

FEARING AND TRUSTING—TRUSTING AND NOT FEARING

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“What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.” Psalm 56:3
“I will trust, and not be afraid.” Isaiah 12:2

I INTEND this evening to have two texts, though I shall not therefore have two sermons and so keep you a double length of time. Our first text, which will suffice to begin with, is in the 56th Psalm, at the 3rd verse—*“What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.”*

David was one of the boldest of men. From his youth up, he was noted for his courage. As a youth he went, in simple confidence in God, and attacked the giant Goliath. Throughout life there was no man who seemed to be more at home in wars and battles, and less likely to be afraid. But yet this hero, this courageous man, says that he was sometimes afraid, and I suppose that there are none of us but must plead guilty to the impeachment that sometimes the brave spirit gives way, and that we tremble and are afraid. It is a disease for which the cure is here mentioned, *“What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee, when my soul suffers from the palsy of fear, I will lay hold upon the strong one and get strength from Him, and so my fears shall all be cast out.”*

To be afraid is, in some cases, *a very childish thing*. We expect to see our little children sometimes frightened and that they will not bear to be alone in the dark, but we are surely not afraid to be there. The more we are afraid, the more childish we become. Courage is manly, but to be afraid is to be like a child. It is not always so, however, for there are some great and sore dangers which may well make the very boldest man tremble.

To be afraid is always *a distressing thing*. The heart beats quickly and the whole system seems to be thrown out of order. There have been known cases of men who have had to endure severe terror for several hours—and their hair has all turned grey in a single night. No doubt, too, there have been diseases which have brought men to their graves which have been caused by fright. Fear is always distressing and whether it be the fear of outward danger, or fear of inward sin, it is always a terrible thing to have to go mourning because of being afraid.

And to be afraid, too, is always *a weakening thing*. The man who can keep calm in the midst of difficulty is better able to meet it. If he be at sea in a storm, if his mind be quiet, he is likely to steer his vessel safely through the danger, but if he be perturbed and cast down with agitated alarm, we can have but little confidence in him, for we know not where he may steer the bark. A man who is afraid often runs into worse dangers than those from which he seeks to escape. He plunges himself into the sea to escape from the river, and it is as though he fled from a lion and a bear met him.

To be afraid, then, is generally a very mischievous thing, and though sometimes exceedingly excusable, yet full often is exceedingly dangerous also. David, however, here gives us the cure for fear, *“What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.”*

I shall not have time this evening to take all the fears and amazements which distress humanity, but there are four or five which we will mention, and which may comprehend the others—

I. SOMETIMES WE ARE AFRAID OF TEMPORAL TROUBLES.

If some of you have such a smooth path in life that you are untried in this respect, yet the great proportion of mankind have a hard fight to find bread to eat and garments wherewith they shall be clothed, and in the lives of the poor, especially, there must often be sad times when they are afraid lest

they should not be able to provide things necessary and should be brought to absolute starvation. Such a fear must very often afflict those who are in extreme poverty.

And you, too, who are in business, in this age of competition, you are, no doubt, frequently afraid lest, by a failure in this direction or in that, you should not be able to meet your engagements and the good ship of your business should drive upon the rocks. Such fears, I suppose, fall to the lot of all young tradesmen when they are starting in business, and peradventure, there are a few older ones who have done longer and rougher work, and are quite free from such times of anxious fear.

And brethren, even if we have none of these troubles about what we shall eat and what we shall drink, yet we have our domestic troubles that make us to be much alarmed. It is no small thing to see a child sick, or worse still, to see your life's partner gradually fading away and to know, as some do, that the case is beyond all medical skill—and that she, who is so dear, must be taken away.

And you wives, perhaps, are, some of you, dreading the hour when you may become widows and your little children may be fatherless. You have often been afraid as you have looked forward to the calamity which seemed to overshadow you. God has not made this world to be a nest for us, and if we try to make it such for ourselves, He plants thorns in it so that we may be compelled to mount and find our soul's true home somewhere else, in a higher and nobler sphere than this poor world can give.

