

GLAD TIDINGS

**FROM HEAVEN
To the Worst of Sinners on
Earth.**

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Luke 2:10.

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TO THE CHRISTIAN READER

Reader,

The nature of man is prone to be inquisitive after news, especially in these unsettled and distracted times amongst us, for it is a great part of the employment of people and takes up much of their time, as if London were Athens, and the people thereof Athenians, who spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some news. Acts 17:21. And yet the news we hear is sometimes bad, sometimes uncertain, and many times false. Divert thy thoughts awhile from earthly things, and in this ensuing treatise thou shalt hear great news from Heaven in the Gospel. The Law indeed brings us tidings, but it is like the message of Ehud to Eglon, Judges 3:21, it brings a dagger with it that stabs mortally, but the tidings of the Gospel is like that message of the young Prophet to Jehu, to make him a King. II Kings 9:6.

There is nothing truly terrible, but the Gospel brings tidings of our freedom from it, {if we be believers,} nor nothing truly amiable, but it tells us of our interest in it. How welcome to a poor captive is news of deliverance from slavery? The Gospel brings us tidings of our deliverance from Sin, Satan, Death, Hell, from Wrath, and Damnation, it tells us of Riches, and Glory, and Kingdoms, and Crowns, and what soever may satisfy the capacious soul of man.

God hath appointed different conditions for men and angels. The angels that stood are so

established that they cannot fall; the angels that fell are determined under eternal wrath that they cannot rise, but God from everlasting in his love and mercy has appointed that fallen man should have a way of recovery, as a board after shipwreck, whereby he might come safe to the shore. And God in time was pleased to come out of his hidden eternity, and to discover this love of his to the world, and hath sent his Son to purchase it, and his Spirit to apply it, and his servants to tell, {not this, or that particular man,} but all Nations, Matt.28:19, that whosoever believeth, Luke 2:10, in Jesus Christ shall have everlasting life. John 3:16. These blessed tidings are brought by the Gospel.

And let none say this news is too good to be true, for God who is truth itself {as it were on purpose} to anticipate the infidelity of man, hath said it, and sworn it, and sealed it with the blood of his dear Son, that we might have strong consolation; and hath made this fabric of the world to be as a stage to act the redemption of his people on, which being finished, it shall be no more.

It should stir us up to love and bless the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit; and to embrace the messengers that bring those glad tidings, to account their very feet beautiful, the meanest part of the body, and upon the mountains, the barren places of the earth. Isa.52:7. And I doubt not but many poor souls can from experience bless God for the worthy author in those barren mountains, where he converseth, and elsewhere, and say of him as David of Ahimaaz, he is a good

man, and bringeth good tidings. II Sam.18:27. Though others being hardened spurn such tidings, and labour to extinguish this light of the Gospel, who God in just judgment will cause to stumble, and fall, and lie down in eternal darkness. But I shall detain thee no longer from the work, but commend it and thee to God's blessing, and rest.

Thine in the Gospel of Christ,

Walter Cradock

GOOD NEWS TO THE WORST OF SINNERS.

*"And he said unto them, go ye into all the world,
and preach the gospel to every creature."*

You may easily understand who spake these words, and to whom they were spoken. In these words, our Lord Jesus Christ after his Resurrection, when he had all power in Heaven and Earth given to him, sends forth his Apostles to Preach, and he bids them to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. This was their Commission which they were to have now, to go preach the Gospel. Indeed, they had a Commission before, but it was only to the Jews; and it was a little, but by spurts, but now Christ was risen from the dead, and had received all power in Heaven and Earth, he sends them for good and all, {as it were,} he gives them a full and complete Commission, "go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

Before I come to the Lesson that I mean to insist upon, there are two things here in the words that must be opened, that you may see the foundation or ground of this Lesson; and that is.

First, what is meant by Gospel? Go, and preach the Gospel. Then, what is meant by the creature? Go preach the Gospel to every creature. For the first, what is meant by Gospel? I will not stand upon the several acceptations of it, only you may understand that both in the Scripture language, and also among the Heathen, Gospel hath been

taken for glad tidings, good news in general; any good news or glad tidings have been called Gospel. So the Greek word signifies, so some conceive the English word Gospel, being old English, signifies Gospel, that is, good speech, good news, good hearing, good tidings; but in a peculiar sense in Scripture it is taken for that good tidings of grace and salvation by Jesus Christ. And so in this sense we read of it in the Old Testament, and in the New. In the Old Testament, you shall read in Hebrews 4:2, that our fathers had the Gospel as well as we; but, beloved, you are to take notice, that though our fathers had the Gospel, that is, the glad tidings of life and salvation by Jesus Christ, from Adam, from the beginning of the world, yet they had it but dimly and darkly; and they had it mixed with a great deal of Law, a great deal of bad tidings, {as I may so speak,} they had a little good news with a great deal of bad. So Adam had a little good tidings, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpents head," Gen.3:15, and there was bad tidings also, there was the curse upon the serpent, and upon the woman, and the man; the woman should bring forth in pain, the man must eat his bread in the sweat of his brows; and so in all the Old Testament, there was a little Gospel in the Prophecies, and Gospel in the Sacrifices, and Gospel in the Visions, but abundance of Law mingled with this Gospel. The one spake sad tidings, as well as the other did good; for you know the Law spake curses and damnation to those that in every point did not observe it. But in the New Testament, especially after the Resurrection of Jesus

Christ, when he went up to Heaven, we read that there was perfect Gospel, or only good news, and glad tidings, for the bad news was now all gone. And so it is to be understood here, go preach the Gospel. As if he should say, I do not {my disciples} bid you to go and give them now good news, and then bad, to give them a little of the Law, and a line of Gospel, but go preach the Gospel emphatically, that is, merely, purely Gospel; for now Christ is risen from the dead, and now the Gospel in the purity and simplicity is erected, "go preach the Gospel."

"To every creature." What should be the meaning of that? We know that in the Scripture language, creature most usually signifies not men but beasts, and things without life, as in Romans 8, you have it twice or thrice, the creature groaneth; the beasts, and the woods, and everything that God hath made, as being a name somewhat too low for men in the ordinary Scripture expression. Yet so as it comprehends men, for men also are sometimes called creatures. Now, what should the meaning of this be, that now the Gospel being to be purely, and fully, and completely set up, whether the Lord Jesus would have them preach, and make known glad tidings to all creatures, that is, that even the brute beasts, and these creatures without life, that they should have glad tidings, and good news from the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. I will not aver that it is so, that that is the meaning of it. But surely beloved, there is no creature under heaven, but hath a great deal of glad tidings, and good news from the Death and Resurrection of Jesus

Christ, for we read in Romans 8, that the creature groans, and the creature expects deliverance and redemption. All these creatures by sin are brought into slavery, and certainly they shall partake of the liberty of the sons of God; there is a redemption for them out of slavery, as well as for men by the redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ. But what that shall be, or in what sort I cannot determine. Now whether you will understand it so, that our Lord Christ meant not men and women only, but that by creature, the poor creatures that are without life, and brute beasts, and all might understand the precious worth of this Gospel.

Or take it more restrained, as generally the godly do, that by creature here is meant the Gentiles, in opposition to the Jews, for they knew that they were to preach the Gospel to the Jews, which they also did before the resurrection, but now saith Christ, "go preach the Gospel to every creature." That is, now I will have no distinction of persons, I do not now say, take heed of the way of the Samaritans, but go which way you will, go to the Gentiles, to Sinners, to any men, or women that you can call creatures, Scythians, Barbarian, bond or free, go and preach the Gospel to them, bring them glad tidings and news that Jesus Christ hath brought life, and grace, and salvation freely for them.

That this is the meaning, compare it with Matthew 28:19. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Here it is, go preach to every creature, there it is, go teach all

nations, I will have no partition or distinction between them saith Christ. I gave you leave, and often bid you teach the Jews before; but now go teach the Gentiles; for the world was then divided into those two parts, Jews and Gentiles, go teach the Gentiles, go teach every creature.

But some may say, why doth not our Lord then say, go teach the Gentiles as well as the Jew? Why doth he call them creatures? I answer, it is not an ordinary expression to call men creatures in the Scripture, but the reason {as I conceive} is this, because the Gentiles were great sinners and the greatest of sinners. And that you shall see clearly in divers places, as in Matthew 5, where Christ forbids us to take care for tomorrow, what we shall eat, and what we shall drink; why? "For {saith he} after these things the Gentiles seek," that is, the worst of sinners, and we must not be like them. So in Ephesians 4, the Apostle would not have them darkened in their understandings, and walk as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds. So in I Peter 3, it is an ordinary expression in Scripture, where great sinners are spoken of, either they are called Gentiles, or else compared to Gentiles. "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles." Gal.2:15. That is, the Gentiles were the greatest sinners that were; now they being the greatest sinners, the Lord calls them creatures, and not men, because it is an ordinary expression in Scripture to call wicked people beasts rather than men. In Isaiah 11, they are called Bears, and Wolves, and Tigers, and Foxes, and Dogs, and Bulls,

&c. So in Hosea 1, compared with I Peter 2, "which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God, which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." You that were not a people saith Peter, hath God made his people. They were not a people; God will not ordinarily vouchsafe wicked men and women the name of people, but they were not a people. What were they then? They were Dogs for filthiness, Foxes for cunning, Tigers for cruelty, and Bears, and such kind of creatures. Therefore the Jews were called the people of the Lord, not only to distinguish them from others, but they were called the people of God, as we see in Exodus, it was a privilege to be accounted a people first, and then the people of the Lord. "They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities, and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation." Deut.32:21.

