

**A SERMON, DELIVERED IN
BOSTON, ON THE ANNIVERSARY
OF THE AMERICAN EDUCATION
SOCIETY, OCTOBER 4, 1820**

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A Sermon, Delivered in Boston, on the Anniversary of the American Education Society, October 4, 1820 by Ebenezer Porter

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SERMON,

DELIVERED IN BOSTON,

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE

AMERICAN

EDUCATION SOCIETY

OCTOBER 4, 1820.

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SERMON.

MARK XVI. 15.

AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD, AND PREACH
THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE.

THE original command of our Lord to these same preachers was ; “ Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not : but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

The reasons for this restriction have now ceased : the command is, “ Go ye into all the world :” the preaching of the gospel must not be confined by territorial limits. The opportunity to hear, and the obligation to obey its calls, must be extended to men of every nation and condition.

But on *whom* does this command to evangelize the world, this command so explicit, so intelligible, so authoritative, on whom does it fix its claims ? In the first instance, certainly it was addressed to the Apostles ; but, as certainly, the requisition of the risen Saviour was

not *limited* to them: for that these eleven men should personally preach the gospel to every human being, or even to every nation, was manifestly impossible. That their successors in the ministry, and indeed, the future church collectively, were also included in the injunction of the text, is perfectly evident from the promise which follows, according to Matthew, "Lo I am with you, not to the close of *your* life, but *always*, even to the *end of the world*." These men were addressed as pioneers of the Christian cause. Their ministrations, including their public discourses, and especially their *writings*, were designed to be the pattern of preaching, and the standard, of faith, in all subsequent ages. Through them, the divine, omnipresent Saviour, promises to be *with all* his faithful servants; and by his protecting providence, and sanctifying Spirit, to guide and prosper their efforts, in the great work of converting the world to himself. We are prepared then to inquire;—Why the *Gospel* should be published, as the appropriate instrument of accomplishing this work?—Why it should be published, to *every creature*?—And by *what means* it is to be published?

FIRST, Why is the *Gospel* to be published?

The short reason is, that it reveals the only remedy for the maladies of a ruined world. Is it necessary that man should know the character and laws of his Creator, before he can love and serve him in a proper manner? Where and how is he to gain this all important knowledge? From the exercise of unassisted reason? The

heavens indeed "declare the glory of God, and the firmament his handy work;" but in vain do these rolling orbs shine around him whose moral vision is extinguished by sin. The "light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not."

Shall he go to the temples of paganism, and ask, *what is God?* A block, a reptile, or perhaps the image of some fabled sage or hero, once a monster of depravity, is presented to him as an object of divine honor and adoration; while the deity, the priest, and the worshipper;—the altar and the incense, are distinguished by the same character of impurity and pollution. But let him come to the Gospel for instruction, and here he learns that, "God is a spirit;" a holy, unchanging, eternal Spirit;—"and they that worship him must worship him, in spirit and in truth."

Does fallen man need to be taught the obligations of duty, which bind him to his Maker, and his fellow men? Whence shall he derive this instruction? The code of Zoroaster, indeed, taught the Persians many valuable precepts, borrowed from the sacred books of Moses, and mingled with his own absurd inventions. But the Persians were notwithstanding, and still are, a selfish, base, and faithless people. The Eleusinian mysteries, and the Sibylline oracles, adapted as they were, by the show of religious rites, to impose upon popular credulity, tended in no measure to purity of morals, but altogether to impiety and profligacy. And what did the ethics of Aristotle and Epictetus accomplish, in coun-

tries distinguished above all others, by genius and refinement in arts? They did nothing worthy to be named, in stemming the current of malevolent passions, and the general corruption of manners. Facts illustrating the same principle meet the eye, wherever it turns on the Pagan world. The modern Asiatics, as you know, are addicted to inhumanity, perfidy, and abandoned licentiousness. Their *religious ceremonies* are horribly obscene and bloody; such as "it were pollution to describe," in a Christian assembly.

The best systems of morals framed by men are vitally defective, in their influence on human conduct. They aim only at restraint and mitigation of evil propensities, and that by motives adapted to cherish the evil principles from which they spring. But the Gospel aims to *exterminate* these principles. It aims to renovate and sanctify; to produce good *morals*, by producing good *men*, and making every action stand in immediate relation to a perfect law, and an eternal retribution.

Still more, when we take into view the immortal destination of fallen man, and ask, does he need a Saviour?—the infinite importance of the Gospel appears as the adequate, and the only remedy adapted to his case. Where else can he find the revelation of such a Saviour as he needs? Ancient sages and oracles are silent here. The schools of philosophy never struck out one ray of light, to twinkle on the darkness that lies beyond the grave. But in the blood of Christ forgiveness and salvation are proclaimed to guilty men. His cross, while

it exhibits the divine perfections in a blaze of glory, is the radiant point from which hope beams on a dying world.

The Gospel then should be published to men, as their *only* guide to duty and salvation. This prepares the way for a brief reply to our

SECOND enquiry, why should it be published to *every creature* ?

All are ruined. I cannot dwell on the proof of this point. Show me the man that is not a sinner, and I admit that he does not need the restraints, the instruction, and the salvation which the Gospel has provided. But shall we acknowledge that every human being shares in the moral ruin of the apostacy, that he is destined to an eternal existence, that he can be ransomed only by the blood of atonement; and yet can we doubt whether he needs to be made acquainted with the Gospel? Surely the consistent Christian, wherever he is, must desire that a knowledge of the only Saviour may be extended to every one of his fellow men; and to produce this result, no practicable efforts on his part will be wanting. Is the Hottentot immortal? Is he the certain heir of happiness or misery hereafter? Is his only chance for heaven suspended on an interest in the blessings of the Gospel? And is it possible that you may be instrumental of sending him the Gospel? Decide these points, and there is no room to hesitate as to your own duty. It must not be said that an immortal being, the object of your Christian benevolence, shall perish be-