

W. A. Weston's
THE GOSPEL A JOYFUL SOUND.

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A SERMON,

PREACHED

AT MORRIS-TOWN, NEW-JERSEY,

March 23, 1823.

BY SYMMES C. HENRY, A. M.
PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CRANBURY.

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THE GOSPEL A JOYFUL SOUND,

A SERMON.

PSALMS XXXIX. 15.

Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.

THESE words contain a very beautiful allusion to the blowing of the Jubilee trumpet, which was sounded throughout all the land of Israel at the commencement of every fiftieth year. The institution was of divine appointment, and was hailed with joy and gladness in every part of the nation. During this happy season there was a complete cessation from all servile and unnecessary labour; and immediately when it was ushered in by the usual signal, perfect liberty was granted to every prisoner, alienated estates reverted to their original possessors, and debts of all kinds from one Jew to another were remitted. All this, was certainly, a very striking emblem of the proclamation of the everlasting gospel, bringing with it glad tidings of great joy to a ruined world, restoring life to those who are dead in sin, liberty to the bond slaves of satan, and salvation to the perishing children of men. The same blessed era is alluded to

by the prophet *Isaiah* in that strain of lively and evangelical description which he gives of the long expected Messiah.—“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound—to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” At the fulfilment of this remarkable prediction when Jesus Christ appeared in the flesh and began his public ministry, then the prophecy of the Psalmist, which we have in the words of the text, might be applied with great meaning and propriety. But its force and application will be more clearly perceived, if we take into view the labours of the Apostles after the ascension of the Redeemer, and especially the more general diffusion of christianity at the present day.—Already has the sound of the gospel saluted, and is daily saluting the ears of thousands; and we have every assurance from the lively oracles of heaven, that the time is not far distant when the clarion of “grace, mercy and peace” shall be heard by every mortal.

In the further prosecution of this discourse we shall enquire,

- I. *In what respects the Gospel is a joyful sound?*
- II. *What is implied in knowing it?*
- III. *What is the blessedness which a scriptural knowledge of its doctrines ensures and imparts?*

I. We shall now endeavour to show, in the first place, that the Gospel is truly a *joyful sound*; a sound which should make every bosom thrill with delight, and every heart beat high with a holy pleasure. This will plainly appear if we consider,

1st. *That the Gospel is the most complete and glorious delineation of duty and of morals ever given to the world.* When the Son of God condescended to become incarnate, the nations of the earth were sitting in darkness, and groping in the mazes of ignorance and superstition. Even the people whom God had chosen and set apart for himself were grossly deficient in their knowledge of his character and his will. Highly distinguished as they were, to them were not given the greater privileges of a gospel day. The best of them could but see through a glass darkly. The system of their worship was not only burdensome but obscure. The rites and ceremonies which they observed, were not only grievous to be borne, but were merely the *shadows* of those great and substantial realities which were to be revealed. They enjoyed but the faint streaks of morning light without being permitted to behold the rising of *the sun of righteousness*. With them all was typical, and hence obscure and unimpressive. If then, such were the circumstances of a nation whom God had made the depositary of his oracles, and to whom were confined all the institutions of the only true religion, how impenetrable this mist which must have hung over the heathen world, the thick gloom of

which had never been dispersed by a ray of heavenly light. Their different systems of religion and morals were full of endless error and mistake. Their ideas of virtue and that course of conduct which becomes an accountable being were absurd in the extreme.— Their idolatry was of the basest kind, and the means by which they thought to appease their respective deities, were as foolish as they were ridiculous, and as ridiculous as they were cruel. Indeed, the attributes of their Gods were passions so vile and detestable, that they would degrade the man who cherished their emotions, and followed their abominable dictates. Such was the state of a large portion of mankind. All their opinions concerning true morality, low and unworthy. Truly the world by their false wisdom knew not God, and the most intelligent one among them declared that without a revelation, they could never come to a knowledge of the truth. What therefore they knew not, we are given to understand. The promulgation of the gospel was the introduction of a dispensation, bearing on its every feature, the glory of spiritual light, and the grandeur of moral truth.— It abolished the carnal ordinances of the *Jew* on the one hand, and cleared away the darkness and superstition of the *Pagan*, on the other. Here the terms of christian discipleship are so plainly proposed, that the wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein, and so glaring, that he who runs may read. The

principles of rectitude are drawn as with a sun-beam. And while it calls upon men to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," it also reminds them, that no anxieties, no frames or doings of their own, will ever present their souls spotless and unblameable before the eye of infinite purity. It gives us to understand, that all its requisitions are embodied in "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." In the gospel, therefore, there is contained a more noble and glorious system of *ethics* than men with all their boasted ingenuity ever produced. The two grand and leading principles of action which it enjoins, are *love to God*, and *love to man*. These are to regulate our conduct, and from these are deduced all those duties which we owe to God, our neighbour and ourselves. The most perfect and incomparable rules of life are here set before us : rules for all the various situations in which we may be placed, and for all the several relations we may sustain ; rules, which, for their purity, their wisdom, their dignity and their importance, far surpass all the moral lessons of the wisest sages of antiquity. But the principal excellence of gospel morality, and that which gives it an unquestionable superiority to every other system, is, that it inculcates a meek and forgiving temper, in opposition to that violent, imperious and revengeful disposition, which is so prevalent in

