, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego; for there was a hot fiery furnace prepared for them, seven times hotter than ordinary; the king proclaims, that whatever he be that will not fall down and worship his image, should presently be cast into this furnace; this was enough to startle a person, and make him tremble; but, how is the temper of the three children expressed? "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter." These threatenings, though very fearful in the eyes of others, seemed nothing to them, they made a hush at it. Even so, people are then free, who, when evil is coming, care not for it. A man, when he cares not for anything that assails him, rushes in upon it; and though it seem to threaten him some mischief, yet he is confident it cannot hurt him. So far as you can overlook evils drawing on you, more or less, not regarding them in respect of any hurt they can do you, so far are you free from fear.

You will say, none can have such a temper of spirit, when dangers are growing, especially great and thick upon them. No? What say you of these three children? I speak of men now, they were careless. You will say, it may be, but that was an extraordinary case. Nay, you find, that the very ground of the undaunted-ness of their spirits, was the same which the Lord proposes in this text, to put us out of fear. "Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us." The

carelessness of their spirits was grounded upon a common principle of the whole church, and upon the same the Lord proposes to all the rest of his people, they being confident God was their God, neither the greatness of the king, nor the violence of his threatenings, could stir them a jot; they were all nothing to God, who was their God, who was able to deliver them, and would deliver them. Their confidence in this was that which made them break forth into this bold expression, "we are careless to answer thee in this matter." But now, let us consider.

What the people of God should not fear. What, to be afraid of nothing? Doth not the Lord himself commend fear to men? Nay, is not God himself called the fear of Isaac? And yet would you make us believe, that we should have no fear? I answer, there is a three-fold fear; there is a natural, a religious, and a turbulent fear. A natural fear is nothing, but such an affection as is in men by nature, that they cannot be freed from; such a fear was in Christ himself, without sin. A religious and godly fear, is nothing but an awful reverence, whereby people keep a fit distance between the glorious majesty of God, and the meanness of a creature, and it is opposed to sauciness; a turbulent fear, is a fear of disquiet-ness; now all disquieting fear, is that which the Lord endeavors to take off from his people.

Well, but what are the things, you will say, that we should not be afraid of, nor dismayed at? Perhaps I shall pitch upon things, people are much afraid of, and will think strange they should not. I must tell you, the people of God, need not be afraid of their sins; and yet, let me not be mistaken, I do not say, they must not be afraid to sin, but they need not be afraid of their sins; they that have God for their God, there is no sin that ever they commit that can possibly do them any hurt. Therefore, as their sins cannot hurt them, so there is no cause of fear in their sins they have committed.

Some will be ready to say, this is strange; all the evils in the world that come, grow up from the sinfulness of men. If a man be afraid of anything, he should be afraid of sin, from whence all evils flow.

I answer, beloved, it is true, sin naturally is a root bringing forth all manner of evil fruit. "The wages of sin is death;" but yet, whatever sin in its own nature brings forth, yet the sins of God's peculiar people, that have God for their own God, can do them no hurt, and in that regard, there is no cause of fear from any they have ever committed. Beloved, I conceive this may seem somewhat harsh to some, especially, such as misconceive the drift I aim at, which is not to encourage any unto sin, but to ease the consciences of the distressed. I desire you to resolve with yourselves this one thing, so far as the Lord reveals it, so far you will sit down contented with his mind revealed to you; and I beseech you, kick not against the truth. There is not one sin or all the sins together, of any one believer, that can possibly do that believer any hurt, real hurt, I mean; and therefore he ought not to be afraid of them.¹

