

EVIL TIDINGS SILENCED

A SERMON

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“He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.” Psalm 112:7

THERE cannot, I think, be any doubt that this Psalm from first to last, at least in its primary acceptation, belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ; that he is the person had in view all through the Psalm, but not apart from his people, his people in oneness with him. Hence it said “blessed is the man that fears the Lord,” no one ever feared God in such perfection as did the Savior; “that delights greatly in his commandments;” and no one ever so delighted in the commandments of God as Christ did, especially those commandments that pertain to the eternal salvation of the people. Then it goes on to state the happy consequence of his so doing. “His seed shall be mighty upon earth; the generation of the upright shall be blessed,” because, by their being brought to lay hold of him in what he has done, they hereby become mighty, because God himself is their strength; and therefore they shall fatally fail, when the Lord their God himself shall fail. “His seed,” then, in consequence of what he has done, and what he is, “shall be mighty upon earth; the generation of the upright shall be blessed.” And you will at once perceive also that the language of our text applies literally and with full force to the Savior, that while he was not to be moved, but to be had in everlasting remembrance, he should not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart was fixed, trusting in the Lord, in a perfection that no other did. Hence the 22nd Psalm foresees that the Savior, if I may without irreverence say it, would be a child of providence, and from his very birth cast upon the providential care of God; he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. So that he hoped in the Lord even when he was at his mother’s breasts, God was his hope. Thus, the dear Savior is not only our substitute, but also our lovely and beautiful example. He does not expect us to come up to that perfection in which he lived; but while he had the Holy Spirit without measure, he does in measure give the same spirit to his own people; they are partakers of the same spirit of trust in God, decision for God, and of the same spirit of victory by faith in Christ that he himself achieved for them. However, we will notice the text as applied to the believer.

First, then, *the evil tidings and their remedy*; secondly, *victory over our fears*; “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; thirdly, *the establishment*; “his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.”

First, *the evil tidings and their remedy*. In so doing we must bring in the dear Savior; we must begin with him, because we shall not see clearly into the remedy unless we bring him in; in a word, he is the remedy. What, then, are the evil tidings to which we stand exposed? There was a time when we did not think there were any tidings on the way particularly evil, and consequently we did not fear any particularly evil tidings. But when the time came for the Lord to show us what our sins were, we then saw that the evil tidings that stood against us were our sins; we were made to feel that as sure as we exist, not an idle word should escape the scrutinizing eye of God, not one sin should be left out of the account that should be brought against us at the last great day, and that every one of these sins has in it the strength of God's eternal law. We began to feel that although in reasoning, when we attempt to balance the punishment with the crime, we cannot without divine teaching see that the faults deserve such a punishment as is in reserve for sin, namely, everlasting punishment; tormented day and night for ever and ever; yet when God opens our eyes, gives us to see that sin is objectively infinite; don't let us lose sight of that, that sin is objectively infinite, because it is against an infinite God; *infinite* means infinity, of duration as well as infinity of space; therefore from the very nature of sin, as against an eternal Being, against an object of infinity, against God, everlasting punishment is the reward. We are quite aware that some stagger a little at this doctrine; but there is not one man that denies the doctrine of the eternity of punishment who feels altogether happy in his position. He knows very well that his idea of denying the eternity of punishment, which the Scriptures so clearly declare, is arrived at only by a little reasoning and certain inferences which he draws from certain scriptures. But such men do not feel happy; they do not feel altogether comfortable. I saw in private some time ago one who had written the most learned work possible upon that question; and I said, "Well, do you feel as satisfied that you are right in the sentiment of your book as you feel satisfied as to the truth of the Adam fall, the Savior's mediation, and of salvation?" "Well," he said, I certainly do not; I thought there was, and I think so now, a current of evidence running in that direction, and I have guided myself by that current of evidence." Now I say, when God awakens up the sinner, and fastens upon his conscience the idea of punishment, the dreadfulness of the punishment, why, such an one would give a thousand worlds if he had never been born. His sins now become evil tidings; and he says, the worst of it is, it is God himself that will bring all these sins to me at the last day; I cannot deny them, because the Lord will say to each, I was there when so and so occurred; I was there, I was there; there is no way of escape. Oh, happy then the man who is thus convinced, and to whom his sins are thus become as evil tidings. And now let us look at the remedy, when we are thus convinced by divine teaching, the Lord will not stop there; he will show us that Jesus Christ is the remedy; and that all these sins that make us tremble came against the Lord Jesus Christ! they made him sweat great drops of blood; and he himself then came under God's law, and has taken away the strength of that law legally, not by any violence, but by a life of obedience, and bringing in everlasting righteousness; as it says in this Psalm, "his righteousness endures forever." He embodied in his wonderful person, in his death, all the sins of the people; all we want is for you to see it, and rest upon it, and plead before God what the Lord Jesus Christ is. When the Lord thus opens your eyes, and gives you to see the infinite ability of Christ, when you once see that he is the remedy, you will smile at the thought of insufficiency or deficiency, or the possibility of your being lost. Remember, if sin be against an infinite object, an infinite God, and thereby has in it eternal duration, the person who puts sin away is God also. Jesus Christ must be God in order to reach the sin objectively. If sin be objectively infinite, then "we must have a person to take away that sin that is infinite, that he by his infinity may reach that sin in the objectivity of it. Sin in the subjectivity of it is finite, and so Jesus Christ had a finite nature, that he might suffer for sin in the

