

The Gospel, Glad Tidings.

by Edward Payson

The gospel of Christ is a message of glad tidings, a grand display of the moral excellencies and perfections of Jehovah, which has always occasioned joy and gladness in all who have received it.

Scripture: Mark 16:15, John 3:16, Acts 13:26, Romans 1:16, Romans 10:17, 2 Corinthians 4:4, 2 Corinthians 5:20, 1 Timothy 1:11, Hebrews 4:2

Topics: "Gospel Message", "Christian Salvation"

Description

Edward Payson preaches about the glorious gospel of the blessed God, emphasizing the bright light that the Apostle Paul shone as he reflected the image of the Sun of righteousness. The gospel is described as the glorious glad tidings of the blessed God, filled with joy, salvation, and the display of God's moral excellencies. The sermon urges ministers to faithfully proclaim the gospel, highlighting the divine commission and the importance of not delaying in sharing the life-giving message. For the congregation, the sermon calls for a response to the gospel, questioning if they have truly believed and experienced the joy and peace that come from accepting the glorious gospel of Christ.

Transcript

"The glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust"

1 Timothy 1:11

the numerous burning and shining lights which our blessed Saviour has, at different periods; placed in his golden candlesticks to enlighten the church, during the long and gloomy night of his absence from the world, perhaps none have burned brighter, with a flame more vehement, or with rays more clear, or shone with more constant, bright and unclouded luster, than the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Of all whose characters have been transmitted to us, either in profane or sacred history, he appears to have made the nearest approaches to the Sun of righteousness, and, in consequence, to have felt most powerfully the attractive influence of his love; to have imbibed most plentifully his enlightening, life-giving beams; to have reflected most perfectly his glorious image; and to have moved with the greatest velocity in the orbit of duty.

His life affords a striking verification of our Saviour's remark, that to whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much. As his devotional feelings were peculiarly strong and lively, so is the language in which he expresses them. It seems to hold a kind of middle rank between that which is employed by other

Christians, and that which will hereafter be poured forth by saints and angels before the throne. Thoughts that glow, and words that burn, are every where scattered through his pages.

One instance of this, among many which will occur to every pious mind, we have in our text. Never, perhaps, since the gospel was first promulgated to a dying world, has it been more justly or happily described, than in this brief but glowing passage, in which the Apostle styles it--the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. I need not inform you that the word, gospel, literally signifies glad tidings. Substitute these words for the term made use of in our text, and you have, the glorious glad tidings of the blessed God.

What other sounds, like these, ever vibrated upon mortal ears? What other combination of words could be formed, so full of meaning, of energy, of life and rapture, as this? Who but the fervent Apostle, or rather, who but the Holy Spirit, by whom he was inspired, could ever have formed such a combination? And who does not wish to understand and feel the full import of these divinely inspired, enrapturing words? What ear is not erect, what mind does not expand, what heart does not open and dilate itself, to drink in; the glorious glad tidings of the blessed God, committed to a mortal's trust?

Would to heaven, my friends, you could on this occasion hear the import of these tidings fully unfolded; their infinite worth and importance clearly stated. But this you will never hear on earth; for here we know but in part, and, of course, can prophesy but in part; but when that which is perfect shall come, that which is in part shall be done away. Till that day of perfect light shall burst upon us, the day in which we shall know even as we are known, you must be content to see the inestimable treasure of the gospel dispensed from earthen vessels, dispensed in scanty measures, and too often debased by the impurities of the frail vessels which contain it.

In attempting to dispense to you a portion of this treasure on the present occasion, I shall, in the first place, endeavor to show what the gospel of Christ is, by illustrating the description given of it in our text. From this description we learn, I. That the gospel of Christ is "tidings." This is the most simple and proper conception we can form of it. It is not an abstract truth, it is not a merely speculative proposition, it is not an abstruse system of philosophy or ethics, which reason might have discovered or formed--but it is simply tidings; a message, a report, as the prophet styles it, announcing to us important intelligence, intelligence of a connected succession of facts; of facts which reason could never have discovered; intelligence of what was devised in the counsels of eternity for the redemption of our ruined race, of what has since been done in time to effect it, and of what will be done hereafter for its full completion when time shall be no more.

