

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

HEART'S-EASE.

A Sermon

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“He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.”
Psalm cxii. 7.

THE last month has been a peculiarly gloomy season. Evil tidings have followed on one another's heels like Job's messengers. Epidemics have been rampant among our families, and many are the early graves which have been filled by contagious diseases. It is greatly to be feared that the cholera is stretching its wings of death, and hastening to find its prey in our crowded lanes and alleys. The murrain among the cattle is cutting off the herd from the stall, and polluting the most substantial food of man; and it is much to be feared that the continual showers must be spoiling much of the uncartered corn, and causing serious loss to farmers in the more northern counties.

In the newspapers of the last few weeks there has been a constant succession of the most fearful crimes. Scarcely have we known a period in which persons disposed to be melancholy might more thoroughly indulge their taste for the darkest apprehensions and forebodings. Cheerful as I am, I could in some degree sympathize with a good old saint, with whom I sat a few minutes the other night, when he began to lament our national sins, and tremble at the presence of what he conceived to be national judgments. Though I am very far from being troubled with uneasy forecastings, yet I freely admit that old age and long experience may justly suggest to us earnest searchings of heart because of the ills of the present period.

More terrible than rumour of plague or murrain, is the manifest fact that Popery is advancing among us with giant strides. Turn which way we will, Popery—Romish or Anglican—reeks in our nostrils. It is no longer engaged in secretly undermining our bulwarks, it has set its ladder to the wall, and is scaling the ramparts. The Popish party in the Establishment, supported by the undoubted superstition of the National Prayer-book, now seeks to regain its ancient prominence; while its allies without are moving heaven and earth to win this nation to the dominion of Antichrist. Meanwhile, there are numerous causes for mourning in the Church of God itself—many defections, many departing

from first principles and fundamental doctrines, and some, who did run well, suddenly turning aside, and proving that they had never run in the power and energy of the Spirit of God. If one preferred the night side of life, one might sit down and readily gather congenial shades of cloud and mist about one's head and heart. But what would this avail? Despondency wins no victories. Let us pluck up courage, and go to our knees and to our God. Those who have laid hold on Christ Jesus, and are resting in the Father's love and power, have no reason to be disquieted: should all hell be unmuzzled, and all earth be unhinged, they may rejoice with a joy undamped by carnal fear or earthly sorrow. They have found a secret source of supply, from which they can draw, if all earth's wells should suddenly run dry; for all their fresh springs are in their God. Of each believer, when full of faith, it is true, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

I. To come directly to the text. EVIL TIDINGS MAY COME TO THE BEST OF MEN—to those whose hearts are fixed and are trusting in the Lord.

It may be of great service to us to remember this dreary fact, for it may lead us to set loose by earthly things. Let us chew this very bitter morsel for a moment or two: there is nothing very palatable or pleasant in the recollection that we are not above the shafts of adversity, but it may humble us and prevent our boasting with the Psalmist, "My mountain standeth firm: I shall never be moved." It may stay us from taking too deep root in this soil, from which we are so soon to be transplanted into the heavenly garden.

1. Let us remember the frail tenure upon which we hold our *temporal mercies*: how soon may evil tidings come concerning them. We rightly class *our families* first in our possessions. We look with delight into the faces of our children; we mark their growing abilities; we are charmed with evidences of opening intelligence—yet they may never live to manhood, their sun may go down ere it is yet noon. We are, perhaps, perplexed as to what we shall do with them when they shall be old enough to be apprenticed to a trade, or initiated into a profession—we may never have that task to care for; long before they reach that period of life, they may be slumbering in their graves. We gaze with ever-fresh delight upon those beloved ones with whom we are united in the ties of wedlock, but if we gaze wisely, we shall clearly see mortality written upon the fairest brow, and glistening in the most loving eye. How soon may these partners of our hearts' best affections be rent away from us! We must beware of making idols of those who are nearest and dearest, for the objects of our idolatry may soon, like the golden calf, be dashed in pieces, and we may have to drink the waters of bitterness because of our sin. If we would remember that all the trees of earth are marked with the woodman's axe, we should not be so ready to build our nests in them. We should love, but we should love with the love which expects death, and which reckons upon separations. Our dear relations are but loaned to us, and the hour when we must return them to the lender's hand may be even at the door.

