

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

FEARS!

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“Fears are entertained that——“ *Entertained* are they? Oh, then, people like the fears?

But “there is reason to fear.” If there were not, there could be no question as to whether to fear or not. It is precisely because there is reason to fear that we have need to ask the question, May we fear?

And the Scripture seems clearly to show that it is not in any outward circumstances, but in the relation of a person to God, that the answer ought to be found to the question, “Should I fear?” or “May I fear?”

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO SHOULD FEAR.

Some of them very rich, and strong, and wise, and merry. But they should always fear for all that. Some of them poor, weak, ignorant, distressed, even fearful, and yet without the fear they ought, above all, and before all, to have had.

In a certain sense, all men should fear. “Let us fear,” says the Apostle Paul, “lest — and if Paul *wanted* to fear, who ought not? But, thank God, there are many who have, with Paul, found that it is possible to fear without any amazement—to fear, and yet to rejoice evermore—to fear, and yet never be afraid.

But they should fear and tremble who have not fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel. They should fear because they are without the only protection against inevitable and imminent ruin.

The citizens of a country at war, whose feeble forces have been broken and scattered before the mighty armies of the alien, and whose towns, and villages, and fields, are being made desolate as the barbarous foe comes marching on,

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have all cause to fear until they are under the protection of some powerful neutral or some impregnable fortress.

The rich man has all the more to fear because of his very wealth—the poor all the more to fear because of his helplessness. The man of business finds no security in the multitude of his connections or engagements, and the nobleman no safety in his leisure and retirement. The healthy find their strength no match for sword and bullet, and the sick dread their doubled risk of death. The old can see no sufficient refuge in grey hairs, and the young no sure prospect of pity. Flight, instant flight, is the only resort for any and for all, and carriage, and horse, and mule, and foot, are off with one heedless rush to the only way of escape.

The whole world is at enmity with God. His awful power has again and again sent waves of wrathful destruction over land and sea. But still the war goes on with reckless, eager defiance of His love and His power alike. And on come the huge hosts of hosts which He commands. The years as they fly hurry us on to the awful moment when, in one terrible medley of blood, and fire, and crashing ruin, and torment, all this conflict shall end; and yet scarcely anyone fears before Him, before whom all the earth should fear.

And yet the only hope of anyone lies in such fear and such flight as God has prescribed. Riches, honor, power, learning, strength, morality, are altogether useless to protect anyone against Him! Like a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, wilt Thou despise their image—a shadow: gone.

Until a man is certain that God, for Christ's sake, has pardoned him—that he is within the Good Shepherd's fold—that the God of Israel is his help, his God, and that he is one of God's own children, adopted through faith in His only begotten One, washed clean in the blood of the Lamb—he ought to fear every moment, for he is truly in danger of hell fire.

The morning sun may smite him, or the evening chill strike death into his heart. The stormy blast may overthrow his dwelling, or the gentle breeze may breath poison into his veins. Water may sweep him into eternity, or fire may shrivel up his life. Hunger may waste away his strength, or food may bear to him a more rapid destruction. Disease may creep upon him ere he sees it, and bow him down to the grave; or accident may snap away his existence in a moment. And the

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moment when he ceases to live here will be the moment when all hope for his soul ceases for ever.

Ought not such a one to fear? What will protect, or help, or cheer him when the things in which he trusts and hopes are all gone for ever?

His pleas, his excuses for neglecting God, for putting off salvation, for comforting himself without God—what will they all avail but to crush him in deeper despair and anguish for ever, when his opportunities are all gone, and his light all extinct?

Oh, reader, not yet at peace with God, fear Him, who is able to cast both body and soul into hell, where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.

PEOPLE WHO SHOULD NOT FEAR.

“Oh whom should such a man as I be afraid?” sounds a very haughty question, and yet it only expresses the idea pressed upon us throughout God’s Word everywhere, that a certain sort of people cannot have reason to fear under any circumstances, the only proper occasion of fear being separation from this favored class.

What sort of people, then, are these to whom fear is to be unknown? Clearly, people who are *safe*—safe because they have escaped from the danger they were in; safe because they have got on to an immovable foundation; safe because they have got an infallible shelter from harm; safe because they have secured indestructible possessions and provisions; safe because they have ceased to believe in any safety out of God, and have put all their trust in Him; safe, in fact, because they have run away as God told them to do, and because He has run to meet them, as He promised He would.

The vile haunts of iniquity, the sparkling cup of sin, the gay company of the careless ones, the glittering show of fashion, the fascinating volumes and weekly numbers of ungodliness, the barren pathway of morality, the respectable highway of formal but godless religion, the busy, crowded road of the money-maker, and the bowery, secluded lanes of the pleasure-seeker, all alike have been left far behind, and in front we see—yes, we see, as clearly as the plainest



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matter of every day life, Jesus-ours, looking after us, and crowns, and thrones, and palms, and harps, and brightness for ever—all ours through the blood of the Lamb. Having escaped from wrath through Him—having escaped the evil that is in the world through lust—having fled for refuge and having found it—of whom shall we be afraid?

There cannot be ground for fear unless we have not really given up all we professed to have abandoned—not really transferred our treasure and our affection to the eternal and only just resting-place for either.

“I fear I shall lose money.”

