

THE JOYFULNESS OF THE GOSPEL.

The Gospel is not a message of gloom, says the author of "Blind Bartimeus," a thing to be whispered in darkness as a dreadful secret. We dishonour the Gospel when we would recommend it by a melancholy visage. We have not entered into its spirit, if, when we would press its claims upon a friend, we go stealthily aside, and hang our heads, and use a lugubrious speech, and seem like doleful culprits at the confessional, instead of free citizens of the kingdom, rejoicing in our coming inheritance of inconceivable glory. When the hypocrites in Isaiah's time would keep a fast, they bowed their heads as a bulrush, and spread sackcloth and ashes under them. And, in Christ's day, they were of a sad countenance, and disfigured their faces; but Christ rebuked this, and required His disciples rather to wash their faces, and anoint their heads, that, even in keeping a fast, they might lack none of the usual tokens of cheerfulness.

O, the Gospel is joyful! It found the race cowering in despair by the forbidden tree, under the threatened vengeance of Jehovah; and it will not leave them, till the last of the ransomed seed are exulting in eternal song before their Father's throne. When it first visited our world, the earth was groaning and travailing in the bondage of corruption. But the Redeemer shall one day break these chains, and introduce the burdened creation into the glorious liberty of the children of God. It is already waiting for their manifestation, and leaning forward in eager hope of its own deliverance.

The Gospel gloomy! It is an anthem from the harps of heaven, the music of the river of life washing its shores on high, and pouring in cascades upon the earth. Not so cheerful was the song of the morning stars, nor the shout of the sons of God so joyful. Gushing from the fountains of eternal harmony, it was first heard on earth in a low tone of solemn gladness, uttered in Eden, by the Lord God himself. This gave the keynote of the Gospel song. Patriarchs caught it up, and taught it to the generations following. It breathed from the harp of Psalmists, and rang like a clarion from tower and mountain-top, as Prophets proclaimed the year of jubilee. Fresh notes from heaven have enriched the harmony as the Lord of hosts, and his angels have revealed new promises, and called on the suffering children of Zion to be joyful in their King. From bondage and exile, from dens and caves, from bloody fields and fiery stakes, and peaceful death-beds have they answered, in tones which have cheered the desolate, and made oppressors shake upon the thrones; while sun and moon, and all the stars of light, stormy wind fulfilling His word, the roaring sea and the fulness thereof, mountains and hills, fruitful fields and all the trees of the wood have rejoiced before the Lord, and the coming of His anointed, for the redemption of His people and the glory of His holy name.

The Gospel gloomy! If the best right, and the only right, to be glad on earth, with the assured prospect of eternal blessedness in heaven; if songs in the night, and stars of promise; if the light of morning with its fragrant breath and singing birds; if health for the sick, return for the banished, pardon for the doomed, and life for the dying; if love, joy, peace, hope; if harp and crown and waving palm, and the everlasting vision of the Redeemer's glory, be gloomy, then is the Gospel gloomy.