It is true, that, in addition to these tidings, the gospel of Christ contains a system of doctrines, of precepts and of motives; but it is no less true, that all these doctrines, precepts and motives, are founded upon the facts, communicated by those tidings in which the gospel essentially consists; and that to their connection with these facts, they owe all their influence and importance. Perfectly agreeable to this representation, is the account given us of the primitive preachers, and of their mode of preaching the gospel.

They acted like men who felt that they were sent, not so much to dispute and argue, as to proclaim tidings, to bear testimony to facts. Their preaching is styled their testimony, and the very word which we render to preach, literally signifies to make proclamation as a herald. Hence St. Paul speaks of the ministry which he had received to testify the gospel of the grace of God; and St. John, referring to himself and his fellow apostles, says, we do testify that God sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.

The gospel of Christ, then, essentially consists in tidings; and to proclaim these tidings and testify their truth in connection with the doctrines and precepts, of which they are the basis, and with the consequences of receiving and of rejecting them, is to preach this gospel as it was originally preached. 2. The tidings which constitute the gospel of Christ are glad tidings; tidings which are designed and perfectly adapted to excite joy and gladness in all who receive them.

That they are so, is abundantly evident from the nature of the intelligence which they communicate. They are tidings of an all-sufficient Saviour for the self-destroyed, of an offended God reconciled, of pardon to the justly condemned, of sanctification to the polluted, of honor and glory to the degraded, of deliverance to captives, of freedom to slaves, of sight to the blind, of happiness to the wretched, of a forfeited heaven regained, of life, everlasting life to the dead.

And must I prove that these are glad tidings? Does the sun shine? are circles round? is happiness desirable? is pain disagreeable? And is it not equally evident, that the tidings we are describing are glad tidings of great joy. But it may in some cases be necessary to prove even self-evident truths. To the blind it may be necessary to prove that the sun shines. And, in a spiritual sense we are blind. We need arguments to convince us, that the Sun of righteousness is a bright and glorious luminary; that the tidings of his rising upon a dark world are joyful tidings.

Such arguments it is easy to adduce, arguments sufficient to produce conviction even in the blind. If you wish for such arguments, go and seek them among the heathen, who never heard of the gospel of Christ. There, see darkness covering the earth, and gross darkness the people. See those dark places of the earth, filled not only with the habitations, but with the temples of lust and cruelty. Enter into conversation with the inhabitants of those gloomy regions. Ask them who made the world; they cannot tell.

Who created themselves? they know not. Ask what God they worship, they will point to a plant or animal, a stock or a stone. Ask how the favor of these miserable deities is to be obtained; their priests, their temples, their religious ceremonies with one voice reply, by the performance of rites indecent, cruel and absurd; by tormenting our bodies, by sacrificing our children, by acts of brutish sensuality and diabolical cruelty. Ask them where happiness is to be found, they scarcely know its name.

Ask for what purpose they were created, they are at a loss for a reply. They know neither whence they came, nor whither they are to go. View them in the night of affliction: No star of Bethlehem, with mild luster, cheers or softens its gloom. View them on the bed of sickness: No kind hand administers to them the balm of Gilead; there is no interpreter, no intercessor to say, Deliver them from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom. Contemplate them in their last agonies.

No atoning blood speaks peace to their guilty conscience; no gospel brings life and immortality to their view; no blessed Comforter points to an opening heaven; no kind shepherd goes with them through the dark valley which leads to the dominions of death; no Saviour appears to disrobe the monster of his terrors, or deprive him of his fatal sting, but they are left to grapple with him unassisted and alone. If in this awful conflict they ever seem to display courage and fortitude, it is only the fortitude of insensibility and the courage of despair.

