

SAFE DWELLING

A SERMON

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“But whoso hearkens unto me shall dwell safely and shall be quiet from fear of evil.” Proverbs 1:33

THERE are contained in the Bible two covenants, the Jewish covenant, and the Christian covenant: in other words, the old covenant and the new covenant. The first, namely, the old, was temporal, and you have a full-length description of the old covenant in the 28th of Deuteronomy; and the blessings of that old covenant were temporal; the penalties also of that covenant were temporal; but this covenant, nevertheless, had a typical meaning. You have in the 110th Psalm the new covenant, and you will observe how that 110th Psalm, which commences with the enthronement of the dear Savior, goes on describing his saving power, how that his people, the people given to him in vast eternity, are made willing, how they are brought into harmony with his eternal priesthood and with God's immutable oath; how he works victories as he goes on; and how the Psalm terminates with that refreshing which the Savior realized in the days of his humiliation, and which his people realize as they travel through this wilderness. “He shall drink of the brook by the way;” and the brook of which he drank was made up of Old Testament promises; he drank of that brook, and we drink of the same brook; and when we do so, we lift up our heads, and see that our redemption draws near. Now, in the two paragraphs connected with our text you have the language of the old covenant; the wisdom of God in the Jewish covenant, calling upon the simple ones to cease from their simplicity, and the scorers to cease from their scorning; and upon those that hated knowledge to be wise, and if they would turn at his reproof and listen to him, he would then pour out his Spirit, in the sense of that dispensation, upon them, and favor them, and that they should dwell safely in the land of Canaan, temporally, mind, and that he would shield them from evil; and which blessing they always realized when they thus hearkened unto the Lord. But it laid with the Jews to hearken to the Lord or not, and they chose generally not to hearken to him; and as they would not hearken to him, as they would none of his reproof, as they would none of his counsel, and as they would not choose the fear of Jehovah, therefore he says, “I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes; when your fear comes as a desolation, and your destruction comes as a whirlwind.” Now, this is the language of the old covenant; the promissory part of that covenant is a type or figure of the new covenant, and the penal parts of that covenant

are nothing else but the voice of the law. But does the new covenant come in that way? Does the new covenant come and ask people to turn to God? I believe not. Does the new covenant come and say, Turn you at my reproof: if you do, I will bless you; if you do not, I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear comes? No, the new covenant does not thus come. The new covenant comes with, "Live." The Lord drops the word into the soul; the dead in the new covenant, or after the order of the new covenant, hear the voice of the Son of God, and live; it is the Spirit that quickens; or, to sum up the whole in these words, "Your people shall be willing in the day of your power." And the apostle Paul shows that by Christ Jesus this old covenant is blotted out, its handwriting taken out of the way and nailed to the cross, and that there is nothing left to the people of God but the new covenant, there is nothing forms a part of their portion but the new covenant. The new covenant contained in the Scriptures is contained in that way that shall deceive those that are not taught of God. Thus, then, while men are running about and saying that the gospel comes and says, "Turn you at my reproof," that it lies with men to turn or not, and if you do not accept me I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear comes; this is the language of the old covenant, but it is not the language of the new covenant; the language of the new covenant is, "I will" and "they shall." Thus, then, you must distinguish between a covenant that has penalties, and a covenant that has no penalties. The new covenant has no penalties, for this reason, that the Lord Jesus Christ did not belong to the old covenant. If he had belonged to the old covenant, and had been the Mediator of that covenant, he would have taken away the penalties of that covenant, and the Jewish nation would have continued as prosperous to this day as they were in Solomon's day, and would have gone on prospering down to the end of time, if Christ had been the Mediator of that covenant. But that covenant was not good enough for him to be the Mediator of; that covenant was not of a kind that answered to the dignity of his person. Jesus Christ would not be the Mediator of a covenant after the law of a carnal commandment, but the Mediator of a covenant after the power of an endless life. Jesus Christ would not be the Mediator of a covenant that simply answered to earthly and to typical purposes; but he would be the Mediator of an immutable covenant, that stretches on into endless ages, goes on to all eternity; the Mediator of a covenant wherein is embodied all the salvation and all the desire of the soul. So that there can be no penalties in the new covenant because Christ belongs to the new covenant, and, therefore, has taken all the penalties away. And so John, looking, or rather seeing things in the light of this new covenant, says, "There shall be no more curse, and there shall be no more sorrow, and there shall be no more death, and there shall be no more pain; for the Lord God shall dwell with them, and be their God, and they shall be his people." So then, for myself, I see that there is a wonderful difference between the two dispensations. Men, I say, are making the gospel speak as though the gospel came from the old covenant. The gospel does not come from the old covenant; the gospel comes from the new covenant; the gospel does not come from the earthly Zion, but from the heavenly Zion, and it is just like the Zion from which it comes; the gospel does not come from an earthly Jerusalem, for it would be a fallible gospel then; but it comes from the heavenly Jerusalem, and is just like the Jerusalem from which it comes; the gospel does not come from an earthly Eden, but from a heavenly Eden. The gospel does not come from God as a God of creation, or as a God of the Jewish nation, or as a God merely of legislation; the gospel comes from God as a God of boundless and everlasting love; and, therefore, the gospel is love from the first to the last syllable of it, in the whole range of it, in the whole compass of it, all its items, all its provisions, all its purposes, in every way, nothing but love. It comes from God as a God of boundless and everlasting love, to carry out the purposes of his everlasting love, and this love is shown in and by his dear Son. The mighty difference, then, between the two! And if you look at the professing world, you will see