The like is certainly true of our *worldly goods*. Do not riches take to themselves wings and fly away? And though we have heard some

almost profanely say that they have clipped the wings of their riches, so that they cannot fly, yet may the bird of prey rend them where they are, and the rotting carcase of the wealth which the owners cannot enjoy, may be a perpetual curse to them. Full often gold and silver canker in the coffer, and fret the soul of their claimant. God can do with us as with Israel: "While the meat was yet in their mouths, the curse of God came upon them." What substance have we beneath the skies? Is not what we call *substance* a mere shadow soon departing? Your good, substantial ship has often returned from her voyage to enrich her owner, and just now she flies before a favouring gale; but there are storms, and hurricanes, and sunken reefs, and quicksands, and who knows how soon your promising venture and the vessel which bears it may sink into the briny sea. There stands your house—it is full of merchandize upon which, with but a fair profit, great wealth may be obtained; but a fire may come, and there may happen to be no insurance, or by a change of market profit may wither into loss. Your present prosperity may soon be turned into distress by the failure of some larger house, the dishonouring of heavy bills, a breach of credit, or an unexpected drain of capital. How often have enterprizes high as the tower of Babel, suddenly rocked, and reeled, and fallen in total ruin. This world at best is but a sandy foundation, and the wisest builder may well look for an end to the most substantial of its erections.

Evil tidings may also come to us in another respect: we may suddenly find our *health* decay. That strength which now enables us to perform our daily business with delight, may so fail us that the slightest exertion may cause us pain. Although unconscious of so sad a fact, we may be even now fostering within our bodies the disease which is destined to stretch us upon the bed of sickness. We should be prepared for the days of darkness, for they are many. The day of sickness would not overtake us as a thief, if we were wise enough to remember that we are dust. Frail flowers of the field, we must not reckon upon blooming for ever. Spring lasts not all the year, the time of the sere and yellow leaf must come, and the frosts of winter must nip our root. Wherefore should I suppose that I am to enjoy an immunity from the common ills of mankind? Am I not among those who are born of woman, and is it not written that all such are "of few days, and full of trouble?" Do not the "sparks fly upward" from my hearth? and wherefore, then, should I suppose that I am not "born to trouble" like the rest of my race? It were well for us if we would remember that there is a time appointed for weakness and sickness; then we should be more thankful for the privilege of going up to the Lord's house, since the day cometh when we can no longer go up to Zion's hill. While we can serve God, let us recollect that the time may come when we shall rather have to bear than to do; when we can only glorify him by suffering, and not by earnest activity. Be it ours to live while we live, and snatch the present moment out of the jaws of time, and while the evil days come not, nor the days draw nigh in which we shall say, we have no pleasure in them, let us serve God with both our hands, and spend and be spent in his service. There is no single point in which we can hope to escape from the sharp arrows of affliction. The fondest hope which you and I have cherished may yet drop like the

fruit of the tree before it is ripe, smitten at the core by a secret worm. Set not your affections upon things of earth: set your whole heart upon things above, for *here* the rust corrupteth, and the moth devoureth, and the thief breaketh through, but *there* all joys are perpetual and eternal. What is there here after all but cloud-land? Why seek we to be lords of acres of mere mist? What are earth's treasures but vapour; will you heap up for yourself haze and fog? Cloud and mist will pass away, and if these be your riches, how poverty-stricken will you be when you can carry none of these airy riches into the land of solid wealth. Christian, remember well the insecurity of all earthly things, and be content to have it so.

Certain expositors refer this passage to *slander* and reproach, and they translate it, "He shall not be afraid of evil hearing." It is one of the sharpest trials of the Christian's life to be misunderstood, misrepresented, and belied, but any man who will serve his master well must make up his mind to endure much of this affliction. The more prominent you are in Christ's service, the more certain are you to be the butt of calumny. I have long ago said farewell to my character; I lost it in the earlier days of my ministry by being a little more zealous than suited a slumbering age, and I have never been able to regain it except in the sight of him who judgeth all the earth, and in the hearts of those who love me for my work's sake. Beloved fellow-labourers in the vineyard of the Lord Jesus, you must all set your account upon being despised and reproached for his dear sake. You weaker ones come to your minister and say, "So-and-so has spoken evil of me." What, young friend, is this a strange thing? Did this never happen to anybody before? You sit down and cry, "It will break my heart; this cruel report will be the death of me." Was no one else ever broken in heart by reproach? Did nobody else have his character besmeared by the fingers of envy and the tongue of tale-bearing? Who are you, my fine sir, that you should escape? Gentle sister, who are you that you are never to be abused? Humble yourself and do not be so proud as to think a special escape should be made for you, when your Lord and all his followers have had to endure much contradiction of sinners. Woe unto you when all men speak well of you. It is a blessing to attain to such a state that you care no more than the rock careth for the raging billows what men may say, so long as you have a conscience void of offence both toward God and toward man. In all these things, however, we ought to expect evil tidings.