In a word, they live without God, they die without hope, their situation is, in many respects, more wretched than that of the beasts that perish. Yet such, my hearers, would have been your situation, were it not for the gospel of Christ. Who, then, will say that the tidings which it communicates are not glad tidings of great joy? Are you still unconvinced? Do you demand stronger evidences of this truth? You shall have them.

Come with me to the garden of Eden. Look back to the hour which succeeded man's apostasy: See the golden chain, which bound man to God, sundered apparently forever, and this wretched world groaning under the weight of human guilt and of its Creator's curse, sinking down, far down, into a bottomless abyss of misery and despair.

See that tremendous being who is a consuming fire, encircling it on every side, and wrapping it as it were in an atmosphere of flame. Hear from his lips the tremendous sentence, Man has sinned, and man must die. See the king of terrors advancing, with gigantic strides, to execute the awful sentence, spreading desolation through the vegetable, animal and rational kingdoms, and brandishing his resistless dart, in triumph over a prostrate world. See the grave expanding her marble jaws to receive whatever might fall before his wide wasting scythe, and hell beneath yawning dreadfully to engulf forever its guilty, helpless, despairing victims.

Such was the situation of our ruined race after the apostasy. There was nothing before every child of Adam, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. There was but one road through this world, but one gate that opened out of it, --the wide gate and the broad way that leads to destruction. My friends, endeavor to realize, if you can, the horrors of such a situation. I am aware that to do this is by no means easy. You have so long been accustomed to hear the tidings of salvation, that you can scarcely conceive of what would have been our situation, had no Saviour appeared.

But endeavor, for a moment, to forget that you ever heard of Christ, or his gospel. View yourselves as immortal beings, hastening to eternity, with the curse of God's broken law, like a flaming sword pursuing you, death with his dart dipped in mortal poison awaiting you, a dark cloud fraught with the lightnings of divine vengeance rolling over your heads, your feet standing in slippery places in darkness, and the bottomless pit beneath, expecting your fall. Then, when not only all hope, but all possibility of escape seemed taken away, suppose the flaming sword suddenly extinguished, the sting of death extracted, the Sun of righteousness bursting forth, painting a rainbow upon the before threatening cloud, a golden ladder let down from the opening gates of heaven, while a choir of angels swiftly descending, exclaim, Behold, we bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.

Would you, could you, while contemplating such a scene, and listening to the angelic message, doubt whether it communicated glad tidings? Would you not rather unite with them in exclaiming, Glad tidings, glad tidings, glory to God in the highest, that there is peace on earth and good will to men? If this be not sufficient, if you still doubt, go and contemplate the effect which these tidings have produced wherever they have been believed. We judge of the nature of a cause by the effects which it produces, and, therefore, if the reception of the gospel has always occasioned joy and gladness, we may justly infer that it is glad tidings.

And has it not done this? What supported our trembling first parents, when sinking under the weight of their Maker's curse, and contemplating with shuddering horrors the bottomless abyss into which they had plunged themselves and their wretched offspring? What enabled Enoch to walk with God? What cheered all the pious antediluvian patriarchs through their wearisome pilgrimage of several hundred years? What consoled them in affliction? what supported them in death? Nothing, I answer, nothing but the precious words in which the gospel was first promulgated to a ruined world: The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.

This line, this little line, in which the glad tidings are so briefly and obscurely revealed, contains, so far as we know, all the consolation which the children of God enjoyed for almost two thousand years. Here the well-spring of salvation was first opened to the view of mortals; here the waters of life, which now flow broad and deep as a river, first bubbled up in the sandy desert; and thousands now in heaven stooped and drank and live forever, tasting the joys of heaven on earth.

The next intimation of the gospel was given to Abraham in the gracious promise, it, thee and thy seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. This passage is little less brief and obscure than the other; but what effects did it produce upon the mind of the venerable patriarch? Let our Saviour inform us: --Abraham earnestly desired to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad. Yes the distant view of a Saviour through the long vista of two thousand years, was sufficient to fill him with joy.