Therefore the Lord Jesus because he would not have his Disciples make any exception, he calls them creatures; as if he should say my Disciples, though they be so sinful that according to the ordinary Scripture language you cannot call them men, and women, or people, yet they are creatures, and go preach the Gospel to every creature, go to the Gentiles, the greatest sinners in the world, whom I will not vouchsafe to call a people, yet they are creatures, go preach the Gospel to them. So that now I am come to the lesson which we are to observe, and that is this.

That the Ministry of the Gospel {especially after the resurrection of Jesus Christ} contains nothing but glad tidings, and good news even to the worst of sinners. Creatures that were so bad that they could not be called men and women, yet saith Christ, go preach the Gospel, pure Gospel, glad tidings to them. I say the Ministry of the Gospel if it be rightly dispensed doth not contain a tittle in it but perfect good news, and glad tidings to the heart of the worst of sinners. For this is the proper difference between the Law and the Gospel. The Law speaks good news, but only to the righteous. If thou do well thou shalt be rewarded; if thou fulfill the Law thou shalt have life; the Law speaks well to a man to the extent that he is a righteous man, but the Gospel quite contrary, the proper object of all the good that the Gospel brings, it is to a man as a sinner, not as a regenerate man, and a righteous man, and a humble man, but as a sinner. And here is the excellency of the Gospel, the more sinful any man is, the more suitable this Gospel is to him, the more sin abounds, grace abounds much more; therefore you shall read, Romans 4, that they that had the benefit of the Gospel are called ungodly, for Christ justifieth the ungodly. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly." Rom.4:5. They are called aliens, Eph.2:12, they are called strangers and enemies, and men without strength, Rom.5:6, they are called the chief of sinners. I Tim.1:9. So to enemies, aliens, strangers, lost people, unrighteous, ungodly, and the like, the

Gospel brings perfect good news, and glad tidings of life, and grace, and salvation by Jesus Christ.

Now this in some measure you know, but this that I tell you I fear you do not know, that the Ministry of the Gospel it is only good news, there is not one word of bad news, not one line, not one syllable, or tittle, but only glad tidings, sweet, and good news to the heart of the worst of sinners. Therefore to show you this truth a little more fully, I would ask you to observe the following. Before our Lord Christ went to Heaven there was some Gospel, but there was much Law; and as our Lord Christ was a Minister of the Gospel, so he was of the circumcision, as the Apostle calls him, I mean before his resurrection; yet it is said in Luke 4, that he took the book of Isaiah 8, {and some think this was the first Sermon that ever he made,} and he read this place and opened it to the people. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Luke 4:18-19. Beloved, there is nothing in all this but only good news, glad tidings; as that the poor should have salvation by Christ, that the broken hearted should be healed, that the captives should be delivered, that the blind should receive their sight, and that them that are bruised should be set at liberty, and them that are slaves should have the year of Jubilee,

the acceptable year of the Lord; there is not a tittle in all this but only good news and glad tidings.

Take another place, and that is Hebrews 12:18, and there you shall have the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament, or between the Law and the Gospel, {if I may so speak,} Law; that is, the administration of the Gospel in the time of the Law, where there was a little good news, but mingled with a world of bad, and terrible news. "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them anymore, for they could not endure that which was commanded, and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart, &c." Heb.12:18-20. Here is nothing but what is terrible, and sad news, as a mountain that was so terrible that it might not be touched, &c. When God did give his Law upon Mount Horeb, or Mount Sinai, that mountain was all aflame. If we see a house burning with fire it is terrible, but to see a mountain all over burning with fire, and with blackness, and darkness, and tempest too! A fire though it be terrible, yet there is somewhat of comfort conveyed thereby, because there is light, but that fire was full of blackness and darkness, and darkness is a sad thing. And there was tempest, and lightning, and thunder, and a voice of words, a voice of terrible words that bid them do such and such things that they had no

power to do, and yet they must do them, or be damned. It was terrible, insomuch that Moses himself, that used to see God, face to face, said, I quake exceedingly, and if a beast touched the hill he must be stoned to death, or thrust through with a dart. Here was nothing but terrible objects in the administration of the Old Testament, in the giving of the Law upon Mount Sinai.

But come to the New Testament, of the Gospel as it is set up since Christ went to the holy of holies, after his resurrection. "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Heb.12:22-24. You are come now to Mount Sion, and that was a pleasant place, if you take it according to the letter, it was the pleasantest place about Jerusalem. And you are come to the City of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem. And, what a beautiful thing that is, you may read in Revelations 20 & 21, of a City with twelve gates, and every gate a whole pearl, and to an innumerable company of Angels. Whether that be meant, that now, in the times of the Gospel, God sends out angels to minister to the Saints more frequently, or diligently than formerly; or as most men understand it, ye are now come to a myriad of Angels, or to an

innumerable company of Angels, that is, ye are come to an estate by Christ in the Gospel, wherein you are at least equal with Angels. And you are come to the general assembly, and Church of the firstborn; as if he should say, you are come to a Church where all are Patriarchs, for the Patriarchs were the first born heretofore; Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and they were honourable men. Every Saint in the time of the Gospel is in as honourable and glorious a condition as any Patriarch; you are not come to a Church of ordinary Saints, but to the Church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven. And you are come to the judge of all. You will say that is a terrible thing. No, it is a blessed thing to see God in the light of the Gospel to be a judge. Therefore in II Thes.1:4, and divers other places, he comforts the Saints in their persecutions, and sufferings with this, that God will come to judgment, God is the Judge of all, it is a comfortable thing.

And then you are come to the spirits of just men made perfect, to such an assembly of Saints, and Church of the first born where the spirits of men are made perfect, that is beyond my expression and conception; there is a perfection of the Saints in their love, and in their graces incomparable to that it was before. And ye are come to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling. You are come to such a rich estate, and to such a Testament where Christ is the Intercessor, and his blood speaks not as the blood of Abel, for it doth not cry for vengeance, but always for grace, and mercy

from his Father to you. You see in the administration of the New Testament, or of the Gospel, there is not one syllable, or tittle, but what is amiable, and sweet, and comfortable even to the worst of sinners. And therefore the Spouse in the Canticles, speaking of Christ, {as I suppose,} she commends Jesus Christ from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot as all beautiful, and amiable, and then she sums up all, "thou art all fair my love, there is no spot in thee." Jesus Christ in the New Testament or Ministry of the Gospel is all fair, altogether amiable even to the worst of sinners, there is no spot in him. So you have the Lesson briefly.

Now that with the help of God I will further do, is to give you a view of the sum of the whole Gospel in particular, that so you may look upon every piece of it, and you shall see that there is not a jot from the beginning to the end, but it brings glad tidings to the worst of sinners.

First of all you may take notice that the Gospel doth hold forth to sinners their lost wretched condition they are in. In the Gospel poor sinners come to learn what a damnable wretched condition they are in whereas men without it think they are well, they do nobody hurt, they give to the poor, and lend, and the like, and yet they are going the broad way to destruction. Now we see not only by Scripture but by experience the Gospel tells them they are dead in sin, that they are children of wrath, that they are under the curse of God going the broad way to hell.

But you will say, is that good news for a man to hear the Preacher say that he is in a damned condition, and a child of wrath, &c.? Beloved, it is sweet and good news! If the Preacher should make thee a damned creature, or dead in sin it were bad news, but when the Gospel brings thee a light to see that thou art so, whereas otherwise thou in thy blindness wouldest go down to hell in it, it is blessed and good news; it is better to see it here than forever in hell where there is no remedy. And there is no man or woman in this place that belongs to God, but they can bless God, and his Son Jesus Christ that by the Gospel the Lord hath discovered to them their wretched condition that they were naturally in. That is one thing.

A second instance is this, that the Gospel holds forth to sinners, all the wrong ways that they go, and all the wrong means that they use to save their souls; this is by the light of the Gospel. Man naturally is either dead in sin or asleep; or if he be a little awakened, he takes a thousand ways to go to heaven, and none of them God's way, none of them the right way. Every carnal man sometime or other, hath some design in his head to save his soul; one man thinks to do it by his equity and justice in his dealing and trading; another by his hospitality and charity to the poor; another by hearing of sermons and performing of duties, as in the time of Popery how many years did they spend, and spent their strength and time, and their money, and when all came to all, all was lost; all their ways were the wrong way to Heaven. Now, the light of the Gospel

discovers all these false ways, and shows that you will come short of the glory of God and the salvation of your souls; and will convince you that there is no name under heaven by which you can be saved, but only the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 4:12. Consider, is not this good news that God should come first by the Ministry of the Gospel, and show thee thy wretched condition; and then when thou hast spent thy time and strength in false ways to be reconciled to God, and to save thy soul, the Gospel comes and discovers all these that thou mayest go seek the true way?

Thirdly, the Gospel holds forth to poor sinners that there is a love, an eternal love, an infinite love in God's breast to poor sinners before ever the world was made. You know in reason a man would think that God should hate such a one as I am, God foresaw what a creature I would be when I was born, and how I have lived; and reason would think that love should proceed from something amiable in the object that should produce love, some beauty or bounty, as we say, but God sees me to be wicked, and sinful; and therefore reason would think God must damn me world without end. Now the Gospel comes to such a sinner, and tells him the case is otherwise, it is not so, poor sinful man or woman, and though God hate sin above all things in heaven or hell, yet God loved thee knowing what thou wouldest be; God knows the reason of it, we do not; it is as it is said in Deuteronomy, I loved thee, because I loved thee. "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, the LORD thy God hath

chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people." Deut.7:6-7. God hath an infinite, special love to thy poor soul, yet hates thy sin; from before the world was made, and the mountains were brought forth; so God loved the world, that he gave his Son, &c. There was a love in God, out of which he gave his Son Jesus Christ to die for us.