Now, whenever we are tried with these temporal affairs, David tells us we are to trust in God. "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." I will just do this—after having done my best to earn my daily bread and to fight the battle of life, if I find I cannot do all I would, I will throw myself upon the promise of God, wherein He has said, "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure."

I will believe that my Heavenly Father, who feeds the ravens, will feed me, and that if He does not suffer even the gnats that dance in the sunbeam to perish for lack of sustenance, He will not suffer a soul that rests upon Him to perish for lack of daily bread. Oh, it is a sweet thing, though, perhaps, you may some of you think it a hard thing—it is a sweet thing when God enables you to leave tomorrow with Him and to depend upon your Father who is in heaven.

To the tradesman I speak and all who often have to do business in great waters, who seem to go from waterspout to waterspout, and over whom all God's waves and billows seem to go—I believe you will find yourselves much stronger to do battle against these difficulties if it be your constant habit to commit all your cares to Him who cares for you. It will all go wrong with us, even in smooth waters, if we do not have God to be the Pilot.

And as to rough weather, we shall soon be a wreck if we forget Him. I know of nothing more delightful to the believer than every morning to commit the day's troubles to God and then go down into the world feeling, "Well, my Father knows it all." And then at night to commit the troubles of the day again into the great Father's hands and to feel that He has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." It is sweet sleeping when you can have a promise for the pillow at your head.

You know, perhaps, the good old story which is told of the woman on ship-board who was greatly afraid in a storm, but she saw her husband perfectly at peace and she could not understand it. Her husband said he would tell her the reason, so snatching up a sword, he pointed it at her heart. She looked at it, but did not tremble. "Well," he said, "are you not afraid? The sword is sharp and I could kill you in a moment." "No," she said, "because it is in your hands!" "Ah," he replied, "and that is why I am not afraid, because the storm is in my Father's hands and He loves me better than I love you."

A little child was at play in a lower room and as he played away by himself, amusing himself, about every ten minutes he ran to the foot of the stairs and called out, "Mother, are you there?" and his mother answered, "Yes, I am here," and the little lad went back to his sport and fun—and was as happy as happy could be—and until again it crossed his mind that his mother might have gone. So he ran to the stairs again and called, "Mother, are you there?" "All right," she said, and as soon as he heard her voice again, back he went once more to his play.

It is just so with us. In times of temporal trouble, we go to the mercy seat in prayer and we say, "Father, are You there? Is it Your hand that is troubling me? Is it Your Providence that has sent me this

difficulty?” And as soon as you hear the voice which says, “It is I,” you are no longer afraid. Oh! happy are they who, when they are afraid in this way, trust in the Lord.

A second great fear, through which some of you have never passed, but through which all must pass who enter into heaven, is a—

II. FEAR CONCERNING THE GUILT OF PAST SIN.

Do not tell me with regard to temporal troubles that they are sharp and bitter! Believe me, that trouble for sin is far more bitter and keen. Do you remember when God was pleased to awaken you from your long sleep—when you looked within and saw that you were all defiled, and full of pollution, and all manner of evil? Do you recollect how the thoughts pierced you like poisoned arrows—“God requireth that which is pure.” “For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof at the day of judgment”?

Do you recollect how it seemed as though hell flared up right before you where you stood and it seemed as though there was only a step betwixt you and death. The terrors of the Lord got hold upon you, and the very marrow of your bones seemed to freeze as you thought about an angry God and of how you, in your sins, without any preparation, could meet Him! Oh! it is not so long ago with some of us but what we recollect being startled in our sleep under a sense of sin. And all day long the common joys of men were no joys to us, and though before we had been sprightly and cheerful like others, yet our mirth was now turned into mourning and all our laughter into lamentation!

Perhaps some of you are passing through this state of mind now. You are conscious now of your old sins. The sins of your youth are coming up before your remembrance. Now, if so, listen to what David says, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.” Beloved! if you would ever get rid of the fear of your past sins, remember that the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to suffer for the sins of all who will trust Him. All the sins of all His people were reckoned as upon Him and all that they should have suffered on account of those sins, Jesus Christ suffered in their stead.

