

Give to the Winds Thy Fears

Paul Gerhardt (1607–1676); tr. Charles Wesley (1703–1791)

Give to the winds thy fears,
hope and be undismayed;
God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears;
God shall lift up thy head.

Through waves and clouds and storms,
He gently clears the way;
wait thou His time, so shall this night
soon end in joyous day.

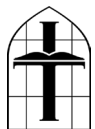
Still heavy is thy heart,
still sink thy spirits down?
Cast off the weight, let fear depart,
and ev'ry care be gone.

What though thou rulest not,
yet heav'n, and earth, and hell
proclaim, God sitteth on the throne,
and ruleth all things well.

Leave to His sov'reign sway
to choose and to command,
so shalt thou wond'ring own His way,
how wise, how strong His hand!

Far, far above thy thought
His counsel shall appear,
when fully He the work hath wrought,
that caused thy needless fear.

Let us in life, in death,
Thy steadfast truth declare,
and publish with our latest breath
Thy love and guardian care.



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ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Me Too

Kevin T. Bauder

It's been a weird eight days. Last Wednesday the girl who shares my life began to feel sick. By mid-afternoon she had decided that she would skip prayer meeting that night, so I went to church alone. I found that I was having trouble concentrating, and by the time we finished I could barely keep my eyes open. I used considerable noise to keep myself awake during the 45-minute drive home, then tumbled into bed.

That night I felt like I was being kicked, not in any one place, but everywhere at once. Every joint hurt. Every muscle ached. Every nerve ending burned. I kept thinking that I should get up and take a pain reliever. Under normal circumstances, my wife would have anticipated that need and brought me one. But she was feeling too bad to think about me.

The next day both of us felt even worse. We skipped work. We dressed sloppily. We huddled in recliners. We took acetaminophen and ibuprofen in overlapping dosages. By that evening, we were starting to feel like we weren't going to get better.

On Friday morning I journeyed to the land of W (which I usually avoid like the plague, but since I clearly had the plague, I decided I'd go) to purchase COVID test kits. To our surprise, both of our test results showed negative. Thus emboldened, we attempted to rouse ourselves to activity. We had been spared the dreaded pestilence, so how bad off could we be? We even drove to the office briefly during the afternoon and attempted to complete a couple hours' worth of work. By the time we got home, my beloved just wanted to crawl into bed and sleep, which she did. I stubbornly refused. We had a guest coming for the night. All must be set in readiness.

For the tale to be complete, I should mention that both of us are vaccinated and both of us are boosted. We had felt some confidence that this coverage would protect us from the scourge; should we happen to catch it, then the jabs would make the disease endurable. By contrast, whatever we had was *not* endurable.

Our guest arrived, and it fell to me to think about dinner. The more sensible half of my marital arrangement remained at home whilst said guest and I

drove to a restaurant. Finding that restaurant permanently closed, we drove to another, where we dined and chatted, me feeling nauseous but liberated because, after all, I had tested negative.

He had an early flight to catch, so I was up at 3:00 AM to drive him to the airport. Back at home I returned to huddling in the recliner and alternating the pain relievers. I can remember thinking, "As much as this stuff hurts, I'm sure glad I didn't come down with COVID."

It's odd how one's mind wanders when one is sick. I recall pondering the significance of the singular versus the plural, especially when it comes to pronouns. I considered how much Black lives matter, and how little Black Lives Matter matters. I found myself viewing gun control as demand-side solution to a supply-size problem. I drew consequential conclusions about these and several other matters throughout the day.

Eventually I fell asleep and these dogmas slumbered with me. I awoke on Sunday, less than prepared to preach and teach, but feeling an obligation to do so and not knowing of any alternative. At least I could do this with a clear conscience since I had tested negative for COVID. Rousing myself, I drove 45 minutes to church, where I immediately fell asleep in the parking lot. Then I spent an hour talking what I'm sure was nonsense during Sunday School, followed by a hour of blather during the morning service. Perhaps moved by some premonition, I did mask up for the entire time, used copious hand sanitizer, and kept my distance from absolutely everybody. No shaking hands for me! I was living an introvert's dream.

I did comment publicly that, as bad as I felt, I was glad I didn't have COVID. After all, I had tested negative. Then, after church, I exited the building immediately, leaving only an apology behind me. People were left asking, "Who was that masked man?" I drove home, and then it was back to huddling in the recliner, consuming pain killers, and adding various cough remedies and decongestants.

Monday was just as bad, but we weren't giving in. After all, we had tested negative. Then, as my wife was cooking lunch, and I was savoring the aroma of onions and other ingredients being sauteed, she suggested that something was wrong with the food. Even the onions, she said, had no smell.

Ruh-Roh.

That's when we made a quick trip to Urgent Care and, as is wont with quick trips to Urgent Care, this one ended up consuming the rest of the day. Along the way we were given another test for COVID, which came back unequivocally, indisputably, undeniably, incontrovertibly positive. We were told that we *must* quarantine (I wish I'd have known that on the previous day). Then, just as we were beginning to quarantine, we were sent off to a twenty-four-hour pharmacy, located forty-five minutes across town, to purchase the new

Pfizer anti-viral that is supposed to fight COVID. Interestingly, the pharmacist thanked us for masking when we came in. She said, "We know exactly why people are buying this medicine, and almost nobody masks when they pick it up."

The whole experience has left a bitter taste in my mouth. I mean *bitter* literally, and I also mean *literally* literally. The foul flavor is one of the side effects of the drug. My tongue tastes like penicillin all the time. It's revolting, but the sort of thing that's a fit punishment for a guy who took his COVID test seriously when it came back negative.

Have you noticed that everybody has their own COVID story? And I don't mean *everybody* literally, but hyperbolically, as in, *lots of people*. Some of their stories are genuinely tragic (I have lost friends to COVID, and nearly lost others). Some are merely tedious repetitions of personal medical history. I suspect that mine fits the latter category. But at least now, when somebody starts talking about how bad their COVID experience was, I can say, #MeToo.

Sorry. My mind is wandering again.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