¹ This is condemned as an error by D. W. in his Gospel Truth, &c. pg.181, through misinterpreted by him; for the Doctor speaks not of the natural evil of sin, and the effects of it, which he represents as odious; but of the penal evil of sin, and the penal effects of it; which the believer need not fear, or that he shall be hurt by it, even eternal damnation, Rom.8:1,33,34; nor does he speak of sin before it is committed, smiling upon a man with a promising countenance, which is most dreadful and odious to the faithful; but, as committed, and lying on the conscience, as he afterwards explains himself; and so Johannes Hoornbeek, "Summa Controversiarum Religionis," pg.714, and Hermann Witsius in "Animadv Iren," chap.12, sec.6, both understood him; and in this sense, sin is not to be feared, nor can it do a believer hurt; that is, bring eternal damnation on him. Dr. Goodwin says the same thing, "if thou believest in Christ, fear not sin; for God, from everlasting, saw all thy sins, and yet for all that he continued to accept thee in his beloved; — the reason is, because Jesus Christ is more beloved of him, than sin is, or can be hated by him; if sin should come to have more interest for hatred, in the heart of God, than Christ hath for love, thou mightest well fear; but he hath accepted thee in his beloved, therefore, be not thou afraid." "Exposition of Ephesians," Vol.1, pg.95. Yet, after all, I am of the same mind I was some years ago, that such expressions should be disused; see my Doctrine of God's everlasting love, &c. pg. 15, and heartily join in the same wish with the excellent Witsius, Iren, chap.13, sect.21, that nothing of this kind might drop from the mouth of a reformed divine; for though sin cannot do any penal hurt to the believer, though it cannot damn him; yet it may damp his spiritual joy, break his peace; yes, his bones, interrupt communion between God and him, dishonor Christ, grieve the Spirit, and cause him to depart for a season. Gill

How will that be made good, you will say? I will make it appear out of Rom.7:14-25; it is true that the apostle expresses himself in heavy complaints against such sins as befall believers, "I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I;" insomuch, that in the last verse but one, he with much vehemence, puts the question thus, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Some will be ready presently to say, here you see plainly is a fear of sin, or ought to be; here is a body of death in men to be afraid of. But give me leave to tell you, that the apostle in this chapter, as I conceive, personates a scrupulous spirit, and doth not speak out his own present case, as it was at this time, but speaks in the person of another, yet a believer; and my reason is this, because in respect of his own person, what was become of his sins, was already resolved; therefore, I conceive, he acts the part of a troubled spirit, that in respect of the multitude and prevalency of corruption, was ready to cry out thus; but mark how the apostle answers this question, whether it be his own case or another's, and you plainly see he concludes, though there be such marvelous filthiness and prevalency in sin, yet it cannot do any hurt; but, saith he, "I thank God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," who will deliver me from this body of death; as much as to say, indeed, till a man look to Christ, there is nothing but matter of bitterness and evil to be seen as the certain fruits of sin; and there can be nothing else, in regard of the evil that is like to follow it. But when persons can once look to Christ, the case is altered. What doth he thank God for? That though naturally a body of death grew up by sin; yet there is no prejudice in this, can come to him, through Christ. Now, that the apostle plainly means, that he thanks God, in that sin could not do him, or others, any hurt; mark how in this thankfulness he expresses himself in chap.8:1, "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, that walk not after the flesh; but after the Spirit." There you see the ground of his thanksgiving; no condemnation to those in Christ. No, you will say, no condemnation in hell; but yet, as there are remainders of sin in God's own people, so there will some evil or other fall upon the commission of sin; mark what the apostle speaks of it, in verse 2 & 3. Would you have the clear mind of the Spirit in it? There it is held forth; "for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Here Christ stands for the deliverance of his people from condemnation, and eternal wrath, say some; yea, but saith the apostle, "we are delivered from the law of sin and death;" what is that, but what the law may do to persons, for those sins which are committed by them? Now, what can sin do when it is condemned? It is true, like a traitor, as he is at liberty, he may do mischief, but take him as he is arraigned, condemned, bound and manacled, he can do none. Now sin is condemned to the believer, it can do no hurt at all to him; for what hurt can that do unto a man which is carried into a land of forgetfulness, to avoid further prejudice of such persons as are endangered by it? When men have been found dangerous unto the state; it hath been a common practice, to banish them from the kingdom, into a place far remote where they cannot have any opportunity of doing any mischief, and when they are banished, they are not to return again, upon pain of death. Now beloved, our scape goat Christ hath carried our sins into a land of forgetfulness.