2. Evil tidings will also come to us concerning *spiritual matters*, and babes in grace will be greatly alarmed. Every now and then there cometh a messenger with breathless haste, who tells us that the sages have discovered that the Bible is a fiction. Years ago, we were all astonished to find that people had been digging down into the earth, and had brought up loads of very hard stones, with which Revelation was to be slain, like Stephen by the Jews. Revelation has lived on wonderfully well and flourished amazingly, notwithstanding all that. Another very judicious naturalist afterwards discovered—and oh, what consternation there was—that we had all sprung from monkeys, and that all living creatures were the result of successive developments from infusorial atoms. Somehow or other, the gospel has managed to

survive even this tremendous blow. Not many months ago, a learned quarryman dug up a jaw-bone and a bushel or two of pointed flints, the undoubted property of primeval men who lived, according to report, ages before Adam; now this discovery was to silence for ever the teachings of inspiration. Those flints were invincible and deadly weapons! But the religion of Jesus is so full of life, that her deadliest foes cannot make an end of her. Voltaire, you remember, had a printing-press at Geneva some years ago, with which he printed a prophecy that Christianity would not survive the century of which he thought himself the bright and shining light; that very press is now printing copies of the Bible in Geneva. A few weeks ago we were informed ethnologically that negroes were nearly allied to apes, and that the Scripture statement that God has made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth was clearly contrary to fact; but, my brethren, this grand old book manages still to survive, and I think the most of us who know its value can say we are not afraid of evil tidings which prophesy the overthrow of its authority, for it will see all its foes withered like grass, and yet not one of its jots or tittles shall pass away. Our heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. We can leave these gentlemen to the old women among us, whose experimental acquaintance with the power of godliness will be as a two-edged sword to slay the enemies' sounding professions of superior intelligence. The blind and the lame in the Lord's army shall laugh to scorn the champions of the Philistines, for the Lord of Hosts is with us as our captain, and Jesus rides forth conquering and to conquer.

Sadder tidings at times afflict us. We hear, dear friends, that *professors have fallen*, and what a thunder-clap it seems when we are told that such-and-such a prominent member has forsaken the path of rectitude, or a minister has departed from sound doctrine. Yes, and we must expect this. Judas and Demas will be represented over and over again, and even Simon Magus will not be wanting in the Church as long as it is here below. We shall, moreover, hear that success has vanished where once it ruled. We may preach the gospel and win thousands of souls; but on a sudden there may be no conversions, and those who are the warmest adherents of the truth may gradually grow cold. For these things be ready. There have been ebbs and flows in the Church in all ages; and her progress has been like that of the ocean when it cometh to its flood: it has been by a succession of in-rolling waves, and waves that fall back again into the sea. So will it be till Christ cometh.

We shall also hear evil tidings about *ourselves*. Satan will tell us that we are hypocrites, and conscience will remind us of sundry things which raise the suspicion that we are not soundly regenerated. It will be a blessed thing if then we can fly again to the cross of Jesus Christ. If the law thunders at us and gives us evil tidings of wrath to come, happy are we if we can fly to the great law-fulfiller and find a shelter from the law's clamorous demands. But we must expect this. No saint gets to heaven without being attacked by Satan. An old divine was wont to say that the way to heaven passed by the mouth of hell. Ye must have spiritual conflicts. How could you be crowned if you did not fight, and how could you win the victory if you knew no battle?

3. Moreover, to conclude the list, the evil tidings of *death* will soon be brought to you by the appointed messenger. How evil are the solemn tidings of departure to the most of men! The message will be given to us, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." We shall see the spirit-finger which beckons down to the cold flood of Jordan, but we shall not fear those evil tidings, nay, faith shall count them a blessed message, and we shall march cheerfully onward where Jesus leads the way.