The mighty debt, too huge for us to calculate, was all laid upon Him and He paid it to the last farthing. He was sued and summoned at the court of the eternal justice, for the sins of His people were reckoned as upon Him—and all that they should have rendered with hands and feet, and brow and side, He discharged—the whole tremendous debt that was due to God, the debt caused by the sins of all His people were paid by Him.

Now, it is a blessed thing when sin burdens us to fly away to Christ and stand in spirit beneath the cross, and feel that under that crimson canopy no flash of divine penalty shall ever fall upon us. “Smite me! Great God? You cannot, for have You not smitten the redeeming Christ on my account? Is it not recorded that for those who trust Him, Your Son is both surety and substitute, and then, can You first sue the Substitute and then afterwards sue the person for whom the Substitute stood?”

Faith thus clings to the cross and feels, nay!—knows, that all is safe. I would God that some of you who are lamenting over the burden of your sins and are pressed down by it, would look to the Son of God, pouring out His life, and would trust Him, for then your sins would be gone in a moment. Only look on Jesus, and though you had committed all the sins that are committable by mortal man, yet Jesus Christ can put them all away. If every form of iniquity were heaped upon you till you were dyed through and through with it, like the scarlet that has been lying long a-soak in the dye, yet let the crimson blood of Jesus come into contact with your crimson sins and they—

*“Shall vanish all away,
Though foul as hell before;
Shall be dissolved beneath the sea,
And shall be found no more.”*

Now, I know it is very easy when we do not feel our sins to trust in Christ, but the business of faith is to trust in Christ when you *do* feel your sins. Brethren, it would be cheap faith to take Christ as the

saints' Savior, but it is the faith of God's elect to take Him as the sinner's Savior. When I can see marks of grace in myself, to trust Christ is easy, but when I see no marks of anything good, but every mark of everything that is evil, and then come and cast myself upon Him, and believe that He can save me, even me, and rest myself upon Him—this is the faith which honors Christ and which will save us. May you have it, and such time as you are afraid of sin, may you trust in Christ.

A third fear, which is remarkably common, is a—

III. FEAR LEST WE SHOULD BE DECEIVED.

Among the best and most careful of believers this fear intrudes itself, “Lest, after having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” Lest, after having been united to the church, I should prove to be a dead member and so be cut out of the living vine. All these fears have I met with. One has said, “I fear I was never chosen of God.” Another has said, “I fear I never was effectually called.” And yet a third has said, “I fear I never possessed the repentance that needs not to be repented of.”

Still others have confessed, “I am afraid my faith is not the faith of God's elect.” Very frequently have I heard this, “I am afraid I am a hypocrite,” which is one of the oddest fears in all the world, for nobody that was a hypocrite was ever afraid of it. It is the hypocrite who goes on peacefully, without fear, confident where there is no ground for confidence.

But these fears abound, and in some respects, they are healthy. Better to go to heaven doubting, than to hell presuming. Better to enter into life halt and maimed, than having two eyes and hands, and feet, to be cast into the destroying fire. We cannot say too much in praise of assurance—and we cannot speak too much against presumption. Dread that! Shun it with all your might.

But when you and I are besieged by these doubts and fears—and I very often am—as to whether we are the children of God or not, what is the best thing for us to do? “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.” This is the shortcut with the devil. This is the way to cut off his head more readily than anyhow else.

Go straight away to Christ. Do not stop to argue with Satan. He is a crafty old liar and he will be sure to defeat you if it comes to argument between you. Say to him, “Satan, if I be deceived, if all I have ever known up till now has been only head knowledge, if I am nothing but a mere hypocrite, yet now—

*“Black, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die.”*

It is a blessed thing to begin again—to be always beginning and yet always going on—for no man ever goes on to perfection who forgets his first love, his first faith, and forgets to walk in Christ Jesus as he walked in Him at the first.