Consider further; suppose a man be entered into many bonds, for great sums; it is true they remain in force; such a man, is subject to fear arrests; but put the case that these are all canceled, that the debt in the creditor's book be blotted out, what hurt then can these bonds do a man, when the seal is torn off, and all the writing in them blotted out? If a man saw a thousand such bonds, in which he were obliged, it would affright him no more than if he saw none. True indeed, every sin is a great debt, and we commit sins daily and hourly against the Lord; and the torments of hell are the merit of the least sin, for I speak not this to extenuate any sin, but to show the greatness of God's grace, and to ease upon good grounds, distressed consciences. Therefore, such as look upon these sins as un-cancelled, and these debts, as true debts, so long they may work a horror in them; but believers, that are the members of Christ, may read fairly all the sins that ever they have committed, also the desert of them, which should be executed upon them, if they were not blotted out; but mark what the Lord speaks, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and

will not remember thy sins." {Is.43:25} Now, what prejudice can that do, that is blotted out? Every debt of a believer is cancelled, so that the Lord himself hath nothing at all to lay to his charge; for, how can that scorpion hurt, that hath lost his sting, and spent his venom in the sides of Christ, and left it there? Christ was wounded for the transgressions of his people, he was bruised for their sins, the chastisement of their peace was upon him. {Is.53:5} What hurt can there be to whom there is peace from God, and nothing but peace? It is true, our sins themselves do not speak peace, but Christ, bearing the sin and wrath that they deserve, speaks peace to every believer, whose transgressions he did bear.

Therefore beloved, be not afraid, ye that are believers and members of Christ, of wrath breaking down from heaven upon you for such and such sins, which you have committed, for all your sins together can do you no harm; all the sting and poison of them were spent upon Christ. Mark that excellent expression of the apostle, "the sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law;" so that here seems to be a sting in sin even to death itself; but mark what follows, "but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." {I Cor.15:56,57} What both he mean? Even the victory of overcoming sin and death. Though naturally sin hath a sting, yet there is a victory over it; Christ is the death of it, as he took away its sting; so that the sins of believers, set up to affright them by Satan, or his instruments, are but scare-crows and bug-bears; things to affright ignorant children indeed, but men of insight, and understanding are able to see that they are counterfeit things. It is true before men come to see the light of the gospel of Christ, their sins stare in their faces, seeming to spit fire at them; but just as children put one of their company into hideous postures, and a fearful and terrible representation, causing every one that knows it not, to run from him; so sin, as it is set up by Satan, with a terrible visage, as it were, to spit fire in the faces of the godly, seems very threatening and dreadful; but, they are to know for certain, it is but a made thing, there is no fear from the sins of believers; all the terror of sin, Christ himself hath drunk; and, in drinking it, he, our life, was crucified; and, in that regard, all the terror and hideousness of sin, as is represented by Satan, is spent, and sin itself is dead. It is true indeed, a living roaring lion is a terrible creature; but, of a dead lion, there is no more fear than is of a stick, or a stone, to him that knows he is dead. While sin is alive, it is fearful and terrible; but, when it is dead, there is no more terror in it than is in a dead lion.

Thus I speak concerning sin, not as it smiles upon a man, with a promising countenance before it be committed; for so it is most dreadful and odious to the faithful, as that which crucified their sweetest Lord; but as committed, and lying upon the conscience of a believer, endeavoring to drive him to deny the love and free grace of God to him, and the all-sufficiency of Christ; for, in this regard, it is crucified by Christ, and so a believer need not be afraid of sin. Indeed, terrible it may seem to be at first, but without just cause, for it can do no hurt. Therefore, the apostle telling us of the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, and contrary to us, saith, "that Christ hath nailed it to his cross." So that the sins of believers are crucified with Christ; "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections, and lusts." We commonly understand, as if our mortification of sin, were the crucifying of the flesh; but the apostle speaks otherwise, and intends, that they, that are Christ's are crucified with him; as much as to say, Christ's dying upon the cross for believers, became the death, that is, the expiration of sin for them, that it should be no more terrible unto them, nor affright them. I have insisted, the more upon this, because, indeed, it is the root from whence all other fears spring; for, from crosses and afflictions, which come upon persons, {of which we shall speak presently,} they run immediately to their sins, and conceive that it is they that have put stings into them, and make them so bitter; still therefore, they are perplexed with fears, as long as sin is upon them; certainly, some fearful thing will come upon them; why? They have committed such and such sins, these be the cause of their fear. But beloved, either deny plainly that Christ died for your sins, that he hath borne the whole wrath of God that sin hath deserved; or sit down by this truth, that sin hurt Christ so much, that it cannot hurt the believer for whom he died.