In eternity there shall be the evil tidings of the angelic trumpet, evil to all but saints, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment." The general summons shall gather together all nations of men to stand before the dread tribunal, but truly in that case our heart shall be so fixed, nay, flooded with divine delights, that with joy shall we receive the resurrection, and with transport stand to be acquitted at the judgment-seat.

I have thus marshalled before you a line of grim-visaged messengers, any one of whom may, within a moment, rush into your chamber, crying, "Tidings! Thou man of God! Tidings!"

II. Now for a second and more cheerful thought. A CHRISTIAN AT NO TIME OUGHT TO FEAR EITHER IN EXPECTATION OF EVIL TIDINGS, OR WHEN THE TIDINGS ACTUALLY ARRIVE.

Under no conceivable circumstances ought you, Christian, to be afraid. And why? Because, if you be troubled, and distressed, and distracted, *what do you more than other men?* Other men have not your God to fly to; they are not favourites of heaven as you are; they have never proved the faithfulness of God as you have done, and it is no wonder if they are bowed down with alarm and cowed with fear: but as for you, you profess to be of another spirit; you testify to the world that God dwelleth in you, and you in him; you say that you have been begotten again unto a lively hope; you testify that your heart lives in heaven and not on earthly things; now, if you are seen to be distracted as other men, what is the value of that grace which you profess to have received? Where is the dignity of that new nature which you claim to possess? Surely, dear brother, unless you would be suspected of having boasted beyond your measure, you must not be afraid of evil tidings.

Again, if you should be filled with alarm, as others are, *you would, doubtless, be led into the sins so common to others under trying circumstances.* The ungodly, when they are overtaken by evil tidings, rebel against God; they murmur, and think that God deals hardly with them. Will you fall into that same sin? Will you provoke the Lord, as they do? If you are the subject of the same distraction, you will, probably, fall into the same murmuring.

Moreover, unconverted men often run to wrong means, to evil shifts, in order to escape from difficulties, and you will be sure to do the same, saint as you are, if your mind too far yields to the present pressure. Trust in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. Your wisest course is to do as Moses did at the Red Sea, "Stand still and see the salvation of God." But if your heart be troubled, if the water gets leaking into your ship, and the vessel itself is filled with the boiling flood, why, you will be plotting this and plotting the other, and ere long, you

will be putting forth your hand unto iniquity, and so piercing yourself through with many sorrows; but if the Holy Spirit enables you in patience to possess your souls, then, if you suffer, you will not sin, and, with all your smarts, you will not suffer from the regret of having departed from the living God.

Further, you must not give way to these doubts, and alarms, and fears, for, if you do, *you will be unfit to meet the trouble*. In storms landmen are all in alarm, and fear, and they are fit for nothing. Just put them under the hatches and keep them down below, or else they will be in the sailors' way. But the old sailor has seen a storm before, and the captain has had many a nor'-wester blowing upon him, so he looks around him just as if all were calm, and gives his orders to the pilot and the first mate with perfect composure; and when they have to reef all sail and lie under bare poles, or, worse still, if the mast goes by the board, he is very serious, but still quiet and hopeful; he has weathered other tempests, and he shall outlive this also. But you flurried people who are all in a flutter at every piece of evil tidings, what will you do? Why you will cut your own fingers in seeking to carve your own deliverance; you will push down your house about your head when you meant to have propped it up. You will be quite unable to meet the difficulty if your heart be not "fixed, trusting in the Lord."

Let me ask you another and very important question. If you give way to fright and fear when you hear of evil tidings, *how can you glorify God?* Saints can sing God's high praises in the fires and bless his name on beds of sickness, but you cannot if you fall into distractions. Why, man, can your murmuring praise God? Your doubting and fearing, as if you had none to help you, will these magnify the Most High? Come, I pray thee, if thou wouldst honour God be brave. A certain good man was much troubled under a loss in business; his wife tried to comfort him but failed, and being a very wise woman she gave it up till the morning. In the morning when she came down stairs her face looked so sad that her husband said, "What is the matter with you?" She, still preserving a mournful countenance, said that a dream had troubled her. "What was it, my dear?" he said; "you ought not to be troubled with dreams." "Oh," she said, "I dreamed that God was dead, and it was such reason for trouble, that all the angels were weeping in heaven, and all the saints on earth were ready to break their hearts." Her husband said, "You must not be foolish, you know it was only a dream." "Oh but," she said, "to think of God's being dead!" He replied, "You must not even think of such a thing, for God cannot die, he ever lives to comfort his people." Instantly her face brightened up, and she said, "I thought I would bring you thus to rebuke yourself, for you have been dreaming that God had forsaken you, and now you see how groundless is your sorrow. While God lives his people are safe."