the world: and that it regulates not merely our *actions*, but our *thoughts* and *affections*. Here we are taught to subdue all those grovelling lusts and appetites, and all those unhallowed passions which are calculated to spread disorder, confusion and misery wherever they prevail; and instead of these to practice justice, charity, temperance, equity and truth, and to cultivate all those feelings of tenderness and brotherly love which can sympathize with the afflicted and which will operate for the relief of their necessities. These are the sentiments which the gospel calls upon us to cherish in our souls and to exhibit in our lives. Sentiments which adorn society, promote peace and happiness and advance the interests of any people. How sublime then, the morality of the gospel; how reasonable in all its requisitions; how consonant with sound philosophy; and how admirably adapted to the condition of men.

2dly. The Gospel is a joyful sound in consequence of the *redemption it proposes*. A redemption as mysterious and profound, as it is efficacious. A redemption from the miseries of sin, the thralldom of satan, and the unutterable pangs of the second death. A redemption in which we have the grandest display of divine justice and divine benevolence that was ever exhibited under the moral government of Jehovah. Here it may emphatically be said, that "mercy and truth meet together, and that righteousness and peace

kiss each other." Here all the attributes of deity are seen to harmonize in one beautiful and glorious combination, and with united voice they proclaim, that "God can be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." But this plan of redeeming mercy which the gospel unfolds to a guilty world, was not the effect of finite wisdom or finite power.—No; it was one of the goings forth of him whose ways are from everlasting, and the most stupendous moral experiment that was ever made in the universe of God. An experiment which was made by means, no less, than the incarnation and death of him who formed the worlds, and who in all the majesty of his Godhead said, "let there be light, and there was light." An experiment which did not fail of success; but which brought in everlasting righteousness, gave a fatal blow to the empire of satan, and laid a firm foundation for our dearest hopes and our sublimest joys. In a word, an experiment at which the angels of heaven are astonished, and which will be the theme of a great multitude that no man can number, while eternity rolls forward in its endless duration.—Without controversy, then, "great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh" for the salvation of sinners. This is the fundamental doctrine of the gospel, this the "glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people." By nature our hearts are corrupt and alienated from God. By practice we are the

transgressors of that holy law, which has been given to us for the rule of our conduct. Consequently we are exposed to that awful curse which it denounces against all who do not live agreeably to its precepts. But hark! there is a voice of mercy which sounds from the sacred word. It declares that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and to purchase pardon for guilty rebels by dying in their stead. It tells us how he travailed in the greatness of his strength, and the infinitude of his sufferings, and the condescending grandeur of his mercy, to accomplish this mighty and amazing scheme of loving kindness. It assures us, that there is full redemption at his throne—that he is waiting to be gracious and stands holding out the sceptre of pardon and reconciliation that all who approach and touch it may live forever. Such are the offers which are now made to the sin-led captive; such the terms by which he shall be emancipated from the kingdom of darkness, by which he shall stand disenthralled from the fetters of satan and redeemed from the eternal woes of perdition. Nay; by which he may arise from the dust of abasement, to claim the privileges and share the immunities of the sons of God.

3dly. The Gospel is a joyful sound because of the *consolation* which it affords. We need not scruple to aver that it is infinitely more productive of real and substantial happiness than all other religious or philo-

sophical tenets that have ever appeared in the world. It is directly calculated to soothe every disorderly passion of the soul, and communicate an inward peace of mind which nothing earthly gives or can destroy. Thousands have felt its divine and quickening power, and have rejoiced in its benign and sacred influence. Its comforts are adapted to every situation in which we may be placed ; and no circumstances so peculiar, no case so difficult and hopeless as to baffle its sovereign remedies. In prosperity and in adversity ; in health and in sickness ; in life and in death, it is ever ready to administer that strength and that consolation which cometh down from above. Amidst the vicissitudes of external things, it bids us look forward to a state of endless and immutable felicity. And when troubles neither few nor small roll in upon us like wave after wave, supported by the hopes which the gospel inspires, we can rise superior to them all. For what are earthly misfortunes to him who claims an eternal world for his inheritance ? What are disappointments and reproaches to the disciple of Jesus, who is conscious of being an adopted child of God, and who can raise an eye of filial affection to heaven, and cry, Abba, Father ? What is the loss of pious friends to him, who hears the gospel saying, in the sweetest accents, “ weep not, they are blessed because they die in the Lord, and shall henceforth forever rest in peace ?” Ah ! what is the closing scene of life to that