This the Gospel, and the Spirit of God in it, reveals to the poor soul, that when I was an enemy to God, he was my friend; when I hated him, he loved me; nay before I was, God had thoughts of an infinite, eternal love to me

Then fourthly, the Gospel holds forth to a sinner, that as God had an infinite love towards him, so it was not a cold love that ended in nothing, but out of this love God would send his Son Jesus Christ into the world to save sinners. This is one main principle of the Gospel, that the Father out of his love sent his own Son, that was the express image of his person, the Son of his love, and delight into this world, to lay down his life, and to die for sinners. Were it not for the Ministry of the Gospel we could never know this! How could we know but by the Gospel that the Lord Jesus Christ did come to die to save sinners? So God loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that he that believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Fifthly, briefly, {for I do but give you a few touches or instances,} it holds out to us that as the Father out of his love sent his Son; so that Jesus Christ actually and really is come into the world, and took our nature upon him soul and body, and the infirmities of both, and sanctified our nature that he took, and in that nature became our Surety, a Public person for us; our Advocate, a second Adam. That he was conceived, and born of the Virgin; and that he lived here, and so did the will of God, and fulfilled his Law; and conversed many years among men, and that therein while he did so, he gave us many blessed experiments of his love, and mercy to poor sinners, in healing the sick, in giving sight to the blind, in raising the dead. And while he conversed among men, he taught, and discovered in a great measure the mysteries of his Father's counsels to us, that else we could never have known, and gave us a holy pattern, and example of life, in humility, and patience, and diligence, and prayer, and thankfulness. All these things are good news and glad tidings to poor sinners, every part of them.

Then the Gospel tells us, that this Lord Jesus Christ after he had walked among men for many years together, that then as a Public person, and second Adam, and our Surety, he did lay down his life, and die for our sins. But you will say, where is the good news from that? Hence it is that poor sinners are reconciled to God, they are made friends with God. Hence it is that poor sinners are redeemed from all their enemies, sin, and death, and wrath,

and curse, and hell; all these by the death of the Lord Jesus are removed.

Then the Gospel tells you that Jesus Christ, as he died for our sins, so he rose again for our justification, he rose again from the dead the third day, whereby poor sinners are assured that they are justified and freed from all their sins, and whereby they shall rise to grace here, and their souls and bodies shall rise to glory hereafter with Christ, and whereby they shall rise out of all afflictions also in due time; for the resurrection of Christ is the ground of our resurrection out of afflictions in this world; and every tittle of this is glad tidings, and good news to poor sinners.

Then the Gospel tells you that after his resurrection he conversed with his Disciples, and not with the world, and that he met with his Disciples from one mountain to another, from one town to another, for a few days after, and there he made many precious prayers to his Father for them, and for all that should believe in him; and there he gave them instructions and directions how they should order the Churches of God, and preach the Gospel to the end of the world. "He answered and said unto them, because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." Matt.13:11.

And then you know the Gospel tells us that he went up into heaven, and from heaven, as soon as he came there, he sent his Holy Spirit to us to unite us to Christ, to be our Intelligencer, to make known the heart of Christ to us, to lead us into all truth, to

comfort us in all distresses, and to make intercession in us till we come to heaven, where he is. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will show you things to come." John 16:13.

And the Gospel tells us this good news that when he went to heaven he made way for poor sinners to come there, and that there he intercedes for us, and there succors us, and pities us when we are in the flesh as he was once.

Then the Gospel tells us that in due time he will come again from heaven as he went, and bring a crown with him, and actually subdue all his peoples enemies, and give them the same glory that he hath, and they shall be one with God forever as he is; he will come and take poor sinners to himself, that they shall be where he is, and as he is, world without end.

The Gospel tells you moreover that all this love, and grace, and mercy, and salvation by Jesus Christ, here, and in Heaven, it is all made sure to us by an Everlasting Covenant, sure and perfect in every point, as David saith, "he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure, for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." II Sam.23:5.

And this Covenant is sealed with the blood of the Testator, the Lord Jesus Christ, that it might be sure and certain, and he hath also sent Pastors and Teachers to make known this Gospel; and he hath given the seal of the Lord's Supper, and Baptism to confirm this Gospel. Put all together, and from the

first to the last, you shall not find in the Ministry of the Gospel {if it be truly and soundly opened} any syllable but what is wholesome and comfortable, and sweet and glad tidings to the worst sinners.

Only, to clear it more fully to you, there are some objections that you may make, {for Beloved it were a happy thing if we did fully understand this lesson, and fully believe it,} therefore that it may sink into your hearts, I will tell you all that I know can be said against it.

One objection is, you will say, the Ministry of the Gospel is not so very good, because we poor sinners do not hear anything in it for the body; we do not hear anything in it of honour and wealth; we see people as poor after they receive Christ as ever they were, and it may be poorer; and if God did mingle in the Gospel earthly things with heavenly, then it were good news, worth the hearing.

Beloved, concerning that I answer but in two words. All the happiness of this world consists either in honour or wealth. As for honour, if you believe in God, if you receive Jesus Christ, the Gospel brings you tidings, that whereas now you are poor people that nobody cares for, you shall be kings and queens, as Christ is a King, so you shall be kings, and his daughters shall be queens. Nay you shall be princes in all the lands. You know earthly kings are but princes in their several kingdoms, as the King of Spain, and the King of England, &c., but the saints, for honour are princes in all lands. They shall bind kings in chains, and nobles in fetters of Iron; such honour have all his saints. "For the LORD taketh

pleasure in his people, he will beautify the meek with salvation. Let the saints be joyful in glory, let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written, this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD." Psal.149:4-9. You must look on it Beloved with a spiritual eye. And if there be any reality in that which they call honour, this is not a notion, but there is more reality in spiritual honour than in carnal. Take carnal men that call you honourable and worshipful, and the like, you know all these are but words, and a puff of wind, when they are present; but they are hateful, and hate one another when they are gone, as the Apostle saith. But if a man receive Christ in the ministry of the Gospel, there is true honour; that is, such a man will be respected in the hearts of others; not only in the eyes of God, and godly men, but in the hearts of the wicked, for in their hearts they will say, such a man is an honourable man, such a woman is an honourable woman, they will not do anything against their consciences, and disobey Christ, they had rather die. Beloved there is more reality in this honour; you shall be princes, and kings, and queens.

And then you shall have innumerable companies of Angels, you shall be in as glorious a condition as they, and somewhat better, you shall have them to wait on you. You consider not this,

because you settle not your selves to search spiritual privileges, you shall have an innumerable company of Angels to wait on you; that is better than to be lords, and earls, that have an innumerable company of swearers, and drunkards, and whoremongers for their serving men, that it were great deal more ease if they could spare them, to be without them, but you shall have a company of Saints and Angels to wait on you.

And though the Gospel tell you not of outward riches, for Christ himself, saith, "the foxes have holes, and the fouls of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not wheron to lay his head," yet the Gospel tells you that you have so much title to worldly things, that godliness hath the promise of this life, and of that which is to come. And that God will be a sun and a shield to those that fear him, and he will withhold from them nothing that is good. "For the LORD God is a sun and shield, the LORD will give grace and glory, no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Psal.84:11. Is not that tidings enough of riches and wealth, when God will withhold nothing that is good? God will give food and raiment, they have it by promise; wicked men have it by providence, as the dogs, and fowls, have it. Therefore, for all that objection this truth runs clear.

But secondly, another will say, the Gospel indeed brings tidings of Christ, and Salvation, but it brings tidings also of afflictions and persecutions; the Gospel saith, "whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." And Christ saith, "I come not to bring peace, but a sword; I come to set

the father against the son, and the son against the father and the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against her mother." And saith the carnal heart I like not this news, I love to be at peace with God, and all the world, as their phrase is.

Concerning that, though it be true that the Gospel brings afflictions, yet it is true the Gospel tells you that these sufferings of yours, in the first place are privileges, the Gospel tells you it is a piece of your happiness to have them. "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." I Cor.3:21-23. Death, what is death? Afflictions are called death, in death oft, that is, afflictions; they are but little deaths, and one great death ends all; the greatest death is a privilege, your afflictions, and poverty, and reproaches, will be a privilege. How is that? You have it in Romans 8, they all work together for good to them that love God. For your good here, and your glory hereafter; for saith the Apostle, II Cor.4:17-18, "for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." II Cor.4:17-18. These light afflictions that are but for a moment, they work for us an exceeding, exceeding weight of glory. The English word cannot express it; compare it with Romans 8,

the afflictions that we suffer are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed. The Spirit of glory riseth on you, the Lord doth you good by it for the present, and it works for a crown of glory hereafter; for this is a true saying, if we suffer with Christ, we shall reign with him. Therefore, though the Gospel bring sufferings with it, yet take them as the Gospel expresses them, they are sweet, and good tidings; they are privileges to you, and will turn for your good here, and your glory hereafter.

The Gospel moreover tells you for your fuller satisfaction that the Lord will lay no more upon you than you are able to bear. And he will be in the affliction with you, in the fire, and in the water; the Lord Jesus will be with you there, and in due time he will make you a way to get out. Beloved, put all together that the Gospel speaks of afflictions, and sufferings, construe them together, and you shall see that there is nothing in all that, but glad tidings and good news.