subjectivity of it, as it is in the creature; that is what I mean by the word subjectivity; and he must be infinite in order to reach the objectivity of sin. Thus, he takes away sin as it is in the creature; he takes away sin as it is against an infinite God. Give me a grain of faith in this Immanuel, I can laugh, as it were, at my sins. They are all gone, atoned for, pardoned, forgotten, blotted out. And as for some of you that are thus convinced of your state, and feel what a fallen nature you have, and what a deceitful heart you have. you are ruminating, and thinking that the Lord cannot save such a poor creature as you are, such a reptile as you see yourself to be, such a poor worm of the earth; why, if you were infinitely worse than you are, he would laugh at your little thoughts about his inability. It matters not to him how deep the dye; "Come, let us reason together;" if you reason without him, you reason wrongly; "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Here is the remedy; and when you recognize this remedy, you will not be afraid of the evil tidings. Sin, when you do not see it as put away for you, pardoned, blotted out, is like Samson's lion, it roars against you, and fills you with awful terror; but when you see what Jesus has done, why, then it is like Samson's dead lion, and honey shall be brought to you by what Christ has done, he having slain this monster. Thus then, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings." Oh, how firm the Savior stood against these evil tidings! He put away our sins, but our sins could not put him away. He put death away, but death could not put him away, and could not hold him fast; he held death fast; when death got into the Savior's hands, it would have been glad to get out of them again, to have reserved itself for future victories; but Christ would not let death get out of his hands when he had got sin into his hands, he would not let it get out of his hands until he had atoned for it. When death got into his hands he would not let it get out of his hands until he had taken its sting, its victory, and power away; and when he had got hold of the devil, he would not let him go until he had bruised his head, that is, overturned all his counsels, and made it impossible for Satan to carry out his designs in the destruction of the souls of those for whom the Lord Jesus Christ died. And when Jesus Christ got hold of the curse, he would not let the curse go until he had drunk the last drop of the bitter cup, until he had blotted out all the curses by his bitter sufferings. Here it is, then, we are not to be afraid of evil tidings.

Then again, notice the great and essential importance of your looking firmly here to Jesus Christ. You see God is a holy God. Well, you do not want any holiness in which to appear before God that you have not by faith in Christ. If we had no holiness in Christ in which to appear before God, then our sins would be a dreadful terror to us; but we do not want any righteousness in which to appear before God which we have not in Christ. Hence, we find the Old Testament saints connect this righteousness of Christ with strength of faith. "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Take away this truth, that you have completeness in Christ, then you would have no strength of confidence; but receive his substitutional work, receive him as having brought in and established eternal life and eternal perfection, this then is the victory over our sins, even our faith. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace." Now notice the senses in which sin shall not have dominion over you. First, it can have no dominion over you as you stand in Christ; there you are exempted from it, all is blotted out, forgiven, passed away; there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. We have to live with God, where there is nothing against us; it is God that justifies, we have to die where there is nothing against us; we have to go to heaven where there is nothing against us, namely, in and by Christ Jesus; so that sin shall not have dominion over you. Secondly, sin shall not have such dominion over you as to sever you from God's truth. Bring you into dreadful bondage in a variety of ways it may; but turn you into unbelievers, separate you from the love of God, it shall not; and in every other respect it is defiled.