christian, who with holy triumph can exclaim, "O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory, thanks be unto God who giveth me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ?" Such are the wonderful supports of the gospel in the most difficult and trying seasons; seasons in which every other expedient fails to console, and are at best but "broken reeds on which peace bleeds, and hope expires." And so in every adverse situation of life, it reminds us that these light afflictions, if sanctified, will work out for us, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. But especially is the gospel a source of consolation to those who mourn for sin. "Beauty, instead of ashes, is appointed for all such, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Burdened with guilt, and incapable of finding relief from human resources, the mind has here found peace unspeakable, in beholding that sacrifice which alone could atone for transgression. Here the weeping penitent is directed to that physician who is able to cure the dangerous malady of his soul, who will apply an healing balm to his wounded conscience, and cleanse him from all his pollution in that fountain, which has been set open for sin and uncleanness. Here flow the waters of life in rich abundance, waters which have their source in heaven, and of which if a man drink, he shall never thirst, for they will be in him as a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Once more :—The Gospel may emphatically be styled a joyful sound, if we consider *that state of future glory and happiness*, which it so explicitly reveals.—The prospects, which it discovers to the enraptured eye of faith, are as animating and delightful, as they are noble and divine. Prospects which the gospel claims as its prerogative to unfold. It alone can enable us to draw aside the veil which separates eternity from time, and rise to some elevated mount, where we may stand and gaze at the boundless landscape which lies before us. It is a *spiritual telescope* without which we are left ignorant of the *heaven of heavens*, and walk along the verge of life in doubt and uncertainty about an hereafter. We can trace the soul through all the winding paths of time, until she bids farewell to her clay tenement, but farther human intellect cannot penetrate. Here reason stops, and fails to give an answer. In her loftiest flight she is lost, and returns with dark and uncertain responses. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ alone which brings life and immortality to light, and relieves the anxious inquirer of his perplexity and doubt. Here we learn that to the christian, death is the gate of endless joy, and eternity the career of his existence. Here the grave is divested of its gloom and horror, when we are taught to view it as the deposit of our frailty and corruption. Here we are assured that though we die, we shall live again, and that the demolished fabric of

the believer's flesh and blood shall be reared at some future day, stately and ornamented, shining and illustrious, permanent and durable ; so that what was once the food of worms, will become the companion of angels, and be admitted to those joys which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor of which it hath entered into the heart of man to conceive."—Here a state of the most perfect purity and blessedness is explicitly revealed and freely proposed. A state in which the believer shall forever increase in knowledge, and where the powers and faculties of his soul will be continually expanding. A state in which he shall be introduced to an "innumerable company of angels, to the General Assembly and Church of the first born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." A state where he shall live in the most intimate communion with all the inhabitants of the celestial paradise ; where none of those jarring and evil passions which often mar the dearest friendships on earth will ever gain admittance, and where there will be nothing to interrupt that peace and harmony which will forever and universally prevail. In a word, a state in which there will be no more death, neither sorrow, nor sighing, nor pain, for the former things shall have passed away." Such are the prospects for which we are indebted to the gospel. Prospects which are calculated to excite our gratitude and surprise, which can cheer our darkest

moments, and in comparison with which all sublunary things lose their charms and sink into bitterness and contempt.

From the considerations which have been suggested it is sufficiently clear that the Gospel is denominated a "*joyful sound*" with the most emphatical propriety. It chases away the moral darkness of the mind ; bids the ruined sinner, look up from the depth of his depravity and wretchedness, to " the lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world ;" brings home the precious boon of divine consolation to the afflicted heart ; and fixes our eyes and our hopes on that " city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

II. Having considered in what respects the Gospel is a joyful sound, let us now inquire in the second place, what is implied *in knowing it*.

The word *know* appears to imply something more than the mere *privilege* or *act of hearing* a preached gospel, as is evident from the context. Besides, our daily observation convinces us that there are many who hear sermon after sermon, and much about the great and leading principles of Christianity, who nevertheless remain criminally ignorant, and know little or nothing of even the most essential doctrines of our holy religion. Others again may have acquired a *correct and extensive speculative acquaintance* with the system of revealed truth, but their knowledge of its

doctrines will not ensure any great and lasting blessedness to their souls, either for time or for eternity. This kind of phraseology therefore has a reference to the benign, the practical, and saving influence which the truths of the gospel are designed to produce and do actually produce when impressed upon the heart by the effectual operations of the Holy Spirit.