Beloved, whatever may be the doubt that comes to you tonight, I beseech you recollect it is still, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” If you have been a backslider, weep over it. If you have been a great sinner, be sorry for it, but still remember, “All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men,” and “Where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound.”

The Gospel's voice is still, “Return, ye backsliding children, for I am married unto you, saith the LORD.” “Come, now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow.” Come, come, come, you doubting one, trembling and broken to pieces. Come again—a guilty, weak and helpless worm—and cast yourself into Jesus' arms.

But we cannot tarry upon that. A fourth fear, which is frequent enough to cause Christians much distress, is—

IV. A FEAR THAT WE SHALL NOT HOLD ON AND HOLD OUT TO THE END.

Many thousands of God's saints are quite unnecessarily troubled with this. Remember, that where God begins to work, He does not ask us to finish. He always completes His own work. If you have

begun the work of salvation, you will have to carry it on, but if God has begun the good work in you, He will carry it on and bring it to its perfection of completeness in “the day of Christ.”

Yet there are thousands who say, “Should I be tempted, I might fall. Working as I do with so many others, none of whom fear God, but who sneer and ridicule at divine things, I might, perhaps, turn aside and prove like one of them.” It is very proper that you should have that fear, very proper that you should be distressed at it.

*“What anguish has that question stirred,
If I should also go!”*

But dearly beloved, what time you are afraid, do not say, “I shall be able to hold out”—do not trust in yourselves or you will trust a broken reed, but what time you are afraid, renew your trust in Christ. Go with the temptation which you now experience and which you expect to recur tomorrow, to the Lord and He will, with the temptation, show the way of escape out of it.

I remember a miner who had been a sad, drunken man, and a great blasphemer, but he was converted among the Methodists, and a right earnest man he was, but he seemed to have been a man of strong passions, and on one occasion when he was praying, he prayed that sooner than that he might ever go back to his old sins, if God foresaw that he would not be able to bear up under the temptation, He would take him to heaven at once, and while he was praying the prayer in the prayer meeting he fell dead. God had answered him.

Now, if you are to be tried in the order of Providence in a way that you cannot bear and there is no other way of escape for you, God will take you clean away to where no temptation shall ever come near you. What time you are afraid, put your trust in Him, and all will be well.

The last fear I have to mention, and then I shall have done with my first text, is this—

V. THE FEAR OF DEATH.

There are some “who, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage.” But Christ came to deliver such—and where Christ works, He delivers us from that fear. Beloved, do you ever get afraid of death? You do, perhaps, when you feel very sick, or when you are very ill and low spirited. You begin to look forward and you say, “I have run with the footmen and they have wearied me; what shall I do when I have to contend with the rider on the pale horse? My trials have been so great that I have scarcely found faith enough to bear them. What shall I do in the last great trial of the swellings of Jordan?”

Now, what ought you to do at the time you are afraid of dying, but to say with David, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee”? Oh! fear not to die! If you are in Christ, death is nothing. “But the pain, the dying struggle,” you say. Oh! there is no pain in death. It is the life that is full of pain. Death! What is it? Well, it is but a pin’s prick and then it is over. “Many lie a-dying for weeks or months together,” say some. Nay! Say they live, for ’tis living that makes them full of pain and anguish, but death ends all that. Death is just the passing through the narrow stream that is the entrance in the fields where—

“Everlasting spring abides, and never-withering flowers.”

To be afraid to die must be because we do not understand it, for if believers know that to die is but to enter into the arms of Jesus Christ, surely they will be able to sing bravely with one good old saint—

*“Since Jesus is mine, I’ll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off this garment of clay.
To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to glory, through death, led the way.”*

What time you are afraid of dying, trust in the living Savior, for in Him are life and immortality. Recollect—

*“Jesus can make our dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast we lean our head,
And breathe our life out softly there.”*

He will keep you where you shall sing—

*“Oh! if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul would stretch her wings in haste;
Fly fearless through death’s iron gate,
Nor fear the terror as she passed.”*

You shall fear no fear and know no evil, because He shall be with you. And you shall find that His rod and His staff do comfort you.