how blind most ministers are to those distinctions essential to a right understanding of the truth; how blind they are to the two covenants, how blind they are to the distinction between flesh and spirit, and how blind they are to the difference between what we are in ourselves and what we are in Christ; and how blind they are to those real vitalities of the Holy Spirit's work that distinguish the people of God from others.

Those of you that know what real soul-trouble is, have labored in that soul-trouble, and you have waited as in a dungeon, you have waited as in a horrible pit, you have waited as in a prison, until the Lord has been pleased to have mercy upon you, to roll in his mercy, to bring you up out of the dungeon, to bring you out of the prison, to bring you out of the horrible pit; you, and you only, are the people that can understand these things. The natural man, and we are all natural, nothing but natural until a spiritual life is implanted in the soul by the eternal Spirit of God, the natural man understands them not. And then, when you are brought to understand these things, you see how very few ministers there are that can enter into these matters, and you find very few among professors know the great secret that is with the righteous, and that secret is this covenant ordered in all things and sure. There is something in a vital knowledge of the truth that distinguishes its possessor from all other men. Such an one is driven from necessity to embrace the gospel of God, and he learns in the Lord's own time, and he learns it with pleasure, that those curses and threatening's of the old covenant have no more to do with the believer than they have to do with glorified saints in heaven; the law, in its curse and its wrath, has no more to do with the man that is in Christ than it has to do with those that are in heaven. Indeed, the people of God are relatively now, where and what they will be actually by-and-bye; Christ is their representative, both as to what they shall be and as to where they shall be; hence says the apostle, "As he is, so are we in this world."

Having said thus much, I shall now take the language of our text away from a mere temporal covenant, because the safety spoken of in our text primarily, as the language of the wisdom of God in the Jewish covenant, was temporal safety, and the quiet here was temporal, domestic quiet; that if they hearkened unto the Lord, no man shall desire your habitation; if Sennacherib come in against you, the Lord shall blast him in so doing. So that they had thus temporal quiet. Well, say you, does not the new covenant contain this advantage as well as others? Certainly, it does; but then there is a higher safety that we needed, there is a higher quiet that we needed, there is something in a way of safety we needed far beyond that which is temporal. Many, indeed, are the dangers of this life; but the one great danger is the danger of eternal damnation, the danger of being lost, the danger of the soul being cast into hell, the danger of falling into the hands of the living God as a God of wrath; that is one great danger, against which Christ alone can secure us. And it is in relation, then, to this safety that I shall speak this morning. Be it, then, before I enter upon my subject, distinctly understood that from the 20th verse of this chapter down to the end the language is the language of the Jewish covenant, and that the language of the 110th Psalm is the language of the Christian covenant. Read those two parts for yourself, and you will see the language is totally different; the one is conditional, the other is positive; the one has penalties, the other has no penalties; the one is temporal, the other is eternal.