And how is this? Because you are under grace. If you are under the law, then it is a legal system, and sin has strength to condemn; but you are under grace, where sin has lost its condemning and reigning power; where it has lost its right to say a single word. There is not one of your sins that has a right to say a single word against you. If sin be compared to a mighty debt, then the surety steps in and says, I have paid that debt. If it be compared to a mighty injury, then the Mediator steps in and says, I have repaired that injury. If it be compared to enmity, having turned us into enemies, then the Mediator steps in, and he has reconciled us to God by his precious blood; yes, God himself reconciling us to himself, not imputing our trespasses unto us. This is the way, then, in which the Christian is not to be afraid of evil tidings, because infinitely greater is Christ for him than all his sins now can be against him. Next the evil tidings of tribulation, the Christian shall not be afraid of them. Those tidings sometimes come very suddenly, and very unexpectedly, in a very unexpected way. None of us know what a day may bring forth. All peaceful and quiet, everything right and comfortable, one hour; and the next something shall occur distressing beyond description. There was Job, he rose in the morning, and meant to spend his day as he was used to doing; he offered sacrifice in the morning, burnt offering, sin offering, didn't forget the Lord, was decided for God, walked with God and lived with God; but ere the sun went down, everything he was worth was gone. He rose the next morning, again offered sacrifice, and seemed so strengthened, not afraid of these evil tidings; "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord;" before the sun goes down the second day, he is smitten all over with sore boils; and there he is such an object that his friends, his wife, and all that know him, stand aghast; and his wife, as Job rightly said spoke as one of the foolish women, "Curse," that is, anathematize, "God, and die." So that poor Job was left in a wretched state. And yet, while these tidings thus came, they did not come on the ground of anything bad in Job, nor on the ground of anything good in Job; they came because the Lord intended it should be so. And yet Job was not afraid, in the sense we shall presently especially have to notice, of these evil tidings. Now all of you more or less, certainly most of you, whether you appreciate it and give God the glory or not, are fed and clothed, and see how the Lord providentially daily thinks of you and takes care of you. And with all your skill and industry, which I might admire, and do in their place, of course, yet, if the Lord were to withdraw his hand, you may depend upon it Satan would come in; he would soon make terrible havoc. As, then, we know not what a day may bring forth, what a mercy it is for our hearts to be fixed, trusting in the Lord, to leave the remainder of this day with the Lord, to leave the morrow with the Lord, to leave next week, and next year, and the rest of our lives with the Lord; and to leave our death with the Lord. Lord, I am in your hands, my times are in your hands; and whatever gloomy lines or pleasant lines are instore for me, keep me near to yourself; you are a remedy for whatever troubles I have; if you are pleased to step in, you can more than make it up. Yes, if one said of old, "Am I not better to you than ten sons?" Ah, we would put such language into the mouth of our covenant God, only in a different form, and we would say, Lord, if you were to say to us, Am I not better unto you than ten thousand worlds? we would answer, Yes; nothing is like our covenant God. So, then, none of us knows what evil tidings of trouble may come upon us; but let this thought still encourage us to cleave to the Lord our God; he alone can have his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and make the clouds the dust of his feet. Then, again, personal enemies. There are some people whose lot it is to be personally enemies to the people and ministers of God. Some people are never happy unless they can do some mischief, by some slander or some reproach; they care not what they do. And yet such generally are flaring professors; such generally are great sticklers for some particular theory or another. These are the snakes in the grass, these are the creeping things. Well, then, what shall we do? Why, we must not be afraid. You see in what a