Now, brethren, I have taken you far, like a guide conducting a number of travelers up the first road on a mountain, and I think we have gathered something even there, but now I want you to go up higher still. I feel as if, in handling this text, we have been travelling third class to heaven, but now I want you to get into the first class. Hitherto we have been going in a sort of parliamentary train, which will get to heaven safe enough, but I want you now to take the express.

My second text will let you know what I mean. It is in the 12th chapter of Isaiah and the 2nd verse—*“I will trust and not be afraid.”*

This is several stages beyond the first text. David says, “What, time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.” Isaiah says, “I will trust and not be afraid,” which is far better. When David is afraid, he trusts in God, but Isaiah trusts in God first, and then he is not afraid at all. I told you in the first case that there was disease and that faith was the remedy, but you know prevention is always better than cure.

I have heard of a man who had the ague, and he was thankful to have a medicine which helped him through it. But his neighbor said he should not be very thankful for that, for he had a remedy which prevented him from ever having the malady. So with you who are doubting and fearing—it is a good thing that faith can bear you through it, but how much better it will be if you get a faith that does not have these doubts, that lives above these fears and troubles.

See! There are two vessels yonder, and a storm is coming on. I see a great hurrying and scurrying on the deck of one. What are they at? They have a great anchor and they are throwing it out. The storm is coming and they want to get a good hold, for fear lest they should be driven on the shore.

But on the deck of the other vessel, I see no bustle at all. There is the watch pacing up and down as leisurely as possible. Why are they not in a panic? “Ahoy there! Ahoy! What makes you so calm and assured? Have you got out your anchor? See you! Your comrades in the other vessel, how busy they are!” “Oh!” says the watch, “but we had our anchor out a long while ago, before the storm came on and therefore we have no need to trouble now, and hurry to throw it out.”

Now, you who are full of doubts, and fears, and troubles, you know the way to be safe is to throw out the anchor of faith, but it would be better if you had the anchor of faith out already, so that you could trust in God and not be afraid at all.

Let us take the fears which we have already mentioned over again. Faith saves from—

I. THE FEAR OF TEMPORAL TROUBLE.

The man who fully trusts in God is not afraid of temporal trouble. You have read, perhaps, the life of Bernard Palissy, the famous potter. He was confined for many years on account of his religion and he was only permitted to live at all because he was such a skillful workman that they did not want to put him to death.

King Henry the Third of France said to him, one day, “Bernard, I shall be obliged to give you up to your enemies to be burned, unless you change your religion.” Bernard replied, “Your Majesty, I have often heard you say you pity me, but believe me I greatly pity you, though I am no king but only a poor

humble potter, but there is no man living that could compel me to do what I believe to be wrong—and yet you say you will be compelled—those are kingly words for you to utter!” And he could say this to the king, in whose hands his life was!

Bernard was a very poor man. As I have told you, he used to earn his bread by making pottery, and he used to say in his poverty that he was a very rich man, for he had two things—he had heaven and earth, and then he would take up a handful of the clay by which he earned his living. Happy man! Though often brought to the depths of poverty, he could say, “I will trust and not be afraid.”

Take as another example, Martin Luther. They came to Martin one day and they said, “Martin, it is all over with the Reformation cause now, for the Emperor of Germany has sworn a solemn oath to help the Pope.” “I do not care a snap of my finger for both of them,” he said, “nor for all the devils in hell! This is God’s work, and God’s work can stand against both emperors and popes.” Luther was a man who trusted—really, intensely—and because of this he was not afraid. Is not that much better than being afraid, and then having to trust to banish the fear?

Now, God is with me, and come what may—

*“Should earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled;
Now I can smile at Satan’s rage,
And face a frowning world.*

*Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall:
I shall in safety reach my home,
My God, my heaven, my all.”*

Oh! if we can all get to this brave assurance of faith, happy shall we be in the midst of the worst trouble.