1st. In the first place then, to know the Gospel, *is to understand it in a spiritual and saving manner.* This cannot be done while we are strangers to the gracious and transforming work of the spirit. It is the unequivocal declaration of the inspired volume, that “the natural man discerneth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” It is necessary to experience the power of truth in our souls, before we can discover its excellence, or apprehend it in an adequate, scriptural and profitable manner. This connection between knowledge and experience is distinctly recognized by the Divine Redeemer; “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” There is a beauty in divine truth, which an unrenowned man cannot see, a sweetness which he cannot taste, and a force which he cannot feel. Its vital and internal effects are matters which are repulsive to his carnal mind, and nothing appears to him more flat and insipid, than that blessed experimentality of its con-

verting, and sanctifying efficacy, by which it is so gloriously characterised. He is ready to ask in the darkness of his natural ignorance, or in the presumption and hardihood of his infidelity, "how can these things be?"—And yet all this is perfectly compatible with the fact, that he may be strictly orthodox in the general principles of his creed, and even able to defend with correct and lucid argument the faith once delivered to the saints. So that with all his knowledge of doctrine, he is still awfully deficient in experience. He is acquainted with the theology of the new Testament as a *science*, and discusses its various articles, as he would the principles of a mathematical demonstration, but all the while he is a stranger to its divine, its life-giving power. Do not mistake me. I would by no means condemn a correct and thorough acquaintance with the truths of the Gospel, although it may be merely speculative; but I would have you to understand the utter futility of such knowledge for all practical or saving purposes. Hence the necessity of having the understanding enlightened to apprehend the truth in such a way as to produce an abiding impression, and a purifying influence on the heart. This is the exclusive work of the Holy Spirit, and is accomplished by his divine and almighty agency in the great business of conversion and sanctification. By a process as mysterious, yet as certain, and as evident as the blowing of the wind, he illuminates the mind of

the sinner, and shines into his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of God's glory as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ. He then begins to see and to understand the glorious nature and design of the gospel in a manner peculiar to the christian. His knowledge is spiritual, and may be comprehensively defined, a knowledge of the "true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent, whom to know aright is life eternal."

2dly. To know the gospel, is, *to believe it.*—The gospel is a system of truth that demands our credence. It rests upon divine testimony, and as such it is to be received with the most unlimited confidence. The Evangelist informs us, that the great things which it reveals, "were written that we might believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing, we might have life through his name." No one, therefore, can be interested in its exceeding great and precious promises, unless he is first made a partaker of that faith, which it defines and requires. This faith is something more than a mere assent of the understanding to the authenticity of the gospel report; it is a principle that enlists the affections of the heart, bows the stubborn will, destroys the pride of carnal reason, imparts the temper and the docility of little children, and in short is an humble, and most cordial acceptance of the terms of mercy. It is easy to perceive, that this is very different from that general belief in the being of a God, the perfections of his

character, the holiness of his law, the justice of its sentence, the guilt of a sinner, and the plan of salvation through a Mediator which almost every man possesses, who has had a birth and a residence in a christian land. The latter arises from another source, and is the combined effect of educational instruction, and of natural conscience. However beneficial and salutary therefore, it may prove in its consequences, so far as the external conduct is concerned, yet it can never make its way to the inner man, nor restrain those insatiable and irregular desires, nor destroy that rankling enmity to God, nor bring down those high and lofty imaginations, which lurk and prowl there, as in some dark and secret hiding place. It can never render our knowledge of the gospel a practical thing, and consequently wants the characteristics of that faith, that purifies the heart, and regulates the life, and without which it is impossible to please God. But the faith which results from a deep and sanctified knowledge of gospel truth, is more benign in its influence, more efficient in its operation, more glorious and decisive in its effects. It embraces with a cheerful and a willing mind, "the record which God hath given us of his son," rests with unshaken confidence on the promise of his love, and regards with submissive and reverential feeling the awful threatenings of his wrath. A faith like this, must necessarily awaken the tenderest and liveliest emotions of joy and of sorrow, and rouse into active energy, the fears, the hopes, the

desires, and the resolutions of the soul. This is that “work of faith with power which God fulfils in all his people, according to the good pleasure of his goodness, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, may be glorified in them, and they in him.”

3dly. To know the gospel, *is to practice its precepts, and to adorn its doctrine by a holy life and conversation.* It is the distinguishing glory of the gospel, that it is not only a system of the most interesting truths, but of the most important duties. It calls upon us to *do* as well as to *believe*, and would have us to remember that a “faith without works, is dead.” It utterly discards the idea of *passive* or *negative* goodness, and by all its forcible illustrations of the christian life, as well as by its direct injunctions, inculcates the necessity of unwearied diligence and activity in the service of Christ. It teaches us what we are to believe, not with a design to entertain our minds with empty speculation, but to influence and to better our lives. Every thing which it reveals is a proper argument against sin, and a powerful motive to obedience. The whole history of its Great Author while he tabernacled among men; all the discourses which flowed from his heavenly lips; all the actions of his inimitable life, and all the sufferings of his ignominious death, unite in declaring, that “for this purpose was the son of God manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.” The grand design of the gospel therefore, is to deliver us from sin, and to direct and encourage

