**VOLUME 10; CHAPTER 20 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE FIXED HEART IN THE DAY OF FRIGHTFULNESS by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*He shall not be afraid of evil tidings:*

*His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.*

*Psalm 112:7*

THE FIRST PART OF THE TEXT DESCRIBES A MOST DESIRABLE state of mind, that of being able to hear evil tidings without trembling and without panic. The second part of the text reveals the secret of such fearlessness. It is that of the fixed heart, and of the heart fixed because it has confidence in God.

This is supremely a day of evil tidings. Our newspapers are full of them. They contain nothing else. Their good news, the good news for which we look, and which comes to us ever and anon, is always laden with anguish. Battles won mean hearts broken. The tide of sorrow is rising higher and higher in the national life, and its dark waters are overflowing into every hamlet and every home. But they are especially emphatic, these newspapers of ours, about the tidings which are wholly evil. They tell us that the Government is incapable and weak, that politicians are blind, that generals are incapable, or, to summarize, that all the wise men are out of office. These are evil tidings, because for the most part they are untrue.

But there are other tidings coming to us day by day. The situation in the Balkans is critical, the position in Mesopotamia is uncertain, the peril of the sea is not over - perchance Germany is arming every ship in her fleet with seventeen-inch guns, and building submarine monitors; and the summer is to bring the Zeppelins perpetually! Well, these tidings are evil, because there is an element of truth, perchance, in the whole of them. These are the tidings that assault the soul, the mind, the heart, day by day.

Is it possible under such circumstances to be free from panic? Can broken hearts still be courageous? Can minds assaulted by panic-stricken rumor still be fearless? Can wills be dauntless in the presence of great perils? The answer of the text to these inquiries is that there is a man who is unafraid of evil tidings, and that the secret of that man's quietness is that "his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Let us, first, look at his man; and then let us consider the secret of his fearlessness in the midst of circumstances that make for fear.

The whole of the psalm from which the text is taken is in celebration of this man; and it is closely related to the preceding one. Both are acrostic psalms in the Hebrew Bible; each has twenty-two lines, and each line in every case commences with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Their relationship is patent. Psalm 111 celebrates Jehovah. Psalm 112 celebrates the man who trusteth in Jehovah. A most interesting exercise is to read them together, that is, to read verse one of Psalm 111, then verse one in 112, and so on throughout. Such a reading will reveal that all the things of excellence and glory and beauty celebrated in Jehovah are found also in the man who trusts in Him, and is obedient to Him. Observe the closing of the first of these psalms and the opening of the second, for there we have an immediate indication of relationship. The psalm that celebrates the glory of Jehovah ends in these words:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;

A good understanding have all they that do thereafter;

His praise endureth forever.

And the next psalm opens:

Praise ye the Lord.

Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord,

That delighteth greatly in His commandments.

Psalm 112, then, is a character sketch; it is the revelation of a man. It is as beautiful as anything in literature. One wonders whether the writer knew some one man of whom he was thinking. Be that as it may, a man is in view, whether actual or ideal, and it is of this man that the words of our text are employed:

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings;

His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

Now, we must see this man. Let me try to describe him as he is here described by the psalmist, but in other words.

The first thing I notice about him is the fact with which the singer opens. He is a God-fearing man.

Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord,

That delighteth greatly in His commandments.

So reads the first verse of the psalm. My phrase is a much more modern one: he is a God-fearing man. He is a man whose first thought is Godward, a man whose whole life is lived under the mastery of the supreme and fundamental fact that he believes in God. This man may regularly, once or twice a week, or more often, say: "I believe in God the Father Almighty"; or he may hardly ever recite the creed in that particular form, but that is the truth about him. He is a God-fearing man.

The next thing I observe about him is that he is a home-making man.

His children shall be mighty upon earth:

The generation of the upright shall be blessed.

Wealth and riches are in his house,

(Remember these qualities are often found, in the high sense of the words, in the cottage as well as in the castle.)

And his righteousness endureth forever.

His seed mighty in the earth, his generation blessed among the sons of men - wealth and riches in his house are set in relationship to righteousness. He is the home-making man, the man who, first believing in God, has realized, in the deepest of life, though it may be that he does not often talk about it, that God's first circle of human society is the home and the family. He is a home-making man.

The next thing I observe is that he is a helping man:

Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.

Let me say at once that this translation misses the point of the declaration, which really is that this man ariseth unto the upright as light in the darkness. He is a center from which light flashes out on the way of other men. Notice what follows: "He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous." "He dealeth graciously and lendeth"; and yet again, presently,

He hath dispersed, he hath given to the needy;

His righteousness endureth forever.

He is a man who is helping other men.

Finally, I observe one other thing about him. He is a hated man:

The wicked shall see it, and be grieved;

He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away.

This, then, is the man; he is a God-fearing man, a home-making man, a man who is always helping other people, a man who is hated by wicked men. Of that man the psalmist says:

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings,

His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

Let us watch him in the day of evil tidings. What will he do? He gets the news of battle and of death! His heart is stricken, but he does not tremble. He reads his newspaper, and then puts it down, and goes on with his duty. If that man should be destroyed in an air raid, it will be at his post, and he will meet death cheerfully. "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed."