I but, saith another, the Gospel, {if it be indeed the true Gospel that we hear from our Ministers,} it is not good news, for our Ministers preach against drunkards, and swearers, and whoremongers; and when I swear the Minister saith I shall never go to Heaven; and he saith the Gospel will have a man forsake his sins, and repent, and the like, this is not good news; it is good news that God will save me, but it is not good news that I must leave my sins, and all my ways of pleasure that I am in. It is good news that the Gospel will have me

saved but it is not good news that the Gospel will have me a Puritan, and be purified, and purged from my sins.

Concerning that, it is very true that though the Gospel speak not properly against drunkards, and whoremongers, and swearers, yet the Gospel saith that drunkards must leave their drunkenness, and swearers must leave their swearing; and the Gospel calls every man to repentance, from every sin, yet notwithstanding that it is no bad news.

First, take Christ's argument in Matthew 5, doth thy right eye offend thee? Pull it out and cast it from thee; doth thy right hand offend thee? Cut it off, and cast it from thee. That is as some interpret it, there are some sins that are as pleasant as the right eye, and as profitable as the right hand, and thou are better to cut them off. Why so? It is better to go to heaven with one eye, than with two eyes to go to hell; and it is better to go to heaven with one hand, than with two to go to hell. Is it not good tidings when a man is taught to make a good bargain? Is it not good tidings when the Gospel tells a man he must throw away his sins, and it is better to cross himself a little in his lusts and go to heaven, than to go lusts, and soul, and body, and all to hell? Is it not good news, when a man's house is on fire, if one come and show him how to save a piece? It is better than to have all burned. Now the Gospel teacheth you to leave sin, and it is good news, why? I will tell you, because when the Gospel bids thee leave sin, it puts in thee a new nature that is contrary to sin to hate it more than hell, and the

Devil himself, and then if God bid thee leave thy sins, it is the best news in the world. As for instance, there are many men and women I believe here, that if the Lord should say to them, as he did to Solomon, I will give thee whatsoever thou wouldest have in heaven, or earth, there are some in this place that would say, O Lord I would leave my pride, I would have a humble heart, and a heart that should not love worldly things, and a heart that should not be froward and waspish. If the Gospel should leave the heart as the Law did, and bid you throw away your sins, and give no strength to do it, it were bad news, but if the Gospel give you a new nature, to hate sin, and when it bids you leave, it gives you power to take it away; it is sweet, and pleasant news. "For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean, from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Ezek.36:24-27.

Another objection that others may make is, that the Gospel brings tidings, that when we receive Christ, as we must leave sin, so we must set on the doing of good, I must not be my own Master, as the Minister saith, one while I must fast, and another while I must pray, and teach my Children, and my

Family, and this is a hard task, an endless work, I cannot bear it, to pray every morning, and evening, &c.

I answer, this is good news. Why? Because in the first place, when the Gospel tells you any such thing the Gospel doth not bid you do them, or else you shall be damned, as the Law did, but the Gospel saith thus, thou poor drunkard, or thou proud woman, here is a gracious God that hath loved thee, and out of love hath sent Jesus Christ to die for thee, and hath appointed his Ministers to make it known to thee, and here is everlasting redemption, and salvation by him, only because thou art a sinner, there is no other reason in the world; now thou art safe, free from damnation, and hell, fear not that, that is gone, Christ hath died to reconcile thee to God, and Christ hath loved thee, therefore obey him, if not thou shalt not be damned, that is done away already; indeed the Law saith, thou shalt be damned for not doing it, but saith Christ, in the Gospel, I have died, and have forgiven thee thy sins, and if thou wilt be a villain, and not respect my Father that hath loved thee, and I that have died for thee, so it is; but if thou wilt obey me, thou shalt be a good child, &c. Thus the Gospel speaks. Now there is no bad news, for me to hear of my duty, to hear that the Lord Jesus Christ commands me, when I see my salvation sure, I work not for life, as those under the Law, for the Law is a voice of words, it bids me do this, or that, or I shall be damned; and if I went a little awry, I should lose all my labour; no, I see my salvation is safe, for hell and damnation are shut out

of doors, God is my Father, and I am his child, I am in an Everlasting Covenant, there is nothing in Heaven or Hell which shall be able to separate me from the love of God. Now I am redeemed from my enemies, and without fear, as the Scripture saith, why should I not serve him, and study to do what he commands me? "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom.8:38-39.

Besides, admit the Gospel bids thee do many things, the Gospel also gives thee power to do them. It is not a voice of words as that on Mount Sinai, Heb.12:19, that is, words that had a voice, but no power; thou shalt do this, and not that, but it gave no strength, and the people were not able to hear the word. For they were bid, not to commit adultery, not to swear, not to steal, and there was no strength, but a voice. But the voice of the Gospel is a voice of power, it is called the day of God's power, the power of God to salvation; the arm of God, the strength of God, &c. Therefore whatsoever the Gospel commands, it gives a sweet power to the heart to do the same, and then it is no bad news. If a man bid me pay a thousand pounds to my neighbour, and give me a thousand pounds in my hand, it is easy to do it. The Gospel bids me deny myself, and subdue my lusts, if it did give no power it were a terrible thing, but if withal the Gospel carry the Spirit of Christ into the heart and kills sin, and

makes me able to deny myself, then it is good news. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Phil.2:13.

Besides, the duties that the Gospel bids me do, they are few for number, and easy for nature; and for the end of them, it is not for life, and salvation, that is safe, there is no danger of that; and there is a spirit to them, and also there is a sweetness in Gospel obedience, that there is nothing on this side glory so pleasing to the soul that hath believed, as obeying of Jesus Christ. You have your reward in holiness. Godly men say that this is the meaning of it, that holiness is a reward to itself; the doing of good things is a reward to itself.

To say nothing of the reward hereafter, that there is a crown of glory, your labour is not in vain in the Lord. I Cor.15:58. You that work for him, know that the very doing of Gospel duty, with a Gospel spirit, it is no other than meat and drink. Our Lord Christ when he was hungry, and thirsty, when he was weary; one would have thought he might have done many things more pleasing, than to be teaching a silly woman; when they came with meat, he would not leave that which he was doing, "I have meat {saith he} that you know not off." Who gave it thee said they? Saith he, "it is my meat, and drink, to do the will of him that sent me." So, when we have the heart, and the nature, and the spirit of Christ, it will be sweeter than meat, and drink, out of love, to do anything that Jesus Christ commands us.

Again, it may be, that some men will say, the Gospel for the most part brings good news, but there is one thing in the Gospel that me thinks is no good news to poor sinners, saith a poor soul, for the Ministers often preach and tell me, that the Law saith, do this and live; and the Minister tells me, that the Gospel saith, believe and live; he saith that there shall be all happiness, and good to me, if I believe; and saith the poor soul, for my part it is as possible for me to keep the Ten Commandments, as to believe, and the Ministers say, that there is no good thing in the Gospel that I can partake of except I believe; I would like it well but for that one thing, I would, but I cannot believe.

To answer this, if the Gospel held forth Christ and Salvation, upon believing {as many oft preach} it were little better tidings than the Law, for it is as easy for a man of himself to keep the Ten Commandments, by obeying, as to believe of himself, to have faith to receive Christ. Therefore, that is a misunderstanding of the Gospel, the Gospel saith not bring faith with thee, and then here is all grace and salvation upon the condition that you believe; no, for whence should I have faith? Whatsoever is of the flesh, is flesh; and what is of me is flesh, and abominable to God; therefore the Gospel expects not that any sinner should bring faith, for he hath it not; nay, it is a sin to endeavour to have it of himself; but the Gospel as it brings salvation, so it breeds faith in the heart of a sinner. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which

ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." I Thes.2:13. The same word that makes known salvation, the same word breeds, and begets faith in the heart to receive it. That God that gives his alms to us, gives a purse to carry it; that God that gives physic to a poor soul, will give a hand to receive it. It were strange if God should expect faith from a poor sinner, whereas, for ought I know, and learned men hold, that Adam in innocency had not the faith that we are justified by; and for ought I know the angels in heaven have it not; and whence should a poor sinner have it? It is God that gives repentance to Israel, and God is the author and finisher of our faith. Heb.12:2. And in Phil.1:29, it is given to you to believe. Therefore, when I hear of grace, and glory, and salvation by Jesus Christ, I must not consider where I shall have a vessel to carry it home, where I shall have faith to receive it, but it carries the vessel with it, and I go, and take the promise, and by the Holy Spirit that same Gospel that brought the grace will effectually work faith, or else, it were as harsh as the Law. Therefore never stand off about faith, for he that gives grace and salvation, will work faith. "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." John 6:45.

Again, it may be objected by some; we confess that the Gospel is good news, and blessed be God it is performed also. But it seems that there

is in the Gospel, or annexed to it a discipline, or a government whereby we shall be ruled; thus saith one, thus saith another; and if we receive the Gospel of Christ, we must receive the Government of Christ say the Ministers, and we fear that will be no good news to our poor souls.

As for that, in few words as I am able, I confess, beloved, that in, or with the Gospel of Christ, there is a government, or there is a discipline, that may {in a sense} be called an external discipline over the saints or people of God. And it is true that all the governments that have hitherto been in the world, since our Lord Christ went to heaven, men have called them the Governments of the Gospel, and fathered them upon Christ, and the Gospel, and truly if they had been so indeed as men pretended, that is, if those kind of governments that we have had, had been part of the Gospel, surely then there had been a great deal of bad news, and heavy tidings in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As for instance; there have been but two great governments or disciplines {if I may use that word} in the world since our Lord ascended into Heaven. The one was the Papacy and the other Episcopacy.