So, Christian, I think I could give you many reasons why you should praise God, and take courage even when evil tidings come. For the sake of blessing others, for your own spiritual health and profit, that you may get fatness out of famine, safety out of danger, gain out of loss, do pray that your heart may be fixed in sure confidence upon the faithfulness of your covenant God.

III. But now somebody will say, "I do not know how I am to keep from these fears. My mind is like that of another man, and I am readily disturbed." Dear brother, the text tells you, in the third place, that **FIXEDNESS OF HEART IS THE TRUE CURE FOR BEING ALARMED AT EVIL TIDINGS.**

"Fixedness of heart." The translators somewhat differ as to what this passage means; and some think it means preparedness of heart; "my heart is fixed," or, "my heart is prepared." Let it mean both, and then we shall have the whole truth, for he whose heart is fixed is prepared. Now in what respect is a Christian's heart fixed? I think, in many.

First, the Christian's heart is *fixed as to duty*. He says within himself, "It is my business so to walk as Christ also walked: it can never be right for me to do contrary to God's will. I have set the Lord always before me, and in integrity of heart will I walk all my way, wherever that way may lead." Such a man is prepared for anything. Whatever trial comes he is prepared to meet it, because his soul is resolved that come gain, come loss, he will not be dishonest to make himself rich; he will not tell a lie to win a kingdom, he will not give up a principle to save his life. He has not to go, as some of you have, to the next neighbour to say, "What am I to do? What is the best policy?" The Christian has no policy; he does right, and leaves consequences to God. I know that if the skies wanted propping with sin, it is no business of mine to prop them, and if they could only be sustained by my speaking falsely, they should fall. Truth is our business, integrity is our line of duty, and results remain with the Most High. In this respect the man who by grace is fixed for the strait and narrow road, is prepared, come what may.

But, more comfortable than this, the Christian's heart is *fixed as to knowledge* and so prepared. There are some things which a believer knows and is quite fixed about. He knows, for instance, that God sits in the stern-sheets of the vessel when it rocks most. He believes that an invisible hand is always on the world's tiller, and that wherever providence may drift, Jehovah steers it. That re-assuring knowledge prepares him for everything. "It is my Father's will," saith he. He looks over the raging waters and he sees the spirit of Jesus treading the billows, and he hears a voice which saith, "It is I, be not afraid." He knows too that God is always wise, and, knowing this, he is prepared for all events. They cannot come amiss, saith he, there can be no accidents, no mistakes, nothing can occur which ought not to occur. If I should lose all I have, it is better that I should lose than have, if God so wills: the worst calamity is the wisest and the kindest thing that could occur to me if God ordains it. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." The Christian does not merely hold this as a theory, but he knows it as a matter of fact. Everything has worked for good as yet; the poisonous drugs that have been mixed in the compound have nevertheless worked the cure; the sharp cuts of the lancet have cleansed out the proud flesh and facilitated the healing. Every event as yet has worked out the most divinely blessed results; and so, believing this, that God rules it, that God rules wisely, that God brings good out of evil, the believer's heart

is fixed and he is well prepared. Here, bring me which cup you will, my Father fills them all and I will drink them as he sends them, not merely with resignation, but with sanctified delight. Send me what thou wilt, my God, so long as it comes from thee; never was that a bad portion which came from thy table to any one of thy children. My Father, write what thou wilt concerning thy child, I will not seek to pry between the folded leaves, but I will patiently hope and quietly wait as leaf by leaf is unfolded, knowing thou art too wise to err and too good to be unkind. Now see what a preparation this is for evil tidings, this having the heart fixed in a knowledge of God.

Further, there is another kind of fixedness, namely, *the fixedness of resignation*. There is a verse we sing in one of the hymns, that I hardly think at times some of us ought to sing, for it is not at all times true:

“O thou gracious, wise and just,
In thy hands my life I trust,
Have I somewhat dearer still?
I resign it to thy will.”