sneaking way Haman tried to get Mordecai hanged; but then Haman got himself hanged. And see in what a sneaking way they got poor Daniel into the lion's den; but they themselves were torn to pieces, not Daniel. See by what flattery, in what a sneaking way, they got the three poor, defenseless Hebrews; Here are three captive Hebrews, far from their native land, and we Babylonians will get them into the fiery furnace. But those that cast them in, not those that were cast in, were destroyed. So, then, look at Jesus Christ as the remedy for your sins; look at the promise of God, that as your day, so your strength shall be, as the remedy for your troubles; and look at the reign of the Most High; he perceives the craftiness of every foe. Let this be your remedy. "He will take the wise in their own craftiness;" trust in him. Be not afraid of evil tidings in this respect.

One more view of evil tidings I will glance at, and that is death. Death, of course, abstractedly is an evil; and where is the remedy? Jesus Christ is the remedy essentially; and the more we know of him, the less we shall be afraid of these evil tidings. And not only Jesus Christ in what he has done, not only the promise of God, can be our remedy for a dying hour, but to make a dying hour really pleasant there must be something else, and that something else the Lord does not appear to grant to all his people. They all die in the faith, and they all die safely. Now it was David's happy lot to see that the Lord would grant this something else to him. "When I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil;" not only because the Messiah, the coming Melchizedek, is my eternal perfection, and the promise of God that he will never leave nor forsake his own stands firm, but something more, the third advantage, benefit, and blessing, "you are with me." Ah, when the Lord shines upon the soul; you know what the apostle said, when he was caught up spiritually into paradise, he so enjoyed the presence of God in his soul that he was unconscious whether he was in the body or out of the body; all he knew was that he was exceedingly happy, and that he heard unspeakable words; so that if he had been dying while he thus enjoyed the presence of the Lord, the body would have died by itself; the soul would have had nothing to do with it; the soul was so taken up with the Jove of God, the glory of his presence, the peace, and grace, and salvation of God, that the poor body would have died by itself; the soul would be simply quietly enjoying eternal things while the poor body was dying. So that when the soul is in this blissful state, and the body draws its last breath, it seems to say to the soul, You may go now. Very well, the soul says, good night; I shall see you again on the resurrection morning; we shall then meet together, and you will not have to die any, any more. Ah, what a blessed thing is real religion! Here, then, is the remedy for our sins and troubles; the remedy against enemies, the remedy for death; yes, what evil is there for which the Lord has not provided a remedy?

Now we could not have this comfortable confidence were it not that the Savior stood firm in all these respects. How firm he stood under our sins, and against all our troubles, and against his personal enemies. Look at his personal enemies. The Holy Spirit has not informed us, but I should like to know, how much money was given during the Savior's ministry to base men to slander him, to get up things against him, to waylay him and try to murder him. I have no doubt that a great deal of money was given. They gave a lot of money to the soldiers, but then it was too late; he is gone now. And of course, they paid the witnesses very handsomely that they suborned against him: one came and said one thing, another said another: but though the witnesses were so well paid, so well suborned, and the lawyer had so well instructed them, somehow or another the witnesses did not agree. Ah, it is no use, friends: we may fight against God, but the more ingenious the plan, the more terribly we shall be entangled by it. But if on the other hand, if the Lord be on

our side, it matters not how ingenious the traps, and nets, and snares may be, they shall only hold the enemy more securely, give us a more conspicuous victory, and make us more and more glorify the Lord. Such the troubles, such the remedy. There is not a person within these walls can say. It is a text I have nothing to do with. You cannot say that. You that are dead in sins, if your sins are not evil things to you now. so as to make you glad of the tidings of mercy by Jesus Christ, they will be when there will be no good tidings proclaimed; and that will be infinitely worse. And if you have not many troubles now, you will be sure to have some, for "man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward:" and if you have not any personal enemies, perhaps you may not have even before you die: but you know death is a personal enemy. You may depend upon it you cannot die by proxy; you cannot say to death. Now I will give you so much if you take that man instead of me; you cannot bribe death; when death comes with its merciless scythe, down it cuts you by divine decree without any other consideration whatever. Ah, then, happy for the sons and daughters of tribulation if those tribulations are so sanctified as to bring into their souls the spirit of grace and supplication, so that they shall look to that God who has sent a Savior into the world who took our sicknesses, bore our sorrows, carried our griefs, put our sins away, and has brought in a peace that passes all understanding.