As we should not fear our own sins, being believers and members of Christ; so neither ought we to fear the sins of others. But you will say, supposing there be no sins of our own to pull down

judgments, yet the world is full of iniquity, and abundance of sins there are, that bring down wrath from heaven.

Though it be true, that national sins bring down national judgments and wrath; yet all the sins of the times cannot do a member of Christ a jot of hurt; and therefore, as they cannot do him any, he need not be afraid of them. I will make it appear, that the sins of the world, the crying sins of the times, can do a believer no hurt. Mark the plea of the Lord, often mentioned in Ezek.18:2-4, against the people that hit him in the teeth, as if he were unjust; "the fathers {say they} have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." He pleads his own innocency in it, and directly answers, that "the soul that sinneth shall die;" as much as to say, he that commits the fault, shall bear the burden of it; thou, that art not the committer of the fault, shalt not bear the burden of it. Therefore, the sins of the times that are committed by the wicked, cannot do God's people any hurt; the children's teeth shall not be set on edge.

But, some will say, I have had some hand in these sins, I did not reprove them; or, I did not separate myself from them. I answer, suppose the members of Christ are in some sort accessory to these sins, yet, so far as you, in your own persons, have been actors or partakers of these transgressions, Christ hath borne them, and suffered for them. It is not some sins, that Christ bears, and leaves some for believers to bear, and so also leaves some punishment for them to suffer; for he, "the Lamb of God, takes away the sins of the world;" and that he takes them all away, appears, I John 1:7, "the blood of Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Whether then you consider every elect person, as he sinneth by himself, or as he shares with others, all these sins the blood of Christ cleanseth him from; and, therefore, I say, the sins of other people shall not, they cannot, be imputed to him that is a believer.

But, you will say, surely the Lord sends crosses and afflictions upon his own people {as well as upon the people of the world} many times, and should we not, therefore, be afraid of them? Let me tell you, as there is no occasion or need; nay, as people ought not to be afraid for the sins of others, so ought not they to be afraid for the chastisements of the Lord upon them. Consider but the true nature of fear; look upon things as they are in themselves; if there be occasion of fear in anything that may come, there must be evil in these afflictions, or else there need not be fear. Now, there is no evil in them, but all are exceeding good, and they work for good; and that which works for good, is not evil; every agent produceth effects answerable to its own nature; an evil tree brings forth no good fruit, nor a good tree evil fruit; so then, if there be nothing but good in all the afflictions of the people of God, then there is no cause of fear. There is an apprehension of evil in a thing, if there be fear, but there is not a just one in a thing that is good; be assured of this, there is no fear of afflictions, let them be ever so tart, great, or many. Oh, saith one, I shall be undone, as others are, that are plundered; here the heart is disturbed and distracted. But beloved, suppose you lose all that you have, even the wife out of your bosoms, and your children out of your arms, and so deprived of all, yet there is no evil in them, and therefore you ought not to be afraid. There is nothing but good in them; as the apostle tells us, that it is true, for the present that no affliction "seemeth to be joyous, but grievous;" yet he takes away all occasions of fear, though, for the present, they seem evil; yet afterward {saith he} they bring forth "the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." {Heb.12:11} What hurt is in them, when they bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness? In afflictions, they are refined as silver and gold. What hurt is there to silver in the fire, when nothing is intended but the separation of the dross from it? When the Lord afflicts his people, he sits, as a refiner, to take away the dross; the afflictions of God's people are nothing but the refinings of God, to take away the rust; what hurt is there in physic, especially good, when the body is distempered? They that know the benefit of it, will they be afraid of it, though it make them sick for a time? It is true, ignorance and suspicion of the operation, will make men afraid; but the Lord hath made it known to us, that all his chastisements are the fruits of his love, and this is the end of all to take away sins; it is true, men need not fear that the sins they commit shall do them hurt; but the Lord makes use of afflictions, to purge out sin from the conversation, where it is a trouble and burden to the faithful; though he doth not revenge himself of any sin before committed.