Man, what business have you with it to lose? You would turn severely enough upon your son if he were to bet upon some race and then to moan to you with a solemn face about fearing he should lose. Would you not say, “And I hope you will lose, if the money was your own, for a lesson to you never to gamble any more.”

But what must God say to people who profess to be living for eternity, but who are continually on the rack about the very things the world is interested in? Might He not well say to many a one, Why do you profess to love Me, and to be making for heaven, while all the time you are so dreadfully put out about a few pounds? Why don't you either let heaven go and give all your energy to take care of your money, or else let your money go and give all your energy to make sure of heaven?

“I fear my health will fail.”

“And then?”

“I shall be unequal to my work.”

“And then?”

“I shall have a weary, struggling time of it, or shall have to give up altogether, and I don't know whatever will become of me and my poor family.”

“Then you fear you don't know what?”

“Well, yes, I suppose that is about it. If I only knew or could see—”



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Then you would neither believe nor fear unless you saw and knew something dreadful, and then you would fear only. But my dear brother, it is precisely the privilege of a real believer to see and know all about it beforehand by faith.

“There shall no evil befall thee”—that is positive enough surely. “Nothing shall harm you if ye be followers of that which is good.” Can anything be clearer than that?

“He that keepeth Israel shall not slumber.” Better than the best hospital nurse even if you do fall sick.

Whatever have you to fear about? If God be really your Father, and you really His child, do you think He will really let your health or strength give way unless it is the very best thing for you?

If you want to enjoy the privileges and blessings of a child, be childlike. Look up into your Father’s face and smile and laugh aloud for joy even between the sharp pangs of disease and on to the grave edge. Enjoy your Father’s love and goodness, be thankful for it, and never fear, for He will never leave nor forsake you.

“But I have enemies.”

And what can they do? They can hate, and curse, and slander, and rob, and fight, and die, and then they will leave you with eternal life still. And what worse will you be? If you don’t want to be hated, have nothing to do with Christ. If you have Him, you must be content for the world to hate you.

Think of poor young Joseph. Inexperienced and friendless, with clever enemies swarming around him, just watch him climb to a position in which no one dared to be anything but a friend to him!

His brethren were his enemies, and they sold him into a higher and more civilized circle of life than he would ever otherwise have occupied.

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His master and mistress were enemies, and drove him on to the steps of a throne, where he soon had the world at his feet. Joseph trusted in God, and how can anybody be hurt who trusts in Him? Of whom shall I be afraid?

"But I have friends."

Beware of them! But they cannot harm you if you use and do not commit yourself to them. Egypt was a broken reed, trusted in and leaned upon, a fearful curse; but Egypt was a pleasant land and a comfortable hiding-place for the little boy of promise. Even Judas carried the bag very passably for three years or so, and perhaps saved some better man from the damning influence of money.

Trust in God to save you either from putting your trust in man or from being censorious or suspicious, and then you need not fear the evil counsels or the double-dealing of anybody. Jesus Christ could be very fond of Simon, and make the best of him without hesitating to say, Get thee behind me, Satan, when he wanted to lead Him astray.

"I fear I shall come badly off in my old age. I shall insure."

We see plenty of fear of your trusting in the insurance company, and plenty of fear of its breaking and serving you out rightly for fearing; but we see no fear of God's deserting any of His oldest servants. What, help a man in his youth and vigor, and then leave him in his grey hairs! A likely story about the most precious Friend that ever loved!

"But I fear being dependent on others."

Then wake yourself up, and "do good and lend, hoping for nothing again;" and then if somebody should ever have to do the same to you, you will be able to encourage them to go on until their turn comes. Dependence is only irksome to the useless. People who get thoroughly accustomed to be useful are valuable even in their feebleness.

"My only fear is for the work of God."

Dear me, and how do you manage to fear about that?



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“Well I fear that if—unless—“

If it were *not* the work of God you might fear. Unless God does not care about His work, surely He will see to it.

When a contractor is making a railway and the earth falls in, do people begin to cry about the work? Don't they leave the contractor to cry and get it done with what loss he may?

Suppose the contractor fails, and the railway company fails into the bargain, do people fear about the work? Don't they laugh at the old shareholders and take shares in a new company to finish the line?

If the boiler of a man-of-war bursts, or the vessel is rundown or topples over, does the nation fear their national career is at an end? Don't they subscribe for the widows and orphans, laugh at the Government, and call for more ships and larger boilers?

And if men are so persistent in their enterprises, shall we fear that God will allow His work to cease or to fail in any way?

What a lot of “upsets” He has had to put up with all through His work! But he keeps on just the same, and so He will, depend upon it, to the end.

“But death!”

And what about death? Men can only be afraid for their lives who value them too highly or keep them to themselves. Is your life your own? That is the question. If it is, you have every reason to fear, for it may be taken any moment, and you will lose it and life eternal all at once. But if your life is utterly valueless to *you*—not your own, but the property of God and your fellow-men, then what has death got to do with you? It might injure God if He would allow any life of His to be taken a moment before the proper one. It might injure those for whom you live if they depended upon you and not upon God; but you, how can death harm?

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The men who lived and died without fear were men who counted not their lives dear unto them. The sword of Herod and the stones of the Jews could not harm men who had lost all interest in themselves, and who only lived for God and their fellows. Let us walk in the same path and mind the same things, until—

Fearless of hell and ghastly death,
We break through every foe;
The wings of love and arms of faith
Shall bear us conquerors through.