Secondly, *victory over our fears*. Let us look at the believer's victory. "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings." What a mercy for us that we are allowed to qualify, or rather the Holy Scriptures qualify, some of these descriptions. Not afraid of evil tidings. Why, I have been innumerable times afraid of evil tidings, my heart as weak as water, trembled like an aspen leaf, and wished I had never been born. How, then, can the words apply? They apply in a twofold sense. First, when we have what Job had realized at the beginning of his troubles, the presence of the Lord, then we do not fear. Then we say, What do we care? All these things are nothing in the hands of the Lord; he can manage them with perfect ease: it does not matter what it is; "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." He is dealing according to the infinity of his wisdom, his love, and his promise, he will make all things right There is no fear, then, when you enjoy the Lord's presence, and can say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" "God is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" But this is not enough; I should cut some of you off if I were to dwell only upon this view of the matter: we must come to another view, and that is, I think, one of the most encouraging thoughts possible, they shall not so fear evil tidings as to give up God's truth. A great many here, you know, when trouble or persecution arises because of the word. Ah, says one, I am not going to suffer all this for this religion. That man has never seen or felt his lost condition; he does not know the infinite value of the Savior, of his truth, of that covenant ordered in all things and sure. Now, let the child of God fear evil tidings where he may, let him be as wretched and miserable as he may, yet he shall not so fear evil tidings as to give up God's truth; he shall still hold that fast. We see Job came into fear, and wished he had never been born, and so cursed the day of his birth; yet with it all he never gave up God's blessed truth. If your religion does not bring you, understandingly, from necessity, and experimentally, into the bond of the everlasting covenant, your religion is artificial, your conversion is mental and moral, but not in regeneration, nor vital, and you will be a damned man if you die out of that covenant, for there stands the declaration, there is no exception, "This is the covenant I will make with them; my spirit that is upon you, and my words which I put into your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your seed, nor out of the mouth of your seed's seed, henceforth and forever." That is where your salvation must be. And, as to election, why, it will be a pearl to you of infinite price. Look at the last great day; whosoever was not found in the book of life was

cast into the lake of fire. As to the covenant ordered in all things and sure, not a soul ever got to heaven without it yet, or ever will. It is this covenant:

“That takes the babe that’s thither caught from woman’s breast,
Claiming right to sing above the rest;
Because it’s found the happy shore,
It never saw nor sought before.”

And it was because it was included in this everlasting covenant. Everything must be done there and found there; and if your experience does not make you a sinner bad enough, helpless, wretched, poor, and miserable enough, to bring you into the bond of this immutable covenant, if anything short of that can satisfy you, I would not give a single straw for your religion. You may be as pious as the devil transformed into an angel of light; you may be as pious as the Pharisees of old, you may give your goods to feed the poor, your body to be burned, and exercise angelic confidence, but if you are not brought down to Christ’s feet, into the bond of this new covenant, as the Lord lives there is no salvation out of that covenant, any more than there is salvation out of Christ; Christ is in that covenant, and that covenant is in Christ. So, then, they shall not be so afraid of evil tidings as to give up God’s truth, or to shrink back from it. If any of you think I have gone a little too far, not only this morning, but do in general, and you have some thought of going to hear a man of more moderate views, for mercy’s sake go there today; do not come this evening; the sooner you go, the sooner your hollowness and hypocrisy will appear. Depend upon it there is nothing like firmness, decision, for God’s eternal truth. It matters not to me what people think or say, I know I am all right in Christ, in the covenant with God; everything is settled there. As to sin, that has done with me, as I stand in Christ. As to the devil, he knows he cannot hurt me; and as to the world, that cannot hurt me. Why, say you, you are going to talk as though nobody could hurt you. Nor can they; because whatever is done will work for good to me, and do me good. Every curse is sure to be a blessing, every hindrance is sure to be a help; every casting down is sure to raise me up; and besides, there are some pearls, I am obliged to dive for them, and I shall bring them up, and be all the better for going down. Abraham did not like going down to Egypt, but he was much richer when he returned than when he went down to Egypt; and Jonah was a much better man when he came out of the whale’s belly than when he went in. So, then they shall not be so afraid of evil tidings as to give up God’s blessed truth. I could not but smile at some when this chapel was built. Oh, they said, Wells has got a fine chapel now; depend upon it he will be fashionable now. But I had the happiness of seeing the other day a paragraph in a paper eulogizing the people here, but saying that Wells, with all his fine chapel, was not refined yet. And I know the meaning of that; I will give you the translation. The true meaning of that is, that he as honestly and plainly tells us what we are as sinners as he ever did; that he as honestly, as roughly, determinately, and plainly uses the axe to cut up all fleshly confidence as he ever did; he stands as firmly out against all Phariseeism, and as right out for these infallible truths as he ever did; so of course he is not refined. If I were to come in an if-you-wish-it, soft and effeminate sort of way, then I should be refined. But I have some rocks to deal with, and I must use the hammer of truth like a workman; I have some old knotty trees to grub up, and I must use the axe like a workman; I have some that are enwrapped in their own righteousness, and I must use the torch of truth to burn them out of it. I must go to work in a plain, rough, determined manner. It does not matter to me what I am called; I want to see souls brought to God, and the people of God rejoice. If I feel and see that the Lord is