Now we have, then, in the first place, *safety*, and, secondly, *quiet in that safety*. We may embody what we have to say under these two.

First, then, *safety*. Who are the persons that have this safety; that is to say, that are saved? Now wisdom is spoken of in the preceding part as taking men up in their simplicity, in their character as scorers, and as hating knowledge, and as despising the counsel of God, and as not choosing the fear of Jehovah. This just describes the state the gospel finds us in. First, "How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity?" Now, the simple here spoken of means the man, for I am about to take the words in the Christian sense, spiritual sense; means the man who is heedless about his soul. He cares nothing for the judgments that await him; he cares nothing for the wrath sin has entailed, he cares nothing for hell; and he has no desire, living, real desire towards God. Now, then, when the gospel takes hold of a character of this description, it opens up to him the danger to which he is exposed. Hence it is said, the prudent foresees the evil; the simple passes on, heedless of his soul, and is punished with everlasting, dying in that state, destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. So, then, we need to be turned away from this ignorance, this simplicity, this besottedness, this stupidity, and we see the danger; and then we see how we are to be hid; for the prudent foresees the evil, and hides himself. So the Lord turns the simple ones into prudent ones, and such an one begins to see Jesus Christ as the hiding-place; he is the refuge, his atonement can shelter me, his righteousness can shelter me; the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous, that is, the believer, the man justified by faith, runs into it, and is safe. Here, then, if we are blessed with this heavenly prudence, Jesus Christ, in the perfection of his work, will become our hiding-place; we shall believe in the all-sufficiency of his atonement, as the antitypical Paschal Lamb, to shelter us; we shall believe in him, we shall rest in him; we shall see the love, and mercy, and grace, and goodness of God by Christ. We shall turn to him; we shall cease to pass heedlessly on, but shall take heed to ourselves, and examine ourselves from time to time, and pray that we may enter in at the strait gate, and be led into that narrow way that leads to everlasting life. And then, second, these persons are by nature also scorers. Now we must be brought out of that and reconciled to God. Scorning certainly means enmity. When you point the finger of scorn, or speak scornfully of any object, that does fairly indicate enmity. And so by nature some are in a state of enmity against godliness altogether; others are not in a state of enmity against godliness in the universal sense of the word, but being unacquainted with God's truth, all such are in a state of enmity against real godliness, against the sovereignty of the grace of God, against the certainty of the grace of God, and against the vitality of the grace of God; because these are things they cannot enter into. Now, when brought into soul-trouble, such an one ceases to be a scorer; he begins with, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" he goes on with, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" he goes on with, "Lord, save me;" and he becomes by degrees enlightened, till he sees into the beautiful way, oh! the lovely, precious way, in which he is to be reconciled to God. Everlasting thanks to our God; everlasting thanks to the blest Redeemer, and everlasting thanks to the dear Spirit of God for putting such a testimony upon record. Just mark the words: "Reconciling the world unto himself", that is, the world that he has loved and redeemed, as I understand it, "not imputing their trespasses unto them." Ah, Lord, will you forgive all my sins?" Yes, all, past, present, and to come. Lord, will you not impute one to me? Not one. Lord, will you never blame me? I am daily blaming myself for something or another, and, Lord, will you never blame me? Never, never; I have imputed all your sins to my dear Son, and he has put them away, and I have set to your account his life and his death.

Now what do you say, poor sinner, to these terms of reconciliation? Oh, how suited the terms are! How adapted the terms are! How attractive the terms are! Ah! the soul falls in with it, and says, Why, here is nothing but blessing, nothing but love, nothing but mercy, nothing but goodness; is

it possible that this is that which I have been blindly scorning? Ah, then, I will leave the scorner's seat; I will pray to be brought down to the feet of the blest Redeemer, I will pray to be brought into this heavenly reconciliation to God; for in this refuge I shall be safe, in this reconciliation to God I shall be safe.