What then would he have felt, had he seen what we see, and heard the tidings which we hear? had he seen that grain of mustard seed, which he contemplated with rapture, expanding into a tree of life; whose branches fill the earth, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations? Nor did the gospel, darkly as it was revealed, produce less happy effects on the minds of other ancient believers. Witness the case of Job. See him for the trial of his faith, delivered into the power of him whose tender mercies are cruel.

See him stripped of all his possessions, deprived of his children by a sudden and violent death, ridiculed and tempted by his wife, denounced as a hypocrite by his friends, covered from head to foot with ulcers as raging and painful as hell could make them, and his soul transfixed by the arrows of the Almighty, the poison whereof drank up his spirits. See him even then, when heaven, earth and hell seemed combined against him, when all God's waves and billows went over him, rising above them all, fixing the eye of faith upon the promised Messiah, and with unbroken confidence triumphantly exclaiming, I know that my Redeemer liveth, --that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

But on this part of my subject I cannot farther enlarge; for time would fail me to tell of David, of Isaiah, of Daniel, of Zechariah, and of the many other prophets, kings and righteous men, who desired to hear the tidings which we hear, and rejoiced in the anticipation of a Saviour's birth. Never did the psalmist pour forth such enraptured strains, never did he strike his harp with so much of a seraph's fire, never did the prophets employ such glowing language, as when, "rapt into future times," by the spirit of prophecy, they contemplated and endeavored to describe the advent of that Saviour, whose incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension and triumph the gospel announces.

Suffice it to sty, that all the religious joy and consolation, which was tasted in this world for four thousand years, flowed from prophetic intimations of a Saviour's birth. Yes, to this event every pious eye, during all those years, looked forward, striving to catch a glimpse of it through the gloom of ages; to hear predictions of this event every pious ear was open. At length, those who waited for the consolation of Israel are gratified. The voice of a herald is heard, exclaiming, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

He who was emphatically the desire of all nations, appears, and the joy occasioned by the tidings of his birth is such, as we should expect from the joy which expectation of his birth had excited. See the wise men of the past, rejoicing with exceeding great joy, when they saw the star which guided them to the feet of their new born Saviour. See the shepherds rejoicing and glorifying God, while they beheld him lying in a manger. Hear aged Simeon, while with streaming eyes and an overflowing heart he held the infant Saviour

in his arms, exclaiming, Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.

Hear the acclamations of joy, of wonder, of praise, which followed his steps, wherever he went about doing good. Mingle with the throngs that surrounded him on his entrance into Jerusalem. Hear a prophetic voice exclaiming, Rejoice greatly, and shout, Oh daughter of Jerusalem, --for, behold, thy King cometh unto thee, just and having salvation. Hear the whole multitude, in obedience to this command, breaking forth into joy, and with a loud voice glorifying God, while even the children cry, Hosannah to the Son of David! blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Follow the progress of his gospel through the world. See great joy in the city of Samaria, because Philip had preached Christ to them. See the Gentiles of Antioch glad, because they heard that to them this Saviour was to be preached. See a multitude of believers, in almost all ages of the world, rejoicing in an unseen Saviour with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Then look up, and see heaven sympathizing in the joy of earth. See angels desiring to look into these things. Hear them exulting over every sinner that repents.

Listen to the song of the redeemed: Now unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion forever. Hear the eternal Father of the universe justifying all these expressions of joy by exclaiming, Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, forests, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob and glorified himself in Israel. Then pause and say, whether the tidings which excite all this joy are not glad tidings?

Have patriarchs and prophets been deceived? Were the apostles and primitive Christians mad? Are the angels of light infatuated or blind? Is the all-wise God in an error? Does he call upon all his creatures to rejoice, when no cause of joy exists? You must either assert this, or acknowledge that the gospel of Christ is glad tidings of great joy. 3. The gospel is not only glad tidings, but glorious glad tidings. That it is so, is asserted in other passages, as well as in our text.