with me, then good-bye to all the smiles of men, for “woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you!

Lastly, *the establishment*; “his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord;” just as the poet describes:

“The darkest cloud hope pierces through,
And waits upon the Lord;
Expects to find that all is true
Throughout the sacred word.”

Has he not said, he will see us again, and our hearts shall rejoice? Has he not said he will never leave nor forsake us? I have never trusted in vain yet nor will you, if you are friends. And when God made a terrible promise to Abraham, enough to burn up all the Phariseeism in the world, took him abroad, “Look towards heaven, tell the stars, if you be able to number them, so shall” meaning of course his spiritual seed, “so shall your seed be.” Well, but, Lord, suppose I should do something, and upset that. Oh no, I will take care, Abraham. I know you will tell some untruths; you will twice deny that that good woman is your wife, that will be from your fear you will do that; but that will not upset my promise. Your son Isaac will do similarly, and your grandson Jacob will do no better, but that will not upset my promise, nothing can upset my promise; it shall come to pass. Why, if the Lord had given Jacob a conditional promise to go to Padan-aram with, in the first place it is questionable whether he would have got there, and in the next place he certainly never would have got back again; but the Lord gave him an unconditional promise, “I am with you, and I will keep you in all places whither you go; and I will not leave you until I have done that which I have spoken to you of.”

This is what we want, faith to trust in the Lord. Only mind this, you must trust in his new covenant promises by Christ Jesus. If you will bring in your sandy doings, sandy foundations, and expect the Lord to bless you. you will be disappointed. You will be blessed *in* your services, but not blessed *for* them; mind that the Lord blesses me *in* well-doing, but not *for* it; he blesses me *for* Christ Jesus. But a word or two upon the establishment; “his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.” I do like that religion. that goes to the very heart. I am complete in Christ, there I am fixed; God’s counsel is immutable, there I am fixed. I am as complete in Christ, and as much prepared for heaven, when I am as dark as midnight, as wretched as I can exist, as at any other time; complete in Christ at all times. God’s counsel is immutable, and my heart is fixed: and I say it for your encouragement. I can stand before this assembly and say that forty-three years ago the Holy Spirit sealed home upon my soul the new, the everlasting covenant; and from that day to this I have never moved an inch from it; I have never had the slightest inclination to move from it, and nothing can move me. Ever since that time, when the Lord sealed home the new and everlasting covenant. gave me the whole range of the 54th of Isaiah, which chapter contains the verse by which the Lord sealed home the covenant. I have never moved from it. What do you say when you lose your confidence, say you? Why, say I, love the truth all the same; I do not give up the truth then; I know if I get to heaven that is the way I must get there.