Although by nature an enemy, through grace I become a friend, and the Lord will treat me as a friend. Abraham was the friend of God, and God kept Abraham as the apple of his eye, and Abraham is now sitting down in heaven; and God will keep me, and take care of me, so that I have a safe refuge and a safe abode, reconciled to God. See the terms of reconciliation, how beautiful they are! But I have not named them all, many other terms in this mode of reconciliation. There is not only the non-imputation of sin to you, there is not only the imputation of Christ's work to you, there is not only not blaming you, and presenting you blameless; this is not all; there is another term in it, many more terms, indeed, but another is, that the Lord, in this matter of order of reconciliation, loves you with an everlasting love. Will you say, Well, I like the terms of reconciliation, but I do not want the Lord to love me? You would not say that; no, your concern would be, Does he love me? If he has loved me with an everlasting love, he will take care of me. In this order of reconciliation, you will see your election too, that he has chosen you to eternal salvation. In this reconciliation you will also see your final preservation. In this reconciliation you will also see your final glorification. "Whoso hearkens unto me." Now, what say you, then? Can you say that you are brought to hearken to this new covenant wisdom, and enabled to make Christ your refuge, and can you say, "Other refuge have I none"? And do you pray to be brought more and more into this order of reconciliation, and there to live, and there to remain, and there to walk, and to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom you receive this reconciliation? And then it is said of us by nature that we hate knowledge. "You hate knowledge." So that the natural man, describe to him what experimental knowledge is, he cannot understand it, and therefore he hates it. I do not know what that man means, always talking about his soul, and how his soul is, and what he suffers, and strange things he talks; now we hate this kind of knowledge. And then the knowledge of our election of God, which some ministers, professing to be ministers of God, tell us we should not trouble ourselves about; we are not to trouble ourselves about election, say they. But the word of God says, "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven." The word of God says, "We are bound to give thanks unto God, that he has chosen you to salvation." And I am not speaking extravagantly, but with all the solemnity of a dying man, when I say to you that I would not give up the knowledge I have of God's electing grace for all the silver and gold and honors of the world, for life itself. Take away electing grace, the whole economy becomes a system of uncertainty, and I should have no sure hope then that I should ever see God's face with joy. But let me have electing grace, let me have this great truth, then I have all spiritual blessings, everything fixed, everything settled, everything certain, and I can then join with the Psalmist, and say, "Forever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven." And now, being brought to know what experience is, downward experience and upward experience, you will not hate knowledge, but you will love it, and your earnest prayer will be, and your practice will accord with your prayer, "That I may know him." You will practically, all you can, be where he is, and that is in the Bible and in the house of God, the ordinances of God, the servants of God; he is with them, and by all the divinely appointed means you will walk out that principle. And if you ask yourself, of a Lord's day morning, or afternoon, or evening, or any other time when Providence, a kind Providence, so orders it that you can get to hear the word; if you are asked, What are you going for? That I might know him, that I might see him, that I might realize his presence, that I might have fellowship with

him, that I might know that he is my friend, that I might know that he is my Savior; and though I feel somewhat assured of it before, I want to be assured of it again; I am just such a poor, doubting thing as Gideon was; after the Lord had given him one sign, he wanted another sign. And apart from this, says such a one, I am at home where he is; I love the habitation of his house, and the place where his honor dwells, and I like that minister the best that tells me the most, and that tells me in a savory way, that opens up my path, and that opens up God's truth; that opens up the different dispensations of the Bible, and distinguishes between that which is gospel and that which is not gospel, where I can see most, feel most, realize most, understand most, enjoy most of Jesus Christ; there let me be. Well, you will never enjoy the Lord to perfection until you get to heaven. "I shall be satisfied," says one, "when I awake in your likeness." Now then, you have said here you are no longer a simple one, a despising one, but are become a prudent one, foreseeing the evil, and seeking to be hidden in the Rock of Ages; you are no longer a scorner, but are reconciled to God, and become a worshipper, in all solemnity of the true God, desiring grace whereby you may go on to serve him acceptably, with reverence and with godly fear; and that you are no longer a hater of knowledge, but that you love knowledge. Ah, you say, let me know the love of God in the power of it; let me know the Christ of God, and the truth of God, and the counsel of God, and the covenant of God, and the mysteries of vast eternity. Why, it is a knowledge: all things you can desire are not to be compared to this knowledge, wherein you have safety. Now then, this is hearkening to the wisdom of the new covenant, and such shall dwell in safety. Their life is safe, their sanctification is safe, their justification is safe, their salvation safe, their glorification safe, their souls eternally safe,

"Safe in our Redeemer's hands,
E'en when he hides his face."