As we ought not to be afraid of sin and afflictions in general, so we are to take notice that they that have God for their God, must not be afraid of men. The enemies of God that fight against him, there needs no fear, either of their wrath, or policy, their menaces, or cruelty; there is no cause of fear of any of these. It is true; there is, doubtless, an implacable rage, and an unchangeable resolution of revenge, if possibly they could, even to bring fire from heaven, to devour the servants of the living God; but even if their rage were more desperate than it is, there is no cause to fear, inasmuch as God is their God. In Psalm 124, you see there is no cause to fear, though there be ever so much evil approaching; which was made of purpose to set forth this, that the godly need not fear the fury of the oppressor. If the Lord had not been on our side, when men rose up against us, they had swallowed us up, when their fierce wrath was kindled against us; but "blessed be the Lord, {saith the psalmist,} who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken" and we are delivered. Here is fierce wrath, but yet here is escaping, as a bird out of the snare of a fowler; and how comes this to pass? The Lord is their help, and on their side; and if he be on our side, what need of fear is there of their wrath? "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." {Psa.76:10} See what little cause there is of fear from the wrath and rage of men; there shall nothing but matter of praise come forth to the Lord out of it. Wilt thou be afraid of that by which he shall be praised? He is praised by the wrath of men, and all the superfluity of wrath, more than is for the glory of God, he will restrain; the wrath that is more than for his praise, he will be sure to keep it in, and that that is for his glory, wilt thou be afraid of?

Moreover, as you ought not to fear the wrath of men, so neither their policy; though hell itself combine with them to lay snares to entrap the people of God, there is no cause of fear; let there be Ahithophel's among them, whose counsel is an oracle of God, yet he will turn their counsel into foolishness; their Lord confounds the wisdom of the wise, and brings to naught the counsel of the prudent; where is the wise man, where is the scribe, where is the disputer of this world? He hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, as well as the weak things of the world to confound the strong. Now if the Lord choose foolish things to confound the wise, or the wise things of the world to confound themselves, why ought thou to be afraid?

Also there is no occasion of fear {to them that have God for their God,} of the instruments of cruelty; let them have all that cruelty itself can invent, fear not them, fear not their swords, their engines of war; what need we be afraid of that which shall not prosper? Now, the Lord saith plainly, that no weapons formed against the church shall prosper. You know, indeed; that unto a naked breast a sword is terrible; but where there is a coat of mail to fence off a sword, he that hath it, is, or need be no more afraid of the thrust of a sword, than when there is no sword at all thrust against him, especially when he knows his coat of mail is sword-proof, that it cannot pierce it. Armor of proof, you know, will keep out a bullet; when a man knows his armor is of proof, he cares not whether he hath a dagger thrust at it, or a pistol shot against it, he fears not, he cares not; the armor of believers is pistol-proof, it cannot be shot through.

But, you will say, there are many that are slain; will you condemn all that are killed by the enemy, as not believers? Mistake me not, I do not say they are sword-proof, so that the same thing may not befall unto them, as unto others; but only so, that nothing that befalls them, can be truly evil unto them; and in respect of the soul, all that the enemy can do, cannot destroy that. Do you not see them dead, you will say? But mark what the apostle saith, "our life is hid with Christ in God." It is true, there is a natural life, that may be destroyed, as well as the life of a wicked man; but yet the soul of a believer, is not destroyed; it is cannon-proof, all the devils in hell cannot destroy it. Christ himself is our life; now, when he shall appear, then shall we appear with him in glory; so that Christ himself must be killed, before our lives shall be destroyed by the enemies. You that are believers have this advantage of your enemies, the unbelievers; you may take away their lives, but they cannot take away your life; they have but one life, a natural life, but they that are believers, have a life in Christ; nay, he is their life; he himself must be annihilated before they shall; all the power of the sword cannot take away that life from you. It is true, they may take you out of this world, and the comforts

of it; but know, that this world, when the Lord will have the soul separated from it, is a comfortless world; if he himself should answer a person, to give him life in the world, when himself, hath purposed to take him out of it, that, and life itself would be a hell to him. Beloved, the Lord intends only your good in all your changes, and that which is best, he provides for you; though your life is taken away from you, where is the hurt or loss? Consider it well, beloved, death is but the opening of the prison doors to let you out; it is but the arrival of a vessel into the haven of rest. What doth the sword do when it enters into a believer? It makes but a change of immortality for mortality, of life for death, of strength for weakness, of glory for shame, of holiness for sin; it doth but pull down a rotten house of clay, to give possession of mansions of glory; it doth but take persons from cottage at will, to enter into a lordship of inheritance; for it gives full possession of an eternal one. The sword that enters into the breast of a believer, doth but put him into the chamber of the bridegroom, and consummates the marriage of the Lamb to him; it is the fulfilling of the great cry of the saints, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;" and, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ; it takes the bride into communion with her long looked-for beloved, and gives her possession of those things she longed for.