It is very easy to say that, but very difficult to carry it out. To take Isaac, our only son, up to the altar, and unsheath the knife at God's command, needs an Abrahamic faith, and that kind of faith is not so common as it might be among Christians. Beloved, when we gave ourselves to Christ, we gave him our person, our estate, our friends, and everything: we made a full surrender, and the only way to be right when affliction comes, is to stand to that surrender, in fact, to renew it every day. It is a good thing every morning to give all up to God, and then to live through the day, and thank him for renewing the daily lease. If you think you have mercies on a fifty years' lease, you will become discontented if turned out of the tenancy; but if you feel you are only as it were a daily tenant, you will feel grateful that the great Landlord has given you a new lease. The eyes of your body—are they given for ever? Their light may never know to-morrow's sun. Those lips, which you to-day give to God's service, may soon chill in silence. So is it with all you have. Then resign all to God, for if you give it all up to him every day, it will not be hard to give it up when he takes it away at last. If you have resigned it a thousand times before, it will only be a repetition of what you have rehearsed to yourself aforetime, and, therefore, are well taught in. Stand to your resignation, be fixed about that, and you will be prepared for the most evil tidings.

Better still, let me remind you of one form of fixedness which will make you outride every storm, namely, *fixedness as to eternal things*. “I cannot lose”—the Christian may say—“I cannot lose my best things.” When a carrier has many parcels to carry, if he has gold and silver or precious stones, he is sure to put them near himself. Perhaps he has some common goods, and these he ties on behind: some thief, it is possible, steals from the cart some of the common goods which were outside. “Oh, well,” says the man when he gets home, “I am sorry to lose anything, but my precious things are all right; I have them all safe; I thank God the thief could not run away with them.” Now, our earthly goods and even our dearest friends are only the common mercies of God, but our Saviour, our God, our eternal interest in the

covenant, our heaven which we are soon to inherit, these are kept where they cannot be lost. A friend of mine once went up to the Bank with a thousand pounds in his pocket. I do not think he was very wise, for after putting that large sum in his pocket, he put his pocket-handkerchief over it, and somewhere or other down in the Borough, or over London Bridge, a thief stole his pocket-handkerchief. He said to me, "I never thought at all about that; I was so full of joy at finding that the money was not gone." The anecdote is instructive, for our earthly comforts compared with our eternal interests are but as the pocket-handkerchief compared to the thousand pounds, nay, they do not bear so high a relation. If adversity should come and take everything else away, yet, Christian, your heart is still fixed because you have a grasp of eternal things; and neither life nor death, nor time, nor eternity, can make you let go your hold of the glory which is to be revealed in you. Thus you are prepared, come what may.

I will only add one other thought on that point, I believe that *holy gratitude is one blessed way of fixing the soul on God and preparing it for trouble*. You have a friend who gave you a very hard word the other day. You felt very grieved, but after a few minutes you said, "There, now, if he were to kick me, I should always love him for the great kindness that he did to me years ago when I was in great straits." Now, when I think of what our God has done for us, how he saved us from going down into the pit and found a ransom in his own dear Son, when we remember how he has plucked us out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, let him do what seemeth him good: the Lord gave us Christ, then let him take away what he will, we cannot think hardly of him; after such a proof of love we are bound to him by such ties of gratitude that let him take away one mercy after the other, till there is hardly one left, we will yet bless his name. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Let every saint of God feel himself so fixed and bound by ties of gratitude that he is prepared, whatever may come, still to bless his God.

IV. The last point is this, THE GREAT INSTRUMENT OF FIXEDNESS OF HEART IS FAITH IN GOD. "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." You see that we have come hither by progressive steps. Evil tidings may come to an heir of heaven; he ought not to be afraid of them; the way to be prepared for them is to have the heart fixed and prepared, and the method of having the heart fixed is confident trustfulness in the Lord. The Christian is not prepared for trial by trusting in his fellow men, or by relying upon his own wisdom and experience. We lean on a better prop than an arm of flesh. The Christian relies only upon his God. Every attribute engages this confidence. The heir of heaven rests in the *love* of God. "Oh," saith he, "my Father loves me too well to suffer any evil thing to damage me. I know by that very Spirit which he has given, by which I cry 'Abba, Father,' I know the tenderness of his heart forbids that I should ever perish, or that anything should happen to me which shall do me serious damage." When there was a fire many years ago in the little town of Delft, in Holland, it occurred in a house upon the top of which a stork's nest had been built. Now, the storks are very affectionate to their young, and it was observed that as the flames went up, the storks tried first of all to carry