And then, again, it is said of the others; the Lord says, "They would none of my counsel: they did not choose the fear of the Lord;" did not choose the fear of Jehovah, chose other gods beside him. The Lord foresaw that. Hence, in the 28th of Deuteronomy, where you have that old covenant described, if they turned aside, and went after other gods, and served them, then all the curses recorded in the after verses of that 28th of Deuteronomy should come upon them. And so, they were ever apostatizing from the true God, would none of his counsel. They first forsook his counsel, then threw down his altar, and then they had but one more thing to do, and that was, slay all the prophets of the Lord: Let us get rid of them. It is such a wonderful mercy that the Lord does, in a special way, stand by his ministers; for what of enemies, what of the weaknesses of friends, and what of astounding hypocrites, that have appeared for a long time under the mask of friendship, if the Lord did not take care, special care, of his ministers, what would become of the poor things? They are battered, and knocked, and kicked about in our day in different parts of the country, turned into mere doormats. Some consequential, pompous nothing gets into a church; and I know several ministers now that are treated really as though everybody was worthy to be in the place except the minister. Why, all this, my hearer, is of Satan. Let a man go into a town or a village, with vital godliness and vital truth, and speak it out earnestly and honestly, feeble as the man's gifts may be, and if he should not succeed in getting a large congregation on his side, he is sure to succeed in getting a large congregation against him; and if he should not succeed in obtaining many friends, his savory testimony is sure to surround him with plenty of foes. But if, on the other hand, he should succeed, and get a large number on his side, why, the devil is almost raving mad, and will inspire one and the other, and the devil will go from heart to heart throughout that man's

congregation, and see how many he can find in the congregation that he can make use of against the minister. "Forsake your covenant, dig down your altars," and then you may slay the prophets. But, however, the Lord will take care of his own, he will do that; and the Lord has always put the remedy where the disease is; he has always put the safety where the danger is. He would not put the ark away up into some distant world, where the flood was not, he put the ark where the flood was; put the paschal lamb where the danger was; put the operations of his power in dividing the Red Sea to where the danger was; and Christ has placed himself for our eternal salvation where the danger was. And the priests stood between the accumulating waters on the right hand in Jordan, and the people on the left passing over. They went over Jordan under the shadow of the high priest; the priest was with God, and God was with the priest; the priest stood in the danger, and the people passed clean over. And so, bless the Lord! it is now; that although the ministers of God, and the people of God, in many cases, are like lambs among wolves, yet the Lord takes care of them. "Nothing shall by any means hurt you." Oh, how I do myself, forgive me for referring just for a moment to myself, I increasingly glory in the blessed truth given, we know, to all his people, and especially to his ministers, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The apostle Paul found some forsake him in his day, and he said, "I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might be fully known." So, then, if we are interested in this safety, we shall choose the counsel of God, his counsel as embodied in a covenant ordered in all things and sure, we shall abide by that, love it, cleave to it, walk in it. And "they did not choose the fear of Jehovah," that is the original word there rendered "Lord." I like that little alteration to our own advantage because this is just where the Holy Spirit does bring us. The word *Jehovah* always refers, always refers especially to three properties of the Most High, self-existence, eternity, immutability. These three things are meant by the word Jehovah. Self-existence, "I am that I am," eternity, "I live;" immutability, no change. Now this is just the God that the Christian is brought to know in Christ Jesus. As we observed last Lord's day morning, in Christ Jesus, there we rejoice in the self-existence of the blessed God; there we rejoice in his eternity; there we rejoice in his immutability. Such, then, are safe. So, then, I will not this morning descend to any of the minor points and respects in which the people of God hearken unto the Lord. I have noticed this respect. Before I go into the next part, I will just sum this up first. Just mark, then, the very great change which the Lord has wrought. Once we were heedlessly going on to our own destruction; now we are seeking to make Christ our refuge. Once we scorned, blindly scorned in our heart's vital godliness; now we are reconciled to God and love it. Once we hated knowledge, and now we like it above all things. Of course, I mean a saving knowledge of God, above all things that can be desired. Once we would none of his counsel; now our language is, "You shalt guide me with your counsel, and afterward receive me into glory." Once we did not fear the God of the gospel; now we do fear him, we do revere him, we do cleave to him. Oh, how great is the change the Lord has thus wrought! Thus, then, he who hearkens unto the Lord in these things shall dwell in safety, that is, in safety in Christ.