We have been governed either by the Pope that stilled himself, the Successor of Peter, and the Romish Governor, or by Episcopacy in later years, in many parts; though Popery has made the greater stir in the world. Now these two differ in degrees, otherwise they are of the same kind. And if these were the government of Christ, and the discipline of

the Gospel, we may well say, there hath been sad tidings, and heavy news from the Gospel for many years. Give me leave to instance in a few substantial things in these two Governments.

This was one thing that was in both these Governments; the Ministers, {such as they were, by what titles soever they were styled; for they had many sorts,} they took all the power of governing, and government wholly, and solely into their own hands; they called themselves the Church of God. We must look to the Church, {they say,} that is, to the Bishops, and to their laws, &c. They called themselves the Clergy, that is, God's inheritance, as the word in the Original signifies. True it is, there is a power, a sweet Gospel power in the Ministers of Christ, that is somewhat peculiar from the people; but to take all power into their own hands; and to leave the people, and call them the laity, the dross, the vulgar, to leave them as vassals, and slaves, and to call themselves, the Clergy, and the Church, and the like, &c. If this had been Christ's discipline, there had been some hard and heavy tidings in the Gospel of Christ.

Secondly, as they took this power into their hands, so they used this power as lords over God's inheritance, contrary to the command of Jesus Christ. I Pet.5:3. You shall not lord it over God's inheritance. Now you know they were lords, that will appear in two things.

First, they made Laws upon the consciences of men, besides the Laws that Jesus Christ made; you know they had their Synods, and their

Convocations, and their great Councils, and the like, and there they would have Canons or Laws every time they met for the consciences of poor Saints. This was no good news! And then forcing men to aver those laws that they had made; as they had made a law that people should not go out of their Parishes; they must every one hear his own Minister, though it may be he was an ignorant, drunken, dumb, profane wretch, and if they did not, they were forced, and compelled to do it. Beloved, this was not according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for if it had, surely it had been no good news.

Thirdly, in the second Government that we have had hitherto, they imposed Ministers and Officers upon the people, the people never had yet liberty under these two Governments to choose men according to God's own heart, that would feed them with knowledge and understanding, but such as the Bishops sent they must receive, whether they were good or bad, they must take them as they found them; and those usually were either ignorant and unlearned men; or profane unsanctified men, and these were sent by them as lords, and the people were forced to receive them.

Then fourthly, in this government, all the power which they had {which they took all to themselves} they exercised it only, {almost entirely,} against the saints and people of God, either as Schismatics, or Lollards, or Heretics, or Puritans, or the like; either for doing that which was good, or for things that were trifles, according to their own judgment. For doing that which was good,

for fasting and praying, for meeting to teach one another, and to seek the Lord, these were called Conventicles. Or for trifles that they in their consciences held indifferent, as the wearing of the surplice and the cross in baptism; they themselves said they were indifferent things, and trifles, and yet men must be silenced, and people banished beyond Sea for these things. This government we have had, and there was little good news and glad tidings to the souls of the poor saints from all this.

Fifthly, they did restrain the Spirit of God in the Saints both in preaching and praying. In preaching, the Ministers were tied, they must preach such, and not such things, and they must be in danger to be fined, if they did not keep to the hour. And for Prayer, when it may be the poor Ministers soul was full of groans, and sighs, and he would have rejoiced to have poured out his soul to the Lord, he was tied to an old Service-Book, and must read that till he grieved the Spirit of God, and dried up his own spirit as a chip, that he could not pray if he would; and he must read it for an hour together, and then it may be come into the Pulpit, but his spirit was gone.

Again, they backed all their laws with the secular power and punishments; they never rested till they had twisted their own laws, with the secular laws, the civil laws of the Land. Every law of theirs was strengthened and backed with some civil severe law, to confiscation of goods, or imprisonment, or such a fine, to the cutting off of ears, the slitting of noses, the burning of cheeks, to banishment, yea to

death itself; as you know how many precious Saints of God {even by those that pretended the government of Christ, and his discipline} were burned in Smithfield; and how many suffered strange torments, and punishments, yet their persecutors pretended to exercise the discipline and government of Christ. I give you but a few instances; these were the governments we have had hitherto, for thirteen or fourteen hundred years, either from the Pope, or the Bishops, Papacy, or Episcopacy. And truly beloved, there is not a title of good news or glad tidings to the hearts of holy saints, and tender consciences in all this, as your selves may judge.

Now what we shall have the Lord knows, I know not, but only thus much I say, that whatever it will be, if it be according to these strains that have been heretofore, then I confess there will be a great deal of heavy tidings, and hard news, even in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, if men call it Gospel, or anything belonging to it. For my part, as I am wholly ignorant what government men will set up and call it the government of Christ, right, or wrong; so I am not ignorant of the fears and jealousies that are in the hearts of godly people concerning this, and that thing; but be sure, if it be the government of Jesus Christ, and his discipline, there will be nothing but good news, and glad tidings to the honest heart, and tenderest conscience; and if it be not such a government, it is not of God; for I have proved plainly, that there is nothing in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but good news, and glad tidings to the worst

of sinners. But if it be a government that I shall be compelled against conscience, and my goods confiscated for this, or that trifles, this is not according to the Gospel; for there are none of these terrible things in the Gospel of Christ, it is all sweet.

I will give you but one instance, and pass it over. In the government of Christ according to the Scriptures, the two worst, and harshest things that you shall find there, you shall see clearly that they are good things, and good news for a poor Christian to have them set up over his soul.

As first of all, you know that in the Gospel, the government or discipline, call it which way you will. We find in some cases that the Lord Jesus will have us not only comfort, and exhort, and teach one another, but in some cases he will have us reprove one another, and have our Ministers reprove us also, but in love, and tenderness. This is one of the harshest things, and this if you look right on it with a spiritual eye, truly it is glad tidings for a poor Saint, when he hath forgot himself, by the violence of some lust; then for a sincere hearted Brother or Sister in the spirit of meekness, and love to reprove him, and set his bones in joint. You have some of you found in experience that a sweet and wise reproof hath been as pleasing to you as any sermon of consolation that ever you heard. And therefore you see in Scripture how the Lord sets down reproof, that you may not be afraid of it. Lev.19:17. He tells you that reproof is an argument of love, thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart, but rather reprove him. It is an argument of love. A man that

reproves another wisely and meekly loves him, for otherwise his poor soul is going in the way towards hell, from God, and fellowship with God, going on in sin. Now a man that reproves him, he brings him back again from sin, and that strangeness from God that he was in a course to run into. Therefore I say, there is no such evil in reproof.

Besides, the Scripture saith it is a precious thing. Psal.141:5. David saith, "let the righteous smite me, and it shall be as balm, it shall be a kindness; let him reprove me, and it shall be an excellent oil, it shall not break my head." It shall be as excellent oil or balm to heal his soul. Reproof is called a profitable thing also. II Tim.3:16. The Scripture is profitable for instruction, and reproof, &c. If reproof were an evil thing, one could not say that the Scripture were profitable for such an end.

It is a great judgment of God, when God casts a man into such a condition that nobody will reprove him. It is a thing that I am many times afraid of, truly almost to trembling, least a man should so carry himself to the Saints, and so estrange himself that they will not reprove him. O, it is fearful when a man stands on his own bottom, and on his own legs, that men shall say, there is a Professor, he is so proud, and so foolish that none will reprove him. Saith God to Ezekiel, "thou shalt not be a reproof to this people," and in Hosea, "let no man strive, nor reprove another, for thy people are as they that strive with the priest. Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee." Hos.4:4-5. Let no man strive or reprove another.

Why so? Saith the Lord in the end of the chapter, "let him be as a backsliding heifer," for "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." Hos.4:17. It is a pitiful thing when God shall leave a man as a heifer, that is turned into the meadow to grass, let him alone. They used to plow with heifers in those days as we do with horses and oxen, and the horses and oxen are called from the house to the plow, and are driven and beaten, but when the ox is turned to grass to be fatted, let him alone, he lies down, and riseth when he will; so these people were so wicked, that no man should reprove his brother, but he should be as a lamb in a fat pasture. So that reproof, that is one of the harshest things in the government of Christ in the Gospel, it is a good, a precious and profitable thing. It is a great judgment to be without it, therefore though that be used, the doctrine holds true, that there is nothing but good news, glad tidings in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is another thing, that is, Excommunication, cutting a man off from the people of God, or delivering him up to Satan. A man may say that is a terrible thing; it is terrible as I said before, when there is secular punishment with it, confiscation of goods, and loss of estate, and freedom, but according to the Gospel of Christ you shall see, that even the delivering men up to Satan, Christ Jesus intends it in love, for the good, and salvation of their souls; it is harsh, but it is good news. Saith the Apostle, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to

deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." I Cor.5:4-5. Speaking of the incestuous person. If men will be so wretched as to sin grossly, the Lord Jesus hath ordered that such a man shall be delivered to Satan; for what? That he may be damned, and to bring him to hell? No, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. And truly Beloved, I have seen, more than one that have blessed God for that Ordinance, that have been brought to humble their souls, and sweetly, and closely to walk with God again, by the blessing of God on that Ordinance. Now I have told you the worst in the Gospel, either reproof, and that but upon great occasion; or else delivering to Satan, and that must be upon extraordinary occasion; yet both are sweet, and profitable, and precious for the good of the soul; therefore the truth of the Doctrine holds clear to you, that there is nothing in the Gospel, look which way you will, but good news, and glad tidings to the worst of sinners.

There is one objection more, and so I proceed to the uses. Somebody may say out of the Prophet Isaiah, "there is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked," Isa.48:22, and Isa.57:20, "the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." The Prophet seems to comfort the godly, but wicked men have no peace; then a man may say, how doth this stand with your Doctrine? You say that the Gospel holds forth peace,

and glad tidings, and good news to wicked men, even to the worst of sinners.

