

and comfort us, both in the dark and stormy day, when hopes are blighted, and prospects clouded; or, when death looks in at our windows, or enters our dwellings, and takes away the sight of our eyes with a stroke; or, in that still darker season, when the iniquities of our heels do compass about, and Satan stands as an accuser, in the court of conscience, and tries to drive us to despair, by raking up all our iniquities, and enlarging on their aggravations; and arguing that those who have been guilty of such crimes, cannot be the true children of God. It is often in vain, that the poor heart-stricken one "puts in its plea,—that he is a child of God, that he belongs to God's family, and for this end produceth all his evidences,—every thing whereby faith gives him an interest in God. Satan in the meantime, opposeth with all his might; sin and law assist him; many flaws are found in his evidences; the truth of them all is questioned; and the soul hangs in suspense, as to the issue. In the midst of the plea, and contest, the comforter comes, and by a word of promise, or otherwise overpowers the heart, with a comfortable persuasion, that his plea is good, and that he is a child of God; and therefore, it is said of him that he 'witnesseth with our Spirit.' When our Spirits are pleading their right and title, he comes in and bears witness on our side; at the same time, enabling us to put forth acts of filial obedience, kind and child-like; which is called crying, 'Abba, Father.' Remember still the manner of the Spirit's working,—that he doth it effectually, voluntarily and freely. Hence sometimes the dispute hangs long,—the cause is pleading many years. The law seems sometime to prevail, sin and Satan to rejoice, and the poor soul is filled with dread about its inheritance. Perhaps its own witness, from its faith, sanctification, former experience, keeps up the plea with some life and comfort, but the work is not done, the conquest is not fully obtained, until the Spirit, who worketh freely and effectually, when and how he will, comes in with his testimony also; clothing his power with a word of promise, he makes all parties concerned to attend unto him, and puts an end to the controversy."\*

\*Owen.