St. Paul, contrasting the gospel and the law, with a view to show the superiority of the former, observes that if the ministration of death was glorious, the ministration of the Spirit must be still more glorious; for if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. Glory is the display of excellence, or perfection. That the gospel contains a grand display of the moral excellencies and perfections of Jehovah, will be denied by none, but the spiritually blind, who are ignorant of its nature.

But to give only a general view of this grand display of God's character in a single discourse, or even in a volume, is impossible. With less difficulty might we enclose the sun in a lantern. We shall not, therefore, attempt to describe a subject, which must forever be degraded, not only by the descriptions, but by the conceptions, I will not say of men, but of the highest archangel before the throne. On no page less ample than that of the eternal, all-infolding mind, which devised the gospel plan of salvation, can its glories be displayed, nor by any inferior mind can they be fully comprehended.

Suffice it to say, that here the moral character of Jehovah shines full-orbed and complete: here all the fullness of the Godhead, all the insufferable splendors of Deity, burst at once upon our aching sight: here the manifold perfections of God, holiness and goodness, justice and mercy, truth and grace, majesty and condescension, hatred of sin and compassion for sinners, are harmoniously blended, like the parti-colored rays of solar light in one pure blaze of dazzling whiteness.

Here, rather than on any of his other works, he founds his claims to the highest admiration, gratitude and love of his creatures: --here is the work, which ever has called forth, and which through eternity will continue to call forth the most rapturous praises of the celestial choirs, and feed the ever glowing fires of devotion in their breasts; for the glory which shines in the gospel is the glory which illuminates heaven, and the Lamb that was slain is the light thereof. To the truth of these assertions, all will assent, who can say with the apostle, God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

If any doubt respecting the character of the gospel still exists in your minds, it must surely vanish when you recollect that it is, 4. The gospel of God, of the blessed God. It is composed of tidings, of which God is the author, tidings which God himself first proclaimed in the garden of Eden to our ruined progenitors, which angels afterwards caught from his lips, and which his Spirit has since dictated to inspired messengers. They are the tidings, not only of God, but of the blessed God; of a being unutterably happy in himself, and disposed to communicate his happiness to creatures.

They are the effulgence of the God of glory; they are the overflowing of the fountain of happiness; they proceed from Him in whose presence is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures forevermore. If then we may judge of the stream by the fountain, or of any work by its author, who can doubt that the gospel is glorious glad tidings, since it is the tidings of the blessed God. What that is not glorious can proceed from the God of glory? What that is not calculated to give joy to all holy beings, can proceed from the God of happiness and peace?

Having thus attempted to show what the gospel is, I proceed, II. To consider its human administration. It was committed, says the apostle, to my trust. But why? I answer, the gospel was no more designed to remain locked up in the breast of its author, than the rays of light were intended to remain in the body of the sun. That its glad tidings might produce their designed effect, it was necessary they should fly abroad, and be made known to mortals. But by whom should they be communicated?

The importance of the message seemed to require, that Jehovah himself, or at least the most exalted of his creatures, should be the messenger. But this, human weakness forbade. It is evident from facts recorded in the Scriptures, that whenever Jehovah has spoken to man, either in person, or by the ministry of his angels, his hearers have been dazzled, dismayed and overwhelmed. They did not retain sufficient self-possession to understand or even listen to his words. And though, when Christ appeared as the Son of man, in a state of humiliation, his hearers were not thus affected, yet since he has re-ascended to his native heaven, the glories in which he is arrayed are too insufferably bright for mortal eyes to behold; as is evident from the effects which his appearance produced upon the beloved disciple, St.

John. In condescension to our weakness, therefore, God has been pleased to commit the gospel to individuals selected from our own ruined race; individuals, who, having experienced its life-giving and beatifying power, are prepared to recommend it to their perishing fellow sinners. Of these individuals, the first to whom it was committed were the apostles; it was committed to them as a proclamation is committed by earthly princes to their heralds, not to be retained, but communicated.