Whether this man was a man in the olden time on whom the psalmist looked, or whether he is the man you know, your father, perchance, he is a strong man, and all men know it. How is his strength to be accounted for?

And so we pass to consider the second part of the text, the revelation of the secret of this man's fearlessness:

His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

First, "His heart is fixed." Men who are strong are always men who are fixed somewhere, who have a conviction from which they cannot be separated by argument, which cannot be changed, whatever the circumstances in the midst of which they live. Sometimes these men are very narrow, but they are wonderfully strong; they are singularly obstinate, but they are splendidly dependable. Sometimes their convictions resolve themselves into two or three great fundamental truths, and they are never moved from them. Consequently, we always know where to find those men. The fixed heart is the secret of courage. Courage is an affair of the heart; courage is the consciousness of the heart that is fixed. The positive is sometimes best illuminated by the negative. Therefore, let me say that men not so fixed are weak men, however strong they may be. I cannot better illustrate here than by a quotation from old Jacob. When Jacob was dying, he looked out on all his sons, and described them. Mark particularly his description of Reuben, and do not begin where people generally begin, "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." We must go further back. "Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength; the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power. Unstable as water, thou shalt not have the excellency." Was there ever a more graphic picture of the failure of a strong man than that? Reuben, thou art the excellency of dignity, thou art the excellency of power, thou art the beginning of my strength; thou shalt not have the excellency, thou shalt not enter into the inheritance of thine own possession! Why? Thou art unstable as water! The man, who potentially was a great man, was weak, vacillating, because his heart was not fixed, he had laid hold on nothing that was eternal and positive! Such a man drifts, is moved by every wind that sweeps over the surface of the sea, is unstable as water. That man is afraid in the day of evil tidings; that man leaves his post of duty when he expects an air raid; that man talks in the railway train, and everywhere, about the failure of the Government and the failure of the politicians and the failure of the generals! Such a man is a menace to the State, and a hindrance to the purposes of God. His heart is not fixed; he has no central secret of power. He is dynamic, he is kinetic, but he is not static. He is full of power, full of activity in certain directions, but he lacks that secret strength that enables his power to operate to purpose and to victory, and that keeps him strong in the shock of battle, in tempest and hurricane.

We leave him, and by the contrast we see more clearly this old-fashioned man, this God-fearing man, this home-making man, this man who is always willing to help someone else, this man who is hated by evil men, and so is highly complimented. This man is not afraid of evil tidings, because his heart is fixed.

The supreme value of this declaration, however, is that the psalmist has defined the fixity, "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." This man finds his strength in the fact that at all times he maintains in his thinking the central and fundamental relationships of his life; he is trusting in the Lord. Again, to use the negative method of illustration, his heart is not fixed, trusting in himself, but is fixed, trusting in the God Who explains what he is within himself, the God to Whom he himself is related. In a certain way this man has no confidence in himself at all. In another way this man is perfectly confident of his ability to do the thing that God has appointed he should do; and he will do it, whatever storms may sweep, yea, though the mountains be removed and cast into the midst of the sea. He will not go on tour to watch them falling in the sea. He will stay where he is, and do his duty in the midst of the clash. He is trusting in the Lord, not in himself. And yet again, the fixity that characterizes the man described by the psalmist is not of confidence in circumstances. A man who is not confident in circumstances is careless about them. If a man sees only the things that are happening, then, if they are not going according to his idea, he is perturbed, filled with fear - evil tidings render him hopeless. But if a man sees that there is a God controlling all circumstances, then, if circumstances are characterized by turmoil, so that nothing seems in place or in order, he is still unafraid, because he knows that circumstances are the arrangement of God. Therefore this man, trusting in God, knows that while he abides at his post, in the midst of the turmoil, the last word is not the word turmoil, but the word of the God Who is presiding over it. "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

And so one is driven to inquire: Who is this Lord in Whom this man trusts? Who is the God Whom this man fears, and in the fear of Whom he makes strong his own home, holds out helping hands to all who need his help, and because of these things is hated of wickedness? We go back again to Psalm 111, and there we find no doctrine of God, so far as a declaration of the mystery of His Being is concerned, but He is celebrated in the things He does, and by these things He is made known. The psalmist says of Him, "The works of the Lord are great," and "His work is honor and majesty." Here are two words, the light and shadow of which we miss in our reading. Great are the things done! Majestic and honorable is the thing made! The psalmist says of Him that He "is gracious and full of compassion," that He is faithful to His covenants with His people; that He is true and just in all His deeds. Evil tidings come to the man who trusts in his God, tidings of death, tidings of disaster, tidings of difficulty; but the man knows by what he knows of God, not so much in character as in history, that God is overruling. The man knows that God is great in His doing, that He is majestic and stately in the things that He makes to be, that He is in Himself gracious and compassionate, that He is faithful to His covenants, that He is true and just in His deeds, and, therefore, the man is not afraid.