us in the practice of holiness, so that we "might be a peculiar people zealous of good works." That man who is carried away with "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," is still a stranger to "the grace of God which bringeth salvation." He has yet to learn the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and notwithstanding all his professions of respect for gospel morality, the mighty work of putting off the old man with his deeds has never been realized in his *experience* or his *practice*. He might bow with as much propriety before the shrines of a lustful *Jupiter*, or a drunken *Bacchus*, as to approach the altar of that God, the holiness of whose law, and the purity of whose character, are in direct opposition to the predominant dispositions of his soul. The *Shaster* of the *Persian*, the *Vedas* of the *Hindoo*, or the *Koran* of the *Turk*, are as much the rule of his conduct as the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Such is the general tenor of his character that the world would never suspect him of discipleship to its holy spirit and requirements. If then, we have any correct and saving knowledge of the gospel, we *must*, nay we *will* evince it by a life of exemplary piety. We will aspire after the highest attainments; make it our constant and sincere endeavour to please God—to do his will, and to fulfil all righteousness. It will be our desire to grow in grace, and we will give all diligence to "add to our faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience;

and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." Thus will we pursue "whatsoever things are true, honest, chaste, lovely, and of good report, and endeavour to abound in all those "works of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God."

III. We shall now proceed in the third place, to the consideration of *that blessedness*, which a scriptural and sanctified knowledge of the Gospel ensures and imparts.

1st. Those who know the gospel are blessed with *spiritual life*. The love of life is a principle deeply implanted in our very nature. In order to preserve it, we are ready to make any sacrifice, or to risque any danger. Nothing can be more painful and abhorrent to our feelings, than the insensibility, and inactivity of death. Hence the enjoyment of life may be deemed the first and greatest of all blessings. When we emerge from the nonentity by which it is preceded, what scenes of beauty and of pleasure open before us, and are gradually developed to our wondering eyes, and our admiring contemplation as we step forth on its grand and extended theatre. This life, however, is nothing more than what may be termed *natural life*. It is common to all mankind, and is distinguished from mere animal existence, only by the possession and exercise of those intellectual faculties which dignify human nature. It may, and it does exist where

there is no *moral life* in the soul. In our natural state we are "dead in trespasses and sins," and completely destitute of every principle of *spiritual life*. We can no more discover the beauties of holiness, nor delight in the service of God, nor feel the influence of his love in our hearts, than the pallid corpse can open its eyes to behold the light of the sun, or be regaled with the delicacies of taste, or charmed with the melody of sounds, or rise from its coffin, and begin to speak and act like a living man. But those who know the gospel have been raised from this death of sin, to a life of holiness. Their souls have been renewed by divine grace, and they have been made alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Their views and feelings on the great subjects of religion are completely changed. They now begin to regard spiritual objects as matters of the deepest importance. Their joys, their hopes and desires are all spiritual. "The things which are seen and temporal" loose that hold of their affections, and that influence on their conduct, which they once had; and the mighty claims of "the things which are unseen and eternal" engage their attention, and regulate their pursuits. The power of Gospel truth is felt and acknowledged in the whole of this transformation, and the efficacy of its principles will be witnessed throughout the christian life upon which they have now entered.

This life they live by faith on the son of God. Being united to him as the branch is united to the vine,

they partake of his fulness, and receive from him all necessary supplies—Nay Christ liveth in them by the power of his spirit, and they being rooted and grounded in his love, grow up into him in all things, for he is the Head of all divine influences to his people. The exalted nature and glorious tendency of this life surpasses all thought or description. It is the life of the soul, the noblest part of man. It is divine in its origin, progressive in its character, and everlasting in its duration. True, it does not come to maturity at once in this state of imperfection, temptation and sin. It is exposed to many scorching heats and chilling blasts, but the seed from which it springs is imperishable, and the same hand that first planted it, will continue to water it, until it shall be transplanted to the garden of God above, where it will flourish forever in immortal bloom.

2dly. This blessedness consists in the *favour of God*. The inspired penman asserts this with exulting delight. “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk in the light of thy countenance O Lord. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day, for thou art the glory of their strength and in thy favour shall they be exalted.”—The divine favour is a blessing that they could not claim in their natural and unconverted state. They had lost all title to it by their disobedience and rebellion, and instead of being regarded by Jehovah with an eye of complacency, he looked upon them in the frownings of his indigna-