There are three ways to answer it, in few words. The first is, that Isaiah was in a sort an Evangelical Prophet, and spake many things of Gospel by way of Prophesy; he saw things for us, and not for himself, as Peter saith; yet these kind of expressions are more properly Law than Gospel; for it is certain there is no other language in the Law but that there is no peace to the wicked. Transgress once and be damned forever, but the language of the Gospel is contrary, it comes and gives peace to the wicked, and justifieth the ungodly, he preacheth peace to them that are near, and to them that are afar off. And who were they? The Gentiles that were emphatically sinners, "are we not Jews {saith the Apostle} and not sinners of the Gentiles?" Gal.2:15. Therefore this was rather Law than Gospel.

Secondly, there is no peace to the wicked, or to sinners, saith my God. You may understand it also in this sense, that the Lord will not make any peace with sin, though he send messages of peace and reconciliation to sinners; though God be reconciled to a sinner, he will never be reconciled to sin.

But the third, and last, and most proper as I take it is this, there is no peace to the wicked, saith my God; that is, there is no peace to men that continue in sin after Jesus Christ hath been revealed to them, and they have refused him, then there is no peace to them. Observe, for it is a thing of great concernment, it becomes not a Minister of the Gospel by any means to pronounce wrath, and

curse, or damnation to a sinner, as a sinner; he is not a Minister of the Gospel, if he does so, he is a Minister of the Old Testament, that saith, here comes a drunkard, and because he is a drunkard God will plague him, and damn him; this is the language of the Old Testament. But you will say, will you speak peace to drunkards and sinners? We speak judgment, and curses, and damnation to them, when once we have first declared Christ, and they refuse him. And for this reason, and no other according to the Ministry of the Gospel, I am to pronounce, damnation, and curse, to wicked men, because they refuse Jesus Christ, because they do not believe in Jesus Christ.

You will say, is it absolutely evil for a Minister of the Gospel to speak against drunkards, and swearers, and whoremongers, and to say the curse of God will fall on them, &c. No, why? Because I speak against a drunkard, not properly because he is a drunkard, but his drunkenness is a sign that he continues in unbelief, and so hath not received Jesus Christ. So we are to understand the Scriptures. There is a drunkard, a sot, a jeerer of godliness, I say the curse of God will come upon him, and the damnation of hell is ready to overtake him; why? Not because he is properly such a one, but because those are signs that he is an unbeliever. When God shall come to judge the world, there are people that he will judge because they are drunkards, he will throw them to hell, as those in the Mountains of Wales, &c., because they have but a little light, and they did not follow that, they shall be condemned,

and the heathens shall be condemned for their ignorance, &c. But under the Gospel all are wrapped up in unbelief, so that this is the pin of Heaven, or Hell, the very wards that opens, or shuts, that you be believers, or unbelievers. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John 3:36. But I will not stand longer on that.

Now I proceed to show what profit we may have by this Doctrine, by way of Application. There be divers special lessons that I would have you learn hence. The first is this, that this truth that I have now taught you, it is the door of the Gospel, the very entrance into Christian Religion; the first stone as it were in the Christian building in the Profession of Religion, in Gospel Profession. There is a kind of devotion and profession, but it is not built according to the Gospel, but if you would walk according to the Gospel learn this lesson first, that is, that God gives life, and salvation through Christ to sinners, as sinners though they be hard hearted, backsliding, and the chief of sinners, yet as long as they be sinners, and but sinners they may alway look upon Jesus Christ and Salvation in his hand to be bestowed on them. This is a truth that thou must learn, and be taught it of God, or else thou canst not go one step into the Profession of the Gospel; for, beloved, until you know and learn this, you will be like men in the dark, you will be groping for Christ Jesus, but you will never be grafted into him, you will never be knit to Christ. I say this is the first step

to Religion to understand this truth aright, that the Gospel brings glad tidings of salvation to be given to the worst of sinners; therefore though I see no good in me at all whereby I might receive good news from the Law, and though I do not see that I am a humbled sinner as such a Preacher teacheth, or a believing sinner, or a broken hearted sinner, as another Preacher saith, yet I say I am a sinner, and a sinner is the proper object of the Gospel. You will be off, and on, and never be knit to Christ, but will be as a bone in and out till you come to that; for if you go and lay hold on Christ any other way, in any other consideration, that you are humbled sinners, or broken hearted sinners, or mortified sinners, as soon as ever temptation tells you that you are not humbled enough, you will be gone again, the bone will be out of joint again, and so you will be as a reed tossed of the wind, you will never be fastened to Christ. Whosoever holds Christ upon any qualifications on his side, must let him go one time, or other. As for instance, if he thinks the Gospel be directed to broken heartedness, and he can weep at a sermon, tomorrow his heart may be hard, and then he thinks, he is a devil that was but now a Saint. Therefore many Christians after many years Profession of Religion never felt their souls knit, till God rightly, and truly taught them this lesson, but then they were knit to Christ, and their souls were never in and out, they were never lost again, because they were able in all temptations to retreat to this truth as a refuge. For let the devil tell a man he is no Saint, the soul can say, I am a sinner; if the

devil say, thou art an hypocrite, I, but an hypocrite is but a sinner, I am a sinner still, though I be not a broken hearted sinner; so let the devil and hell say what they will, they shall never beat him from that refuge; and saith the soul being a sinner, "I am the proper object of grace and life, and salvation in the Gospel, and though I have no comfort as a Saint that I am in the Kingdom of Heaven, yet at least I have comfort that I am a sinner, and I may be there, though I have no comfort that I am in, yet I have comfort that I am near, and the door is open; though I be not a Saint, I am a sinner, and if I have no real interest in Christ as a Saint, yet I have interest in the promises of Christ as a sinner; and though I cannot serve God cheerfully as a Saint, yet I will serve God as comfortably as I can, as one that may be a Saint. In Matthew 13, it is said of the merchant man seeking goodly pearls, that "when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it," Matt.13:46, he rejoiced. I remember a worthy man of this country saying that he rejoiced not that he had found the pearl, the treasure, but he rejoiced that he was come near such an immense treasure, for he was come to the field where it was; so though I be not assured that I am a Saint, yet a sinner may rightly receive this truth with joy as a sinner, because he is near Christ.

This is the reason that you have so many Professors that know not the first principles of religion of which this is the greatest. They will never do anything for God but when they are assured of their salvation, if there be the least doubt that the

work of grace is not right, they mope, and will do nothing for God, but vex, and fret, and tug, and when their qualifications are gone that they built upon, then they think they are hypocrites, and damned creatures, and God shall have no service from them. When other people, it may be, have not full assurance that they are Saints, not one day of three in the whole year, yet there is a current, and stream of obedience, and love, and delight in God in some measure, and they go on constantly, though not so strongly, doing and suffering his holy will, why? Because they have learned the Gospel aright, they obey God in the notion of sinners. Saith the soul, "I see a great deal of love in God to poor sinners, and the Gospel contains nothing but glad tidings to sinners, and though I have nothing in me that may make me a child of Christ, yet the way is open, therefore I will go on with the work, let him do what he will." Thus the soul is knit to Christ that come what will, it will never be beaten off from Christ. I never knew my own soul knit to Christ till God had taught me this, but it was off, and on, as a bone in and out, a Saint today, and a Hypocrite tomorrow; to call God Father today, and enemy tomorrow. The Gospel is directed to a sinner, not as this, or that sinner, but as a sinner; there is the object of salvation. This makes a Saint, I say go with constancy, if I cannot go to Christ as a saint, yet I can as a sinner; so he hath something that keeps him that he is not as many Professors, that are ready to kill, and hang, and drown themselves, because they see the Gospel is made to Saints, and they see

they are not Saints, then they are in a worse condition than sinners. Learn this you that are professors of Religion, that are in and out, that have spent ten, or twenty, or thirty years, and your souls are not knit to Christ, beg of the Lord to teach you this lesson.

The next lesson that I would teach you from the Lord is, that this being so, that in the administration of the New Testament, or the Ministry of the Gospel, there is nothing but glad tidings, no object but what is amiable and good; then all you that have received Jesus Christ, let me exhort you to this, labour to get up in you a perfect spirit of adoption. My meaning is this, you know there is a spirit of adoption, and a spirit of bondage, the spirit of adoption is a frame of heart, a temper of spirit like that of a child to his father. And you know it is ordinary with the Saints, that they have a little adoption, they can cry Abba father, a little, and low, and at sometimes, but there is a great deal of the spirit of bondage mingled with it, there are sometimes fears, secret whisperings in the heart, no, thou art not right, Christ is not in thee; if he were, it is impossible thou shouldest be so weak, and so easily overcome, and there will be some flaw in the heart, and soakings in of guilt, that will eat out a man's peace, that sometimes he shall call God Father, and another while he will look strangely upon God, and be afraid to come to God, and be loath to go upon his knees before him, and be glad when he is got out of his presence; there is a spirit of bondage mingled with the spirit of adoption.