Faith also saves from the—

II. FEAR CONCERNING PAST SIN.

He is in a blessed state who is delivered from such fear, because he who is not is not afraid. One of you knows a man, perhaps, who has got into debt and who owed a great deal. But some little time ago a friend paid all his debts for him—and he has got the receipt. Now, when he walks the streets, is this man afraid of the sheriff’s officer? Does he fear that he shall be arrested? Why, no. He knows he shall not, because he carries the receipt with him.

Every man who trusts Christ perceives his own sin, but he also perceives that Christ paid for all his sin. He that believes has the witness of his pardon in himself, which he carries with him as a receipt, and which eases his conscience and prevents his fears. Oh! if you can but know that Christ died for you. If you can but rest alone in Him so as to know that He is yours, then all the sins that you have ever committed, though you lament them, shall never cause you a moment’s uneasiness, for they are drowned beneath the Red Sea of the Savior’s blood, and therefore may you say, “I will trust and not be afraid.”

As to that third fear which I mentioned—the fear lest we should be hypocrites, or—

III. LEST THE WORK OF GRACE SHOULD NOT BE RIPENED IN OUR HEARTS—

There is one way of getting rid of that fear entirely. If you take a sovereign across the counter, you may not know whether it is a good one—you may have some doubts about it. But if you get it straight from the Mint, I do not suppose you will have any suspicion of it at all. So when a man asks, “Is my faith right? Is my religion right?” If he can say, “I got it straight from the throne of God by trusting in the blood of Jesus Christ”—then he will know that he received it from headquarters—and there can be no mistake about it. A Christian has no right to be always saying—

“Do I love the Lord or no?”

Am I His, or am I not?"

He may be compelled to say it, sometimes, but it is far better for him to come just as he is and throw himself at the foot of the cross, and say, "Savior, You have promised to save those that believe! I do believe, therefore You have saved me." I know some think this is presumption, but surely it is worse than presumption not to believe God, and it is true humility to take God at His word and to believe Him.

I think I once illustrated this truth in this place in this way. A good mother has two children. Christmas is drawing near and she says to one of them, "Now, John, I shall take you out on Christmas Day to such a place and give you a great treat." She promises the same to William. Now, Master John says to himself, "Well, I do not know. I do not know whether my mother can afford it. Or perhaps I do not deserve it. I hardly think she will take me—it will be presumption in me to believe that she will."

But as for little Master William, he is no sooner told that he is to go out on Christmas Day than he claps his hands and begins to skip—and tells all his playmates tomorrow that his mother is going to take him out on Christmas Day. He is quite sure of it. They begin to ask him, "How do you know?" "Why," he says, "Mother said so." Perhaps they mention some things that make it look rather unlikely. "Oh! but" he says, "my mother never tells lies and she told me she would take me, and I know she will."

Now, which of those children, do you think, is most to be commended—the bigger boy, who raised difficulties and suspected his mother's word? Why, he is a proud little fellow who deserves to go without the pleasure. But as for his little brother, William, who takes his mother at her word—I do not call him proud. I consider him truly humble—and he is the child who really deserves the mother's fondest love.

Now, deal with God as you would have your children deal with you. If He says He will save you if you trust Him, then if you trust Him, why, He will save you. If He is a true God, He cannot destroy the soul that trusts in Christ. Unless this Bible is one great lie from beginning to end, the soul that trusts in Christ must be saved. If God be true, every soul that trusts in Jesus must be safe at the last. Whatever he may be and whoever he may be, if he trusts his soul with Christ, and with Christ alone, cast away he cannot be, unless the promise of God can be of no effect. "I will trust and not be afraid."

So, brethren, it will be with other fears—time fails us to mention them—whatever they may be. May you get into such a blessed state of confidence in the love of God, in the love of Christ's heart, in the power of Christ's arm, in the prevalence of Christ's plea, that at all times you may trust in Him, and in nothing whatever be afraid.

God bring us all up to this second platform and give us grace to stay there, and happy shall you be, and have a foretaste of heaven upon earth. Amen.

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