

Amos VI.1

Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.

~~We are told by a certain writer that profession not principles, or the name of a Christian is not Christianity.~~ There is no condition more dangerous to the souls of men, than to be in the Church of God without the enjoyment of religion. It is a fearful thing to be in a state of carnal security under any circumstances, but [? ?] awful to flatter ourselves with the hope of heaven [?] our affections are fixed upon the ~~thing~~ pleasures [???????? (the whole last line was cut off in the copy)]

places; and occasionally reflect upon their [?daiy] these who are at ease in Zion are slumbering upon ~~an earthquake~~ the brink of ruin, quietly asleep in the arms of their delusion, stupified by the opiates, of sin, wrapped in a veil so thick that the arrows of divine truth fall powerless at their feet until the ~~Holy~~ insulted Spirit of God returns with the ~~awful~~ message, "Ephraim is joined to his idols let him alone"- Let him sin without check or remorse- let him pace the giddy round of dissipation- let him fill up the measure of his iniquity- believe a lie and go down to the pit.

~~I am afraid that our discourse on this occasion but be thought unpopular, and ascribed to this something else their sincere desire to benefit the souls of the people.~~ The wholesome truths of the gospel are in this age of the world are in danger of being divided, and the preacher who declares the whole Counsel of God is in danger of being considered indiscreet and unwise. But woe to those prophets who ~~prophecy~~ smooth their tongues, and prophecy lies- Woe to the Shepherds of Israel that feed themselves and not the flock; be hold I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall [This whole line is missing]

[?] faithful preaching is [?][?] to generally unwelcome to carnal profession of religion ?dence our Lord's discourses while upon earth were ~~the most unpopular~~ dispised by a large portion of the Jewish Church- When he preached in the [?] in Nazareth exposed the errors of their ~~religion~~ conduct, and the corruptions of their hearts, the self-righteous Pharisees were filled with wrath, and ?se up in the synagogue, and laid hold of the Saviour, and led him to the [?] of a hill that they might cast him down headlong

3) And if the Saviour were to come into the world again under similar circumstances, and travel through the country preaching his own gospel- clothed in mean apparel- followed by a multitude of poor people- raising his voice against the follies of the world, and the corruptions of the Church; ~~many of those who profess to be his disciples would be ashamed of this appearance and shrink from his presence~~ he would hardly meet with more success than he did before- many would be ashamed of his appearance, ashamed of his people, and offended with his preaching. If this be true, we ought to examine our hearts [????????? Next line is cut off/illegible]

-ger of being deceived on the subject of religion- It is very possible for us to be in the Church; While our hearts are devoid of every grace of the Holy Spirit. Let us then endeavor to be honest with ourselves on

this occasion, and prove our hearts by the standard of eternal truth, for God has said “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.”

4) We shall call your attention in the,

I. Place to the character specified in our [?] “Those that are at ease in Zion” These words were addressed to the autient Israelites who were self-confident unconcerned and at ease, while they were in the midst of astounding wickedness, and exposed to the judgments of Almighty God- the words of the text may be applied with equal propriety, to careless and worldly minded profession of religion in every age of the world & under every dispensation of divine grace. By the term Zion in our text we are to understand the Church of God- It was originally the name of a hill near Jerusalem, on which David built the tabernacle for the ark of the Lord- It is sometimes called the Holy hill, and sometimes Jerusalem, but under the gospel dispensation it represents the Church of Christ as composed of all the various denominations, who lived the faith which was once delivered to the saints & worship God in Spirit and in truth.

We are not to conclude from the words of our text, that there is no happiness in the service of God. The truly pious sons and daughters of Zion are not destitute of peace and real enjoyment- The people of God shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places However arduous and humiliating the great work of religion may seem to be in the eyes of the ungodly, we are assured that it is a source of pleasure and delight to the sincere and devoted followers of Christ- David said ~~declared~~ that he had rather be a door keeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. The exercises of religion carry along with them a part of their reward- “For the law of the Lord says he is perfect con? The soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right rejoicing the heart; the commandments of the Lord are pure enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold, and in keeping of them there is great reward- Happiness here and salvation in the world to come- Such is the testimony of those who have been born of the Christ & are diligently preaching the precepts of the Bible.

But the woe mentioned in our text is denounced against persons of quite a different character – persons who love attached themselves to the Church without conversion, or since their conversion have backslidden in heart, and in this condition perfectly at ease, apprehending no danger whatever, and flattering themselves with the idea, that they are in the favor of God, and in them the way to heaven – such a condition is truly deplorable, and next to the sin against the Holy Ghost places this human and in the most fearful relation to God, this side the pit of destruction. That we may ascertain whether this be our case, we shall point out several traits of character peculiar to those who are at ease in this Church.

1. They are ignorant of the great importance of [?]ual and eternal things-they have not considered the worth of the soul-the consequences of sin- the benefits of godliness and the reward of the righteous. If a farmer should ascertain that there was a valuable gold mine upon some part of ~~some~~ his plantation and employ himself in gathering up the small particles which might be scattered upon the surface of the earth, he would be considered ignorant of the value of riches

and his conduct regarded as strange and absurd. Such is precisely the character of the lukewarm professor of religion-He has heard of the great reward which awaits the finally faithful, but when he turns to the Bible he