tion. But a glorious reconciliation has been effected. The enmity of their hearts has been slain, and every interposing barrier between God and their souls has been broken down. They can now approach him in the confidence of children, look up to him without trembling, and call him their father and their friend. Delightful thought! invaluable privilege! amazing mercy:—The favour of God comprises all that is most dear and sacred and desirable. To secure it we should cheerfully forego any pleasure, or encounter any trial. With it, we have durable riches, and treasures that never fail; without it we are poor indeed. With it, we have all things, without it we are undone. We might stand before kings and be caressed by princes, but if God be not our friend, our condition would be wretched. We might be admired and respected by all around us, but if God be not our friend, we must be miserable and unhappy. We might possess all wealth, attain to high distinctions, and live and die in all the world calls good and great, but if God be not our friend, our portion must at last be, the cup of mourning and lamentation and woe. Let then the men of the world seek its favour and its smiles; be it our highest ambition to be at peace with him who sways his sceptre over the vast amplitude of creation; and while others are saying, “who will shew us any good?” Let it be our sincere and daily prayer, “Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us,” and refresh our souls with thy salva-

tion.—These are the tokens of his favour which he vouchsafes to those who know his name, and repose their trust in the promises of his love. He has pledged himself as their all-sufficient portion, and their never failing friend, and has promised never to leave them, or to forsake them. He will be with them in every situation and extremity of life and by his Almighty and overruling agency, will make “all things work together for their good.”—“The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but his kindness shall not depart from them, neither shall the covenant of his peace be removed, saith the Lord their Redeemer.”

Again : this blessedness consists in *the most delightful peace and joy of mind on earth, and will be consummated with eternal life and happiness in heaven.* To hold communion with the Father and his son Jesus Christ is the wonderful privilege of believers, and the source from whence flow their sublimest and their purest joys. Those who spend their days in carnal mirth, and in the vain and transitory pursuits of time, may suppose that this is the very acme and perfection of happiness, but the oracles of inspiration declare that such a life deserves not the name, and that such pleasures are both unsatisfying in their nature and transient in their duration.—“To be spiritually minded,” this alone “is life and peace.” It spreads a delightful serenity over the mind, and affords a tranquility and satisfaction, that the stranger inter-

meddles not with.—So far as the soul of the christian is sanctified by the spirit of God, it becomes the region of joy and peace from which the storms and the tempests of earthly passions are excluded, and where clouds of darkness but seldom rise to obscure the benign and cheering rays of the sun of righteousness. Never do men experience one happy day until they begin to live to God. Every sincere disciple of Jesus will confirm the truth of this assertion. They know that to live without God in the world, is to live without hope and without enjoyment. And they also know that the religion of the gospel is an antidote against all their fears; a corrective of all their sinful affections, a solace and support under all the trials and sorrows of life.—The joys of heaven are sometimes let down into their souls while passing through this vale of tears, and the anticipation of its glories, animates them in their progress, and enables them “to mount up as on the wings of an eagle, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint.”—It is true that these divine consolations have their seasons of diminution. They are often interrupted by cold and languid frames. They are often beclouded by the view of a depraved and wicked heart; by a sense of the many imperfections which mingle with their best services, and their many deviations from the path of duty.—The same is sometimes produced by the constitutional temperament of the individual, which ever disposes him to look at the darkest side and to construe his feelings upon the

principles of a gloomy despondency. Still however, "the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, and peace." Allow to these causes all their abating force, and their depressing effects, and yet we affirm that the christian has joys, which the world knows nothing of; joys independent of the changes of time; joys that will survive the shock of death, and will grow up to an "exceeding an eternal weight of glory." This, ah this! will be the consummation of his blessedness.—When he resigns his body to the grave, his sanctified and immortal spirit returns to God who gave it, and who by his grace has prepared it for "a fulness of joy, and pleasures forevermore." Sin and suffering, time and death, hold their dominion over him no longer. The dawn of his future being, is to him, the dawn of an everlasting day. In this immense duration his life will be an uninterrupted progress of love, honour and enjoyment. There fixed forever as a bright and shining pillar in the temple of his God, he will look back with ineffable delight on that choice which accomplished the end of his being; and will stretch his view forward with transport, to joy succeeding joy, and to glory surpassing glory throughout the endless succession of interminable ages.

Thus I have endeavoured to illustrate the important truths suggested by the text. What remains is to conclude this discourse by a few of the most obvious and practical inferences.

1st. We infer from this subject, in the first place,

the wretched and pitiable condition of those who are destitute of the gospel. Cast your eyes over those sections of the globe, where its heavenly light has never beamed, and its benign influence has never been felt, and what do you behold but a wide-spreading waste of spiritual desolation, and spiritual death? These are emphatically the dark places of the earth, full of cruelty and uncleanness; of ignorance and superstition; of vice and immorality in every form, and in every degree. The heart sickens, and the mind recoils at the shocking enormities of heathen climes. When we see them changing the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things, we contemplate with mingled pity and amazement their stupidity and their blindness. They know not that there is a God before whom they must one day appear and pass the solemn test. They know not that there is a dreadful hell to escape, and a glorious heaven to secure. They know of nothing to wash away the stain of sin, but the waters of some magic stream or the performance of rites equally inefficacious and absurd. O could you hearken to the shrieks of the little infant, as it is dropped by a mother's hand into the jaws of the voracious alligator; could you stand by the funeral pile and witness the struggles of nature, when the flames begin to kindle around their devoted victim; could you behold the miserable devotee of superstition, measuring his long journey to