While we are in the flesh we are absent from the Lord; we enjoy the vision of Christ now but in hope, and darkly; but, "when this earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved, we have an house not made with hands." It doth but carry the believer out of a barren, blustering, troublesome wilderness, unto his home, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of glory. What hurt is there in all this? Consider this, that when the worst comes to the worst, if ye should be brought into the greatest strait that ever man was in, when cruelty shall rage and swell to its utmost bounds; this is that which stays up the heart, and makes the weakest spirits strong; and the want of this makes the strongest run away; when a man shall think with himself, if I should be now thrust through by the sword of the enemy, what will become of me? If I be not a member of Christ, I shall go to hell for ever; O, how will this startle him! This in the heart of the stoutest soldier is enough to make him run away, have he never so much courage; but when a man shall stand in the face of an enemy, and the bullets fly about him on every side; and thus think with himself, what if one of these should hit me, what shall become of me? Whither should I go? If he can but say in true faith, heaven is mine, and Christ is mine, I shall go presently unto God, my Father, at whose right hand are joys for evermore; I cannot have a better turn done me, than by one of these messengers, to be sent presently thither. It is recorded, that there was a man that had a spear run at him, by one that sought his life, and entering, it happened to lance an ulcer, that all the physicians could never cure; that thrust of the spear cured the ulcer. O beloved; all the world is not able to cure the ulcers that are in believers, in respect of the cohabitation and practice of sin; for sin will arise, and break forth, in spite of all, and they shall not cease to sin, till they cease to be here. Now the sword that enters into their hearts at one thrust, perfectly cures the ulcers of sin, that there shall never arise anymore; now what hurt is there in that spear, that cures instead of killing?

This, beloved, I speak to encourage all the faithful; for when the enemy looks big upon you, and your hearts are ready to faint; consider what the Lord saith, "I am your God, be not afraid, nor dismayed." Sometimes I observe, people look upon believers with an evil eye, because they do not see them of such dejected countenances, and so full of fearful expressions, as are in themselves, or others; hence they presently censure them as void of sense, and full of security. But consider, hath not the Lord promised that they shall not be moved with evil tidings? Is there nothing in such a promise? Will you say, there is no strength, nor truth in him, in whom is the fulness of all? That when you find such undaunted-ness in any, that when men speak of fire and sword, and the cruelty of the enemy, say, "we are careless, as touching this matter;" you say, they are stupefied, or carnally secure, do you not therein charge the three children for the same. Shall the people of God, who out of the apprehension of God being their God, and out of the gun-shot of sin, say, we fear not touching this matter, shall they be condemned for it? Do not condemn God; is thine eye evil, because his is good? Now, what are the disadvantages by this dismayed-ness of spirit? There are three sorts of them. Fearfulness of spirit produces a great deal of prejudice unto God; not simply to the being of God, but to his glory and honour; it casts many slanders upon him, upon his power; upon his

faithfulness; upon his care and providence; upon the freeness of his grace, and upon the efficacy of the sufferings of Christ. It casts a slander upon the power of God; for if you lend a man an hundred pounds, and he give you a bond to pay it you again, it may be, you fear you shall not have it again; what is the ground of it? I doubt, say you, he will not be able to pay me; when fear ariseth from such a principle, doth not this cast an aspersion upon the ability of the man? If you thought he were an able man, you would not suspect him; so, when you see such and such evils growing towards you, and you begin to be afraid, and to cry out, doubtless I shall sink under them, God is not able to deliver me at such a time; I say, unbelief of the power of God, being the occasion of such fear, thereby casts an heavy slander upon him.