For a similar purpose, it is still committed to ministers of an inferior rank; for he who gave apostles, prophets and evangelists for the work of the ministry, has also given pastors and teachers for the same glorious work. The only difference is, that they received their commission and instructions immediately

from Christ himself, while we receive ours through the medium of their writings. Christ was their Bible, and they are ours. But notwithstanding this difference, every real minister of Christ, at the present day, may with strict truth and propriety say, I also am an ambassador of Christ, and his gospel has been committed to my trust.

If any deny this assertion, and demand proofs of its truth, it is sufficient to reply, that God acknowledges us to be his ambassadors, and stamps his seal upon our commission, by the effects which he produces through our instrumentality. The gospel of Christ, when faithfully dispensed by its ministers, still produces the same effects as were produced by it when uttered by himself and his apostles. In our lips, as well as in theirs, it proves a savor of life unto life, to all that receive, and of death unto death to all who reject it.

In our lips, as well as in theirs, it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. To this proof of a divine commission, St. Paul himself appealed, when it was denied. Speaking to those who were converted by his ministry he says, the seals of my apostleship are ye in the Lord. Ye are our epistle of recommendation, known and read of all men; forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistles of Christ, written not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God; not on tables of stone, but on fleshly tables of the heart.

To similar proofs of a divine commission, every faithful minister of the gospel may still appeal; for, blessed be God, none of them are without such seals of their ministry; such epistles of recommendation from Christ, who hath made them ministers of the New Testament, not merely of the letter which killeth, but of the Spirit which giveth life. The view which has been taken of the gospel of Christ, suggests many highly important and interesting remarks; but the time requires me to omit them, and to proceed to the customary addresses.

My fathers and brethren in the ministry, is the gospel, which has been committed to our trust, the glorious glad tidings of the blessed God? How delightful, how honorable, then, is our employment, and how unspeakable are our obligations to him who has called us to it; who has allowed us to be put in trust with the gospel; that gospel, which was first preached by himself to our first parents in paradise; that gospel, which it has been the highest honor and happiness of prophets to predict, of apostles to preach, of martyrs to seal with their blood, and even of angels to announce and celebrate!

Only to be permitted to hear this gospel, is justly considered as a distinguished favor. What then must it be to preach it? Those who experience its power to save, who are allowed to taste the blessings which it imparts, feel as if a whole eternity would be merely sufficient to pay their mighty debt of gratitude to the Redeemer. What then ought we to feel, through whom that saving power is exerted; by whose instrumentality those blessings are conferred, and who, receiving mercy of the Lord to be faithful, are enabled to save not only ourselves. but them that hear us!

Well may each of us say with the apostle, I thank my God, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry. Well may we with him count not even our lives dear unto ourselves, that we may fulfil the ministry which has been committed to us, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And well may we exhort each other in his language: Seeing we have received this ministry, to faint not, but to be instant in season and out of season. Heathen writers inform us of a soldier, who, when sent out by his general with tidings of a victory, would not stop to extract a thorn which had deeply pierced his foot, until he had delivered his message to the Senate.

And shall we, then, when sent by Jehovah with such a message, a message the faithful delivery of which involves his glory and the eternal happiness of our fellow creatures--shall we linger, shall we suffer any personal inconveniences, any difficulties, any real or fancied dangers, to interrupt or retard us in the execution of our work? Shall we, with the true water of life, the true elixir of immortality in our possession, suffer our own private concerns to divert us from presenting it to the dying, and forcing it into the lips of the dead?

Shall we, with Aaron's censer in our hands, hesitate whether to rush between the living and the dead, when the altar of the Lord is kindled, when the plague has already begun its ravages, and thousands are falling at our right hand, and ten thousand at our left? Shall we wait till tomorrow to present the bread of life to the famished wretch, who, before tomorrow arrives, may expire for want of it? Surely if we can do this, if we can be so regardless of our obligations to God, and of our duty to man, the least punishment which we can expect, is to be debarred from that salvation which we neglected to afford to others, and to be made answerable for the blood of all the souls who, in consequence of this neglect, perished in their sins.