some idolatrous temple by the successive prostrations of his body ; could you see the ponderous car of *Juggernaut* crushing its maniac worshippers beneath its slow-moving wheels, amidst the shouts of assembled millions ; could you hear the *Hindoo Brahmin* express his serious belief in no less than three hundred and thirty millions of deities, and the deluded *Mohammedan* talk of his paradise of sensual bliss ; could you be transported to the interior of Africa, and witness the brutish ignorance and awful degradation of human nature there ; could you visit the western wilds and behold the untutored Indian offering his sacrifice to the God of war, and hear him invoke the ghosts of his fathers as he marches forth to execute some horrid purpose of robbery and bloodshed ; or did you but half consider the fatal blindness that springs from the unbelief of Judaism, methinks the tear of pious compassion would bedew your cheek, and you would begin to feel the movings of a holy benevolence within you. Such is the deplorable state of millions of our race, and is it not calculated to excite the sympathy of a human breast, and to awaken the most lively interest and the most tender concern among a christian people in behalf of the Heathen world ? Are there any who can resist the touching and constraining influence of a consideration so deeply affecting ? Surely, my hearers, we are under obligations the most sacred and imperative to aid in the diffusion of this gospel which will enlighten and civilize, and sanctify wherev-

er it is sent. We are bound by every principle of christianity, as well as by all the generous feelings of philanthropy to exert ourselves for the promotion of this noble work. The cause is the noblest on earth, the sure results the most durable and glorious. It is the cause of God, the cause of immortal souls, the cause for which Jesus died; and therefore it must prosper, it shall finally triumph.

My brethren, we have abundant encouragement to pray, to devise, and to act for the promulgation of the gospel. Can any of you think that it shall remain unknown to the world at large? Can any of you think that its precious truths shall be buried in obscurity, and that its great proposals shall be confined to comparatively a few of our fallen race? Can any of you think that after its heavenly origin, and after having been sealed by the blood of Jesus, that it shall be lost and forgotten? Can any of you think that its vital energies shall ever be paralyzed by the powers of darkness, or fall before the withering blasts of malice and infidelity? No; the perfections of God forbid it; the promises of God forbid it; the honour of his name forbids it. There is a day coming when it shall be universally known, universally believed, universally practised. It shall have free course, run, and be glorified in the salvation of thousands. When we contemplate the vast machinery now in operation for its unlimited diffusion, we cannot but indulge the exhilarating hope, "that the Angel having the everlasting

Gospel to preach to them that are upon the earth," has commenced his auspicious career. Even now the light of divine revelation has dawned in the horizon of regions, which it never before illuminated, and is again becoming visible in others, in which it had suffered a disastrous eclipse. And who is there that has ever been convinced of the divine origin of the gospel, of its delightful nature and peaceful tendency; who is there that has ever experienced its transforming efficacy on his own soul, but will sincerely desire, and earnestly pray, that its glorious light may shine in all the fulness of meridian splendor, diffusing life and joy to the remotest corners of the earth.

2dly. *Let us highly appreciate, and faithfully improve the Gospel.* Next to the gift of his son, the gospel is the greatest blessing God ever bestowed upon a guilty world. Those who have had this treasure in their hands from infancy, and have been accustomed from their youth, to hear its truths expounded, its precepts enforced, and its offers of mercy proclaimed to dying sinners, cannot properly estimate the value of this distinguished privilege. They do not prize it so highly, nor deem the ministration of its ordinances so important, as they would, if they were entirely deprived of them. These things become so common, that they are scarcely viewed as blessings, and are so familiarized to the eye and to the mind, as to fail of producing a deep conviction of the end they are designed to answer, and the benefit they are calculated

to confer. But go to the converted Pagan, who but a short time since heard of the salvation of the gospel for the first time. See him perusing its holy contents, with fixed and joyful eyes, or listening with rapture to the man of God as he points him to Jesus, the friend and the saviour of sinners. Go to the reclaimed profligate or infidel, and see him embracing the truth as it is in Jesus, with a penitent and affectionate heart, and anxious to improve every opportunity of hearing the word of eternal life. Go to the humble christian, who has long been labouring under affliction and disease, and ask him what is his greatest consolation and support in the season of his trial, and he will tell you, the hope of the gospel. Go to the man on the bed of death, who has lived without God and is dying without hope, ask what he thinks now of that gospel he despised and rejected? With anguish of spirit and with despair in his countenance, he will exclaim, O! that I had hearkened to its calls and embraced its offers; O! that I had believed in its author and had an interest in its promises.