But some may say, I never doubted of the ability of God. If you do not, yet Israel did; "can God, {say they,} give flesh in the wilderness?" And consider with yourselves, how often it hath been in the hearts of people, when they have been in any great extremity. How shall we escape? There is no possibility for us to avoid this evil; is not this now a calling in question the power of God? If so, then is there a great scandal cast upon it.

2. It likewise brings a scandal on the faithfulness and truth of God. Some will say, I do not question whether God can do this, but all my fear is, whether he will do it, or no; this ariseth from a suspicion, that God will not do it. Now, I ask, hath he said, he will do it? Hath he said, "I will never fail thee, nor forsake thee?" That "all things shall work together for our good?" And do you fear he will not do it? What do you think of God? Is he not as good as his word? Are God and his faithfulness out of credit with you? Hath he said, and will not he perform? If a man hath promised to give you an hundred pounds, and when he is gone, you fear you shall never have it; do you not call in question the honesty of this man? Do you not make him a liar? Hath not God promised to save and defend you; to be your shield and buckler? Now you, by fear, calling this in question; is this any better than to charge him with dishonesty, and to make him a liar, that he hath said, and will not make good what he hath said?

3. You charge the providence and care of God; for you know that he hath said to "be careful for nothing, but in all things make your requests known to him; and cast your care upon him, for he careth for you." Do you think, he is mindful of you and cares for you when extremity of danger comes upon you; and you fear that you shall miscarry in such danger? Either you think that he doth not mind you, or if he doth, he is not able to help you. This was David's fault, he runs on in this manner, "will the Lord cast off forever; and will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone forever; doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious; hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" {Ps.77:7-9} David charged God with forgetfulness.

4. You cast a scandal upon the free grace of God, when thus afraid; thy fear is, that such an evil will overtake thee; and thou lookest upon thy deserts, and say, this may well come upon me, I have deserved it; I have committed such and such sins, and they will certainly provoke the Lord to send all these evils I fear upon me; and because thou hast sinned, thou fearest such punishments will come upon thee; consider, how thou slanderest the freeness of the grace of God; there is no avoiding of evil, sayest thou, because sin hath been committed; yet herein grace indeed consists, that though it be, yet no wrath shall be provoked, nor punishment inflicted; so often as men fear afflictions from sins committed, they slander the grace of God; there is no way for me to escape, for I have sinned, will men think. When a scholar comes home to his father, and cries, I have committed a fault, there is no escaping the rod, for every fault I commit, I shall be whipped; is not this to cast a scandal upon the clemency of the master, as if he were so rigid, that he would pass by no fault? If you, upon sin committed, fear wrath and judgment, what do you think of God? Do you not plainly declare that there is no clemency in him?

5. You cast a slander upon the sufferings of Christ, that fear wrath, because you have committed such and such a sin; beloved, to what purpose are they? Were they not for the sins of men? Did the Lord behold the travail of his soul, and was he satisfied? And will he come and exact a new payment, after satisfaction given and acknowledged? Either God must be dishonest, to exact payment twice for one debt, or Christ's satisfaction was insufficient? If he did not bear all the wrath of

God, but you must bear some of it yourselves, where is the efficacy of his sufferings? If they were sufficient, wherefore should you then fear any wrath? Certainly, you must either say, Christ hath not borne all indignation, and so make the scripture a liar, which saith, "he beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied," and his sufferings of none effect; or else, though sin hath been committed, you cannot fear wrath, or any evil, as the effect of it.

The second prejudice of fear is as it respects God's service; it may appear divers ways to you.

1. So far as fear possesses the heart, so far is faith suppressed; as it is the cut-throat of believing. "For 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." {Is.30:15} Where there is rest, there is confidence; and where there is no rest, there can be no confidence; therefore as far as you fear the afflictions of the world, in respect of your sins, so far are you weak in faith; faith makes men sit down satisfied, whereas fear fills men full of doubts; when things are not clear, there are disputings, but faith puts an end to all doubts and fears; wherefore, so long as there is fear, there is unbelief.