Let us then, my fathers and brethren, never forget, that the king's business requireth haste, and that who or whatever stands still, we must not. Let the sun pause in his course, though half the world should be wrapped in frost and darkness by his delay; let rivers stagnate in their channels, though an expecting nation should perish with thirst upon its flood-forsaken banks; let long-looked for showers stop in mid-air, though earth, with a thousand famished lips, invoke their descent; but let those who are sent with the life-giving tidings of pardon, peace, and salvation, to an expiring world, never pause, never look or wish for rest, till their Master's welcome voice shall call them from their field of labor to everlasting repose; to that world where those, who, as burning or shining lights, have turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars, and as the brightness of the firmament forever and ever.

A few words to the assembly, and I have done. Is it true, my hearers, that the gospel, which you have often heard, is the glorious glad tidings of the blessed God? Then in every one by whom it is truly believed, it will infallibly excite holy joy, admiration and praise; for every report which is thus believed must produce effects corresponding to its nature and import. If you hear and believe mournful tidings, they will occasion grief. If you hear and believe joyful tidings, they will no less certainly occasion joy.

If you hear and believe an account of any glorious enterprise, or splendid act of liberality, it will call forth admiration and applause. If then you really believe the glorious glad tidings of God; you must and will rejoice, you will admire and bless the Author. Has the gospel, then, produced these effects upon you? Do you know what it is to be filled with joy and peace in believing? Can you, do you unite with the inhabitants of heaven, in ascribing to Christ all that heaven can give?

In a word, do you feel that the gospel is glorious glad tidings of great joy? and is it the language of your hearts, Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift? If not, it is most certain that you never believed the gospel; for the apostle assures us, that it does work effectually in all that believe; and we have already seen that it has, in all ages, filled the hearts of believers with joy, and their lips with praise. And if you believe not the gospel, how awful is your responsibility, your criminality, and your danger!

In your view, the Sun of righteousness has no beams. You see nothing lovely in that Saviour, whom all good beings, on earth and in heaven, love with the most ardent affection. Surely then you are wrong, or they are. Either they must be deceived, or you must be blind. In your breasts the most delightful tidings, that ever vibrated on mortal ears, excite no joy. To you the glorious gospel of the blessed God, that gospel

which is the wisdom of God unto salvation, that gospel whence flows all the happiness that ever will be tasted by man; on earth or in heaven, and which will, through eternity, excite the admiration and the praises of angels, appears little better than foolishness.

In vain, as it respects yourselves, have prophets prophesied; in vain have apostles preached; in vain have martyrs sealed the truth with their blood; in vain have angels descended from heaven with messages of love; in vain has the Son of God expired in agonies on the accursed tree; in vain has the Holy Spirit been sent to strive with sinners; in vain has a revelation of all these wonders been given. You still refuse to believe, and by your unbelief practically charge the God of truth with falsehood; for, says the apostle, he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed the record which God gave of his Son.

Unhappy men! To you the awful words of the apostle apply, in all their force: If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. On you the dreadful sentence falls: He that believeth not, shall be condemned. Your character and doom are described in the declaration: He who believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. "Woe to the wretch, who never felt The inward pangs of pious grief; But adds to all his crying guilt The stubborn site of unbelief.

"The law condemns the rebel dead;

Under the wrath of God he lies;

He seals the curse on his own head,

And with a double vengeance dies."

And will you die under the weight of this double vengeance? Will you go to the regions of despair, from a world, which has been moistened by a Saviour's atoning blood? from a world which has resounded with the glad tidings of pardon, peace, and salvation? O, do not, I beseech you in God's name, and for Christ's sake, do not be infatuated; do not madly reject, the glad tidings. Once more I proclaim them in your ears. Once more I declare unto you, that it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken! for unto you, to each one of you, is the word of this salvation sent.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/edward-payson/the-gospel-glad-tidings/>

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