Now in the New Testament we should labour for a full spirit of adoption. What is that? That is, that there may be nothing in my heart towards God, but pure love, because in his dealings to me there is not a syllable but love, and grace, and glad tidings to me, and my heart and life should be answerable. For the reason of all the horror that you find in your hearts, and all your fears and troubles that arise there, they are from this error in your minds, this opinion that is not quite rooted out, that there is in the Gospel administration some ill, and bad tidings, there is some love, and some hatred; some mercy, and some wrath; you think that it may be God is your Father, and it may be he is your enemy, and that because you have sinned he will damn you to hell. This is natural, and ordinary. Now if you were convinced that there is no wrath in the Gospel since our Lord Jesus is gone to heaven, and is at the right hand of his Father, there is nothing in his dispensation but love, and mercy, and no wrath, hell, and damnation, and sin, &c., are all thrown away, and if I be perfectly righteous, and perfectly justified from all my sins; if I have the spirit of Christ given me, and am one with God forever, by an Everlasting Covenant perfectly ordered in all things and sure, II Sam.23:5, and shall have life and a crown of glory forever, and my sins shall not be laid to my charge; O, what a clear and sweet spirit should I have in God's service! And not a muddy, and dogged, and froward spirit that ariseth from guilt soaking into the soul. When I view this truth over, and pull it by piecemeal, and see that there is

no gall, nothing in the Gospel, first, or last, but what is amiable, and beautiful, and blessed news to sinners; then there should follow this consideration. Why should there be anything in my heart, and spirit towards God, but amiable thoughts, and love, &c? Why should there be any of those cores of unbelief, and distrust, and fear, and horror? Those mixtures of adoption and bondage? Why should there be hellish fears or guilt in me, since there is no wrath, nor anger at all in God? Why should not the carriage of my heart be clear towards him, as his is in his Son, by the administration of the Gospel towards me?

Labour for a perfect spirit of adoption, that you may not have any of those bubblings of bondage in your spirits that now overtake you, and are twisted, and woven with that little adoption that you have. For, who is there among us to this hour, but when he comes before the Lord, and hath a little smiling in his soul to see his favour, and a little joy and delight to come at him; and yet there is some fear, and trembling, as Peter when he was on the waves, and what if God will not receive me, &c. Therefore study to keep up the spirit of adoption. It is a hard thing to keep up the temper of a child in the soul, especially, when God lets a man fall into temptations, and folly, and weakness, &c., but though it be hard labour to keep up that temper, at least thus much, that thou never come to so low a condition {which was the prayer of one that was a good man} wherein you cannot not with a full mouth, and with a clear heart call God your Father,

and thee his child, though the unhappiest and unworthiest child. If thou come below this, if thou call on God with fear, and canst not cry Abba, Abba, that is as much as papa, papa, as our babes do say, if thou do not come so high, thou art spoiled, and undone, desire God to teach you this lesson also.

Thirdly, if this be so that the Ministry of the Gospel is all glad tidings to the worst of sinners; then I appeal to you all, and let every man put his hand upon his own breast, and if this be a truth {as I hope it hath been cleared} you shall all be your own judges; how just will the damnation of that sinner be that will not receive the Gospel. If there were in the Gospel ridged tidings, sad news, {as people are apt to fancy to themselves,} then it were no wonder if one persecuted it, and another despised it, and another neglected it, and another turned it into wantonness, but when it comes in such a stream that there is nothing but love, and light, and salvation, and grace, and all freely laid down at the feet of a sinner for his receiving; nay, he shall have power, and grace to receive it, he shall have salvation, and a vessel to carry it in; judge how justly thy damnation will be in the last day, man, or woman, whosoever thou art that settest thy self against the Gospel, and wilt not receive salvation.

This is the reason why damnation comes out so rife in the New Testament, it is scarce ever mentioned in the Old Testament. That I know of damnation is not mentioned in the Old Testament, nor hell, but as it is taken for the grave, &c. But when Grace, and the Gospel, and Life comes,

damnation comes at the heels of it. How can ye escape the damnation of hell? Then comes the worm that never dieth, and the fire that never goeth out. The reason is, because then damnation is proper; then when a man will not receive salvation, not because he cannot, for no man is damned because he cannot receive Christ, but because he will not receive this salvation and grace. Therefore, saith Christ, Matthew 28, "go preach the Gospel, he that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." That is, saith that godly Dr. Preston, "go tell every wicked man this good news, that Christ hath brought salvation." But it may be they will not believe what we say to them, there is no more in the long and short, but in a word tell them they shall be damned. That is the reason in Matthew 22, where the Ministry of the Gospel is compared to a feast of dainties, and one slighteth it, and another despiseth it, and another rejecteth it; and when the Master of the feast came it is said that he found one without a wedding garment, and that the man was speechless, Matt.22:12, "he was as a man," saith Beza, "with a halter about his neck," saith he, go and "bind him hand, and foot, and cast him into utter darkness, there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." He was speechless, he had nothing to say; and truly, I have had more experience lately of this truth than ever I had in my life. I saw a man that was accounted all his life a professed atheist, and I was with him in the room when one in the company opened the Gospel from one end to the other {as I have endeavoured in my

poor ability to do now} and all the riches, and the salvation of it, how free it is, how there is no wrath, nor anything but what is amiable; saith the man when he had done, judge ye, will ye not think it just if ye be damned, if ye will not receive, and obey this? Saith he it is so, I deserve to be damned without mercy. Consider this, you will say so too, you will be made to confess how just your damnation will be for refusing it. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." Heb.2:3. If there were anything in all this that were harsh, and cruel, and rough, and ridged it were somewhat, but when God hath cast the Gospel into such a mold and way that everything smiles, and all is roses, and yet a wretch shall go and persecute it, and slight it, and neglect, and despise it, I leave such a man, let him judge himself at the last day worthy of damnation, for he shall have judgment without mercy, that rejecteth this mercy; when men have this mercy without mixture of judgment, it is fit that those men should have pure judgment without mixture of mercy.

This is the reason that the Lord laughs at men's destruction. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call

upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me, for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD. They would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.” Prov.1:24-31. Now we must understand that God doth not laugh at any man’s destruction, as a transgressor of the Law, for he hath cast himself into a necessity of sinning, and hath damned himself, and he cannot help it. And God will not laugh at the destruction of the Gentiles, and heathens that have not heard of the Gospel, but when God comes by his Ministers, and opens, and unbolts all the mysteries of the Gospel to people, and hath laid all before them clearly, yet then for people to love darkness rather than light, and to continue drunkards and whoremongers, and swearers, and villains, and jeerers of God’s people, and laugh at his Ordinances, this makes the Lord laugh at their destruction. I beseech you therefore, all you that yet never received the Gospel of Jesus Christ, consider what I have said.

In the fourth place, if the Gospel, and the Ministry of it be good tidings, and glad news to the worst of sinners; then Beloved, you should methinks embrace with all affection the true and sincere Ministers of this Gospel, these Messengers that bring you these glad tidings. We are, {as the Apostle saith,} “the offscouring of the world,” a spectacle to men, and angels. I Cor.4:13. Truly, there are no Ministers in the world that are more persecuted, and

hated, and despised, than the humble, sincere Ministers of the New Testament of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, nor ever were. This is a sore, and a strange thing, if we did bring one word that were sad, and grievous, and harsh to you, it were no wonder, but if all that we speak be the voice of the dove, which language is all sweet, should it not meet with an eager embrace? Come to the Gospel Ministry, if there come a poor man full of sadness, the Ministry of the Gospel speaks a word of comfort to him, if he be in darkness, and he knows not which way to go, waiting on a Gospel Ministry there is light to find his way. If he be in fear, and know not his estate what he is, a Gospel Ministry will give him assurance of God's love; so it brings glad tidings to some souls every hour. "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 brokenhearted, 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, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified." Isa.61:1-3.

Is not this then madness in men that of all creatures in the world they hate that man, and those messengers that bring these blessed glad tidings. There is a Prophesy in Isaiah, "how beautiful upon

the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth!" Isa.52:7. How beautiful are their feet, and much more their lips? You do not in this as you do in natural things, if a man come, and bring glad tidings of taking of such a town, or of such a victory, though it may be there is loss, and little good in it, we all welcome it, and he is rewarded presently, and hath all ways of encouragement, and yet when people shall come, and by the Spirit of God make known all the love of God in Jesus Christ, and all the riches of the Gospel in Jesus Christ, that your hearts should so rise against it, that you should receive and entertain so many prejudices against it, it is a strange and wondrous thing. Therefore you should do well methinks, as you read in the book of God, II Sam.18:27, of two men that did bring tidings to David of the wars, and the watchman said, "me thinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, he is a good man, and cometh with good tidings." He would have the watchman open the gate quickly; why, because he was a good man, and did bring good tidings. So we should, especially if men be good, and holy, and humble, and feel the power of that they speak, and express it in their lives, say as David, that is a good man, and bringeth good tidings; he will teach me if I be ignorant, he will comfort me if I be sad, he will direct me if I have lost my way; he will build me up if I thrive not in grace.

The consideration of this truth methinks should banish all those strange thoughts and prejudices that we have against the Ministers of the Gospel.

In the fifth place another lesson is this, if the Gospel be such good news, such glad tidings, then you should hearken much after it, and inquire much into it. We all {you know} are naturally greedy to hear news, and we know how much time is spent {here in the city especially} in reading Diurnalls, inquiring after tidings, and how much money is cast away that way. We should do so much more about these glorious tidings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not enough to hear a sermon, or to read a chapter once, or twice a day, as it is the manner of some, that will not bring us to know the mysteries of the Gospel, but we must search the Scripture, and compare spiritual things with spiritual things. As in earthly tidings, if a man tell of such a victory one way, and another after him another way, and a third a third way, you compare what they say, and their letters, and news, to find out the truth. So you should be earnest in seeking God, and begging his Spirit, compare Scriptures together, see what the Scripture saith in such a place, and how in another place, and this is the way to find out the mystery of the Gospel.