off their young, but when that could not be done, both parents kept flapping their nests with their wings, as though to cool the young ones, and when the flames drew nearer, both parents set themselves down over the top of the nest and there died with their young ones. Can it be possible that our God could have less affection for his own children than these poor birds had for the offspring of their nest? Impossible! He will cover us with his feathers, and under his wings will we trust; his truth shall be our shield and buckler. Come famine, come pestilence, come disease, come death, come judgment,

“He that hath lov'd us bears us through,
And makes us more than conquerors too.”

The believer, thus dependent upon God's love, is also trusting in God's *power*. He knows that none ever did resist the Lord with success. That mighty arm breaketh in pieces the enemy. When he goeth forth to war, it is as when the potter breaketh earthen vessels with a rod of iron. The Christian feels that the omnipotence of God is more to be trusted than the potence of the devil is to be dreaded. “More is he that is for us than all they that be against us.” The Christian perceives the enemy round about, but his eyes have been touched with heavenly ointment, and he can also see the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire, and therefore he trusteth in the power of his God, and his soul is not disturbed.

He relies also, as we have said, upon the *wisdom* of God; for indeed, every attribute of the Most High becomes a subject of the believer's joy. I am afraid, dear friends, we forget our God too often. I am sure that at the bottom we do not believe him to be wise, or else we do not believe him to be gracious, for, if we did know, and feel, and realize that he is God, and just such a God as Scripture says he is, we should lean back upon him, and leave trouble, adversity, loss, and crosses with him, casting all our care on him, because he careth for us. Get, I pray you, to be assured of his sympathy with you. Do not think he is indifferent to the griefs that vex you. You are in the furnace, but he sits at the mouth of it, watching you as the dross melts in the flame. God is never away from any of his children, but he is nearest to those who are the most sad, and sick, and troubled. If there be one sheep in the fold that is more watched over than the rest, it is the weakest sheep. “He carrieth the lambs in his bosom, and gently leadeth those that are with young.” You cannot think how dear you are to his heart; and he is so determined to bring you safely home, that he has sworn it with an oath. By two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lie, he has given you strong consolation. Will you reject the consolation when *he* brings it? Is not the Comforter himself able to comfort you? Christ has gone to heaven that you might have that precious gift of the Comforter within you. Why will you grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and bring this trouble upon your own spirit by these anxieties, these doubtings, and frettings. “Trust ye in the Lord Jehovah, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” Go with joy and draw water out of the wells of salvation, and praise him all the days of your life. When Dr. Payson was getting near his end, he reminded his friends that God is enough for his people. Said he, “In

years gone by, I often dreaded the taking away of certain earthly comforts, but when they have been withdrawn, I have had so much more of the grace and presence of God, that I have had to be thankful for the apparent loss, for it was a real gain. And now," said he, "that I am a cripple and confined to my house, I am far happier than I ever expected to be, and am as happy as a man well could be out of heaven." We can sing that verse together—

"And if our dearest comforts fall
Before his sovereign will,
He never takes away our all;
Himself he gives us still."

Since you have your God left you, Christian, let the text be true of you, "He is not afraid of evil tidings: for his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

I have not time to say anything about the contrast to all this, but it is a contrast which would bear very hard upon those of you who have not looked to Jesus Christ. You have need to be afraid of everything. The stones of the earth are not in league with you, nor are the beasts of the earth at peace with you. There is no providence working your good; there is no special eye upon your benefit. You are orphan children. The stars in heaven fought against Sisera, remember, and they fight against you. The sweet influence of the Pleiades you cannot know, but for in heavenly blessings you can claim no share. Oh, that you could hide yourself beneath the wings of God! Do you desire it? Then, remember who it was that said, "How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." Fly to the Saviour: there are his wounds; they will afford you shelter. He died to save the lost; for the rebellious he hath obtained mercies. Give him your soul to save; trust him to work a good work in you and for you, and you shall never die, but; with holy joy and confidence, shall live in the light of his countenance evermore. The Lord bless this sermon to the staying of his people's hearts upon himself, and his shall be the praise. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalms xi., xii.