2. Fear is prejudicial to all religious duties; it is a damper of prayer. Beloved, you know, that the life of prayer lies in faith, "if any man pray, let him ask in faith," saith James. Faith is the wing of prayer, and carries it up to heaven; clip the wing, and the motions of it must be slow. Beloved, you that are afraid, in such a fit, what hearts have you to pray? In brief, there is this great prejudice in fear, as it makes all the duties that persons perform, merely selfish. You know that a servant is very diligent for his master, when no danger cometh; but, let the servant be in fear of it, he will leave his masters business to shift for himself, and seek for his own safety? So consider it well, whether your hearts are not for yourselves in your services, when there is a strong passion of fear in your spirits. When a man is in prayer; against some evil he fears is approaching him, what prayer is it? He is altogether for himself that he may be delivered from his present fear; there is not a thought {so far as this fear prevails} that God may be glorified all the while, but only of the evil that is, or like to fall upon him. The believer should serve with sincerity and singleness of spirit; he should do that which he doth, as unto the Lord. Do not mistake, it is not the spirituality, nor fervency in the performances of duties, that carries it; duties are not expiatory helpers with Christ; but, when duties are performed as to, and for the Lord; and not to, and for a man's self, then are they right as services. But all our hope that we must have in any condition; must be only from the grace of God, and all that we act must be to him, for what he hath done for us. Therefore, seeing it is the Lord himself that calls upon you, and bids you be not afraid, take courage from him, and quit yourselves like men; in danger "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." There is this difference, between God's call and man's to do anything; men call to services and employments, but cannot give them power to perform that which they are called unto; but God calls, and gives influence of his own, to make men do such things he calls them unto. The Lord saith, "fear not," and in his voice, there is life, to frame the same temper in your hearts. Christ stands over your dead hearts, as he did over the dead body of Lazarus, saying "arise," who immediately arose; the word of his mouth carried life into it, and with it; so it saith, "fear not," and immediately it takes away all fear from the spirit of that man he speaks inwardly unto; other men may speak, and speak their hearts out, and never the better; but when God calls upon you not to be afraid, he is present in his ordinances, merely for his own sake, to hold out this undauntedness of spirit to you; and it is now with you, if you embrace it; he will make you of an undaunted spirit; he shall strengthen you as that leviathan the Lord speaks of in Job 41, which esteemed iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood, because his scales were so strong. Know this, that believers are the leviathans of God, he will so steel their spirit, that they shall cut iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The Lord is able to put such a spirit into you, and he will make good his promise, wherein he hath engaged himself, that his strength shall be made perfect in weakness; therefore, though you have said, my strength faileth me, yet he shall be the strength of your hearts, and your portion forever; thus you shall give that to him that fearful men rob him of, that is, the glory of his power and faithfulness, the freeness and riches of his grace, and care of his people's welfare, and Christ of his sufficiency; wherein he hath promised plentifully to supply you with all spiritual strength, that you "shall run, and not be

weary, walk and not faint." In a word, there are a few civil respects that I will mention as motives against this fear.

Know that fear, especially dismay, puts a man besides his wits, that while he is in such a passion, he is to seek for common ways of safety; so that whereas men think that fear will help them to avoid danger, commonly in amazement, people stand still, not able to stir to save themselves. Besides, this fear is such a torment, that commonly those evils, so much feared, prove not so hurtful, nor evil to a person, as the present fears; and, besides this, it many times doth not only daunt the spirit of a man in himself, but proves very dangerous to others. You already have had sufficient experience, not long since, of the evil and mischief this fear had like to have occasioned in the army; a thousand to one it was, that the fear of some had not made all the rest to fly; and it was a miracle of mercy, that there should be so great a fear in the army, and yet stand so to it. Fear, at such a time, is of a wonderful spreading and dangerous nature; fearfulness in one, kindles it in many; and so, not only men's persons, but also the cause itself, is hazarded; but these are but low things in respect of the prejudice God himself sustains in the fear of men; therefore, for your encouragement, consider what the Lord hath in store for you; nothing he hath, is, or can give, he thinks too good for you, but is willing to part with it to make you happy; he parts not with his goods, but with his Son, for you; nay, with that which is more, if anything can be more than his Son, that is, himself. Will you now deprive yourselves of the sweet enjoyment of all these, by your base unbelieving, and fearful hearts? Rather let us freely receive, thankfully acknowledge and constantly rest upon our Father's abundant mercy, expressed in so many blessings; but, especially in the gift of his only Son, given unto us, "that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." {Lk.1:74,75}