I will now notice *the quiet*, "and shall be quiet from fear of evil." Now this refers rather to the ultimate end of the people of God than to their present circumstances, because there are no people upon the earth so perpetually fearing evil as they are. They are almost always foreboding something or another. And even Job when he was easy was uneasy; when he was safe, or thought he looked to be safe, felt he was not safe. There is something, he says, in this prosperity, that I am afraid it will not last long. Everything goes on wonderfully easy and wonderfully smooth, but there is something somewhere that makes me uneasy. It is not the lot of the people of God to be like

this. And so, Job says, "I was not in safety in my own mind, neither had I rest." And when all this calamity came upon him, "That which I feared has come upon me." Ah, Christian! it is well for you to fear prosperity; it is well to be watchful over it, especially if it monopolizes your soul, and heart, and feelings; and if you can look back at the time when you did run to the house of God hungry and thirsty, you did listen to the word of God with eager mind, you did love the house of God, and did readily give your humble mite towards the cause of God, that his kingdom may thus go on, and his cause be carried on according to his own appointment. But now that prosperity has satiated you, has overcome that hunger and that thirst, and that kind and liberal feeling, and Christ is not to you what he was, the house of God is not to you what it was, the ministry is not to you what it was, and the poor minister gets the blame of it all, whereas it is yourself. You are grown fat, you are grown worldly, you are grown easy, and you are become carnal, and dead, and an archangel could never please you, nor preach acceptably to you, how should he? how should he? You are full of this world, and full of self, and full of everything but the Spirit of God and the grace of God. Ah, then, if this worldly prosperity and worldly ease has thus filled you, you may well beware of it; for if you are a child of God, you may depend upon it that you will go, by-and-bye, into Job's ditch, or into Jonah's hell, or into Jeremiah's dungeon; for the Lord, though he will allow his people sometimes to be overcome for a time, and thus buried in fleshly things, it shall not be always so. No; they are seeking their ease in the wrong quarter, their safety in the wrong place, their happiness from the wrong source. Gourds must be blasted, and then they shall find where their safety is, and where their quiet is from fear of evil, not in earthly ease, possessions, or prosperity, but in the Lord. Safety is of the Lord.

I had intended, but time does not permit, to have taken a threefold view of this quiet. It is sometimes preceded by a great deal of disquiet. Hence the 107th Psalm, "Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing." So, I will. Here is off, Ah, but stop! Just as the words came, a commandment raised the stormy wind, lifted up the waves of the sea, and they were tossed about, went up to heaven, down again to the depths, staggered like a drunken man, were at their wit's end. Ah, I did mean to thank the Lord, I did mean to rejoice in the Lord, and just as I was going to begin, all this is come about. To be sure; you have to learn something first. You have some pride to be humbled, some conceit to be taken out of you, and to be brought to know that you have no control over the sea of trouble. Go down to the sea in ships; what does the sea care for a ship? Not even a bit. It is the God of the sea that the sea cares for. What did the sea care for the ship when the Savior was in it? Not at all. The disciples labored and toiled, the same as you and I have sometimes, to make things quiet, and make things comfortable, worse. Presently he throws a word in, "Peace! be still!" then are they glad because they are quiet. I know I find it so when I have my temporal troubles, and the devil against me, professors, and some good people, the wind blows, as it were, in all directions, sixty-four ways at once; I really am almost at my wit's end sometimes; and how in the world I can go quietly on and preach the gospel at such a time, I do not know how I do it; but I do manage it somehow or another.