These tidings are great, therefore inquire into them, and they are true tidings, they are not fables, and tidings of common concernment to every Saint. Therefore let this be the use that thou and I should make of it, to desire the Lord to lead us into the depth of those mysteries, and to set ourselves to

study it more, and more; for the further we go the more we shall find, as in a mine. It is not as in your news, many times you have a great deal of good news, and in a day, or two it vanisheth to nothing; but here you shall find, first the field, and then the pearl. Professors are grown careless, they were wont to read chapters morning, and evening, that was ordinary, but thou must do more if thou wilt understand the mysteries of the Gospel, compare one chapter, and one Scripture with another, search the Scriptures, and go to God to open the meaning of it. "And they said one to another, did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures." Luke 24:32.

Sixthly, spread these glad tidings as much as you can to others. You know when people receive good news they run and tell it to others. The poor shepherds, Luke 2, when they heard the news of the Messiah, they left their sheep, and ran to the town to tell it. So, when Christ was risen, Mary runs to tell the news to the disciples. Beloved, when we understand this good news we should endeavour to spread it. People buy Diurnalls for their friends, and fold them in their Letters, and send them about the Kingdom; let us do so with these spiritual tidings, that we may send them forth. O, I would to God that we did see how the poor countries in the North and West of England, in many places, in Towns and Villages, have not so much as a service-book, not so much as reading. If God settle and compose these times, the Lord give you hearts to join together to

find out a course, to send the Ministers of the Gospel to bring the glad tidings to poor people, that lie in the mountains of darkness, and in the shadow of death.

And let us not be so curious or scrupulous, as to hinder people that they should not preach the Gospel. Suppose people have no degrees in the University, or it may be, have not the knowledge of the tongues, {though that were to be wished,} let us not pick quarrels with them to stop their mouths, and to hinder the preaching of the Gospel. And let us not think so hardly in these days, of those men that God hath raised to preach the Gospel. It is strange you shall have your pulpits ring, calling them tub-preachers, and tinkers, and cobblers. We should think better of them, why? They are filled with good news, and they go and tell it to others. We do so usually in other things, when we have good news, we run to our friends, and neighbors, and comrades, and make it known.

This is an age wherein God comes and fills his people with the glorious light of the Gospel, and poor wretches cannot choose but speak what they have seen, and heard; therefore be not so critical and furious. "The Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" Amos 3:8. When God fills the souls of people with the knowledge of Christ; who can keep it in? It is as the new wine spoken of in Luke, it cannot be kept in. Luke 5:37. And surely the time is coming that young men shall see visions, and old men shall dream dreams, and God will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh, and they shall prophesy; it is

prophesied in Joel, and this is to be made good in the New Testament. And therefore if we see that the Lord fills young men, or tradesmen, &c., and gives them hearts to go, and tell the good news to others; why should you be so extremely troubled, and spend your spirits in rage at it?

I seldom tell stories, but let me tell you this one thing; since I have been from you of late, I have observed and seen, in the mountains of Wales, the most glorious work that ever I saw in England, unless it were in London. The Gospel is run over the mountains between Brecknockshire and Monmouthshire, as the fire in the thatch; and who should do this? They have no Ministers, but some of the wisest say, there are about 800 godly people, and they go from one to another. They have no Ministers, it is true, if they had, they would honour them, and bless God for them; and shall we rail at such, and say they are non-preachers, because they were never at the University? Let us fall down, and honour God; for what if God will honour himself that way? They are filled with good news, and they tell it to others; and therefore vex not at them, and say, O, what times are these! And what will become of us? Why, what is the business? O, such a man he was never Master of Arts, he was never at the University, and he takes upon him to preach; when it may be he hath more of God in him than I, and a hundred that have all this.

Only take two cautions. First, I speak not to disparage learning, or learned men, for it were to be wished that there were more godly and learned men

also in England and Wales. Secondly, take this caution, that because God fills many with the Gospel, and they do a great deal of good, take heed least any of you run before you be sent, that is, that a man go not rashly; and believe his own judgment rather than the judgment of the saints; as divers in this City who think they are fit to preach, and other people of God that are better able to judge of their gifts think not so, and yet they will run presently. Take heed of pride, and rashness, but if God fill a man with the tidings of the Gospel, and others of the people of God see it spark out as a vessel full of new wine, who am I that I should resist, if with humility he make known these glorious tidings to others?

If the Gospel be such a thing {as I desire you to spend some thoughts in considering of this truth} then this should comfort us, and help our patience a little in these troublesome times; that though all seem out of order, and we suffer such losses, yet blessed be God we have the voice of the turtledove still in the Land; thou mayest say, though I have hard news at home; trading is low, and my stock is small, yet blessed be God I have the Gospel, that is, I have abundance of glad tidings made known to my ears, and to my soul every day. This is some comfort, you have less of outward things, but more of inward {I suppose} than ever before.

Another thing is this, if this be so, then it is a caution that is necessary to be observed by us that are Ministers, they must take heed of two things. First, take heed of corrupting, and adulterating this blessed Gospel, and glad tidings with their own

wisdom, it is glorious enough of itself, and every addition of human wisdom makes it worse; take heed of sophisticating the word of God, of playing the hucksters, as the Apostle saith, "we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God, but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." II Cor.2:17. We are not those that play the hucksters, hucksters mingle apples and pears, they mingle their commodities, take heed of that.

And then take heed of mingling the Law and the Gospel together. It is true the Law is necessary, and is affixed to the Gospel; but God intends not in the New Testament that it should be mixed and mingled with the Gospel. As to instance in a few, many ministers undue the souls of people, I know this by experience that a Gospel heart that is but weak in Gospel light and grace, had rather lie a year in a closed prison than to be a year under a legal ministry, jumbling old and new together, the Law and the Gospel, for it routs and unsounds a poor soul. As to preach terror and damnation to a sinner, properly as a sinner; though we be called ministers of the Gospel, yet this is a part of the ministry of the Law, for the Law brings curses for a sinner, and blessings for him that doth well. Now when we as a sinner damn him, and curse him, we harden him, and make him run further from God than before.

Secondly, when men have drawn men to good, or driven men from evil with judgments, either spiritual, or temporal, this was the way of the ministry of the Old Testament. When people shall take all the judgments of the Old Testament, and

persuade a man to do this or to take heed of that, or else thou shalt have judgment fall upon thee, and thou wilt bring judgment upon the Land. Beloved, this was the way of God certainly and the way of the ministry of the Old Testament, but I never knew a saint avoid evil, or do good for fear of such judgments. Therefore look to thy own experience; men may play at dice with the word of God that way; if a man's ways like them not, they may say they will bring judgment upon the Land, as Independents, or as such, and such men; but these are but bugbears, why? Because in the Gospel, the saints are delivered from the hands of their enemies that they may serve God without fear, Luke 1:74, they know that in God there is no cloud, God may chasten, and correct them out of love but there is no danger otherwise. And then again they are delivered from men, they are not the servants of men.

I do think for my part constantly, that the main cause of all the divisions, and stirs, and contentions among us is because there's so much of the Old Testament in our ministry especially, and our profession must be accordingly; for our strength will be according to our meat. And truly a man may be a godly man, and yet may be a minister of the Old Testament; and if you take a man, let him be a godly man, if his grace be bred in him by the ministry of the Old Testament, and nourished in him by that, and take another saint that hath grace planted, and bred by the ministry of the Gospel, and nourished by that, the former man though he be godly, must of necessity persecute the latter. I pity them when

ministers rail against this man, and against that, and they know not why, yet they may be godly men. Ishmael might be a godly man for ought I know; he was a type, not of wicked men, but of men under the Old Covenant. If ever you will have peace and comfort in the Land, beg of God to remove an Old Testament spirit from our preachers, from our prayers, and our principals, and to set up the New Testament, Jesus Christ in the Gospel, and then certainly the promise shall be fulfilled, we shall be all of one heart and one way, and one mind, but it will never be otherwise as long as some reach to the ministry of the New Testament and others go in the Old, as Ishmael and Isaac could not be reconciled, no more will these.

I will conclude all with this last word, seeing it is clear out of the word, {and so truly I hope you apprehend it through God's grace,} that the whole Gospel is good, it is nothing but sweet and glad tidings to the worst of sinners, much more to saints; then I exhort you in the name of Jesus Christ that you receive this Gospel. O, there is no reason why thou shouldest be so shy of Christ when we speak fair, and offer fair to your souls, and beseech you earnestly, and give you reasons why you should receive Christ. You harken but a little, and you go away so shy, there are some sinners still; beloved there is no reason for it, God deals plainly; there is no particles of fury in the Gospel, but it is certainly good and glad tidings to the worst of sinners. Therefore receive it. What is that? Endeavour to believe it, for the Lord Jesus that is the faithful

witness hath said it, and children heretofore used to say, it is as true as Gospel; and though it be Gospel, and truth yet you will not believe it.

Then endeavour to embrace it with joy and affection, as those in Thessalonica, for see how they received the Gospel, "knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." I Thes.1:4-6. What if it bring a little affliction with it, that thou be jeered; receive it with joy, it is joyful, and glad tidings. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." Matt.5:11.

And then resign thyself, give thyself wholly up to walk according to this blessed Gospel, and not to turn it into wantonness, or abuse it, but that thou mayest give thyself, body and soul as a living sacrifice to Jesus Christ, that since he died for thee, and hath given thee abundant righteousness, and everlasting salvation, and all blessed, and glad tidings in it, that thou mayest give thyself, and all that thou hast, and art freely to live to that Jesus Christ, and to obey his blessed commands. These are the uses that you and I should endeavour to make, that this truth may remain, and abide with us, that there is nothing in the whole ministry of the

New Testament but good tidings, and glad news to the worst of sinners.

FINIS.