Let us learn then from such considerations, to improve the day of gospel grace; to lay up treasure in heaven, and become rich towards God. And are there any that can remain indifferent to a concern so deeply interesting and momentous? Are there any that can turn their backs on all the invitations of heavenly mercy and trample on love so amazing and divine?

Have you ever thought, my hearers, at what an infinite expense this gospel of our salvation was given to the world? Truly it comes to the children of men stained with the tears and bathed in the blood of the son of God. Every hope which it inspires, cost him a groan. Every animating prospect which it unfolds, bears the image of his cross. Every promise and every consolation which it affords, were the purchase of his extreme and unexampled sufferings. Yes; to promulgate this gospel, the divine Redeemer left the throne of his glory, and the adorations of a multitude that no man can number. For this he consented to tabernacle in the flesh; to become a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. For this he submitted to ignominy and reproach. For this he exclaimed "my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." For this he hung upon the accursed tree, and expired amidst the scoffs of unfeeling rebels, and the convulsions of sympathizing nature. O what a dear bought legacy is the gospel of Jesus Christ! How invaluable should we esteem it! Ah! my fellow sinners, here, and here only, can you behold the inexpressible love and condescension of your saviour.— Here, and here only, can you view God as your reconciled God and Father, and behold his frowning face calmed with the rich drops of the Redeemer's blood. And is not this enough to call forth the sincerest gratitude of your souls; is not this enough to enlist every generous feeling, and every warm affection of your heart

for Jesus; Oh! is not this enough to bring you in all the overflowings of a penitent soul to the foot of his cross, and there cause you to weep for sin, while with a holy resolution you renounce every other dependence, and embrace him for the Lord your righteousness and your strength, your salvation and your eternal portion. With sentiments like these, I would now call upon you to bless God for the gospel of his son. But for this glorious gospel and you might have this day been participating in *Bacchanalian* revels, or as the miserable devotees of idolatry and superstition been pouring out your blood beneath the dripping wheels of *Juggernaut*. But for this gospel, and the glories of eternity would never have beamed upon your path through this dark and lonesome wilderness. No ray of light and of hope would ever have cheered and sustained your sinking spirits, but one impenetrable gloom of doubt and uncertainty would have rested upon you from the cradle to the grave. Then when you hear this gospel preached, hearken to it with seriousness, and practice it without delay. When you read it, read it with care, and treasure up its divine and glorious truths in your heart. Make it the man of your counsel, the guide of your path. Esteem it sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. Meditate upon it by day and by night. Thus will you find in your own experience its life-giving and consoling efficacy. Thus will you adorn its doctrine, live to some good purpose in your day and generation, die peacefully,

if not triumphantly, and enter upon that "inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away forever."

Finally. We may infer from the subject before us, *the awful condemnation of those who slight the gracious and condescending offers of the gospel.* How many there be of this description in our enlightened land, or even in this congregation, it is not my prerogative to declare. But God knows, and such he will judge. It is perfectly evident however, their number is great. Not only those who scoff at every thing sacred and divine come under this class, but they too, who neglect the great salvation, by a supreme attention to the world and the things of the world ; by procrastination or by a stupid indifference to religion. Look at the multitudes who from sabbath, to sabbath, tread the thresholds of zion with unhallowed steps.— Some repair thither to gratify a vain curiosity, others to have their intellect regaled, or for the purpose of captious criticism ; some perhaps to be eyed as the very paragons of fashion and of dress, others to pass away the slow and lingering moments of a day that drags on so tedious and so heavily ; some because it is an established custom, and many because they have been trained to the habit by parental instruction and example. Now all these kinds of worshippers are regarded by God as a set of mockers in his service, and he looks upon them as the implacable enemies of that gospel they have professedly assembled to hear.

Where is their engagedness when the duties of the christian life are inculcated ; when the solemn realities of death, judgment and eternity are brought before them ? Where are their thoughts when they should be all attention to the exhibition of truths so deeply interesting, and so tremendously momentous to their souls ? Alas ! the question is easily solved by an answer from the pen of inspiration, they “ are wandering with the fools eye to the uttermost parts of the earth.” Nor is this all. When they depart, the impressions which they may have received, depart likewise. Scarcely do they loose sight of the sanctuary of God before they turn again to folly. It may be the case is not altered in another view. When at their dwellings this neglected gospel lies folded in obscurity. Its sacred page never salutes their eyes, with its invitations, and promises, and warnings, and threatenings. Fellow mortals, does a book, the divine contents of which were planned in eternity, and were ratified and sealed by the blood of Jehovah Jesus, deserve such despicable treatment. I appeal to your consciences. They tell you *no*, in a still, small voice that alarms your fears, and shakes every evil purpose of your souls. They call upon you to pause and reflect that if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth ; how is it possible that such shall escape as turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.