Come back again to the second of these psalms, and observe the effect of this knowledge on the character of the man. This fixity of heart results in fixity of character, and that fixity may be expressed in the two simplest phrases possible. This man is a man in whom there burns persistently a passion for righteousness and a pity for all need. "Holy and reverend is His name," sings the psalmist of the God in Whom the man trusts, and when he comes to write of the man who trusts in the Lord, the references to the righteousness of the man run throughout. The God in Whom this man believes is the God of unsullied and undeviating holiness, and, therefore, the passion of this man's life is a passion for truth, for righteousness. But the God in Whom this man believes is also a God full of compassion and tender mercy, and, therefore, the man who believes in Him becomes God's distributing center: he scattereth, distributeth, helpeth. His own heart fixed in the God of holiness, he stands for righteousness in human affairs. His own heart homed in the infinite compassion of Deity, he stands for pity and grace and tenderness in the sons of men. Consequently, he is not afraid of evil tidings.

Mark the reasonableness of his quietness, and observe the expression of it. There comes to that man the tidings of death. His own boy is gone! He is not callous. The wound is full of pain, but there is no panic, there is no trembling, there is no whining. He is not afraid, because he knows that death is not the final news, that beyond death, even in that tragic form, all the meaning of life is discovered. He will fold his arms for a moment, perchance ceasing his work while his bosom heaves, but he will say, "He shall not return to me, but I shall go to him." His heart is not afraid of evil tidings.

He also knows that the tidings of incompetence is not the last word. God has always had to deal with human incompetence, and he overrules it in order to arrive at His own goal, to realize the destiny He purposes for humanity. Where have we as a nation ever arrived as the result of our own competence, tell me? We have arrived at wonderful places of power, and influence, and responsibility. What marvels our eyes have seen through these past nineteen months of the sons of the far-flung places of our empire coming to us in the hour of our anguish and travail! Have we won them by our competence? I hear that it is so, that we are a wonderful people for colonizing purposes. Yes, but if the Lord had not been on our side, now may Israel say we should have failed! If we will but read our history aright, we shall find it to be a story of the overruling of incompetence by God; and that it is this that has brought us to the position of power and influence we have occupied in the world, and shall still occupy if our feet are but turned back to the way of His commandments, and our heart becomes fixed, trusting in the Lord. This man says, there may be much incompetence, but the last word is God. His heart is not afraid of evil tidings.

And so, finally, to this man the tidings of danger is not the only tidings. Like the ancient prophet, he has heard other tidings. Do you remember how Obadiah began that weird prophecy of the doom of Edom, the doom of the nation that trusted in its might and its frightfulness? Listen to this: "We have heard tidings from the Lord," Tidings from the Lord! These are the tidings which this man hears every morning. He read something before he read his newspaper - he has read his Bible. The man who is reading his newspaper and listening to the clamor of the voices speaking of failure and disaster and incapacity, and is not afraid is the man who listens in the morning for another Voice, and goes to his work in the halls of legislature, in the mine, in the training camp drilling, in the home toiling, in the battle fighting, and as he goes he says, "We have heard tidings from the Lord."

What are the tidings from the Lord? Well, this is what God said concerning Edom:

Behold, I have made thee small among the nations: thou art greatly despised. The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, O thou that dwellest in the cleft of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou mount on high as the eagle, and though thy nest be set among the stars, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord.

The man who has heard those tidings from the Lord goes out and does his work, and is not afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

Now, let us take up our newspapers again, and what do we see? We see a combination of words that I hardly know how to read! The Casualty List. By a wonderful spiritual instinct, hardly conscious, but coming up out of the subconsciousness of our national life, even our newspapers are putting something else; instead of Casualty List, we read Roll of Honor. They fall, our sons, our brothers, our lovers, our friends! We mourn, we grieve, we sorrow. We read these evil rumors, but we have heard tidings from the Lord, and, consequently, we are not afraid. We hear of grave situations, of peoples still halted, not knowing whether to pass to the right or to the left, to take this side or that side. We hear of diplomacies attempting to capture them for one side or the other. But, in spite of all, we are not afraid. And why not? We can best express it in the language of Julia Ward Howe:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. ...

He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat.

That, verily, is what He is doing. I am no prophet or the son of a prophet in the sense of predicting things to come; but I declare that when presently the war is over, and the conflict is done, we shall sit down quietly and see how these nations dropped into line, howsoever they may go, by virtue of what they were in their own heart and soul. God is compelling them to express themselves, and will do so to the end. If the only thing I see is what the diplomatists are doing, or not doing, then my heart is filled with fear; but when I see God sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat, then I continue with Julia Ward Howe, and I say:

Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him!

Be jubilant my feet!

Our God is marching on.

What, then, shall we do in the day of frightfulness? We will do our duty, the thing that lies nearest, the thing we have to do tomorrow morning. We will do that, and do it well, and do it cheerfully. We will leave the rest to God, the sorrow, the suffering, and the issues. What this nation needs just now as much as, and perhaps more than, anything else is the multiplication of strong, quiet souls who are not afraid of evil tidings, who will go quietly to rest, even though the Zeppelins may be coming, and will not add to the panic that demoralizes, but will do their work. The men and women who can do that on such a day are the men and women who have hearts fixed, trusting in Jehovah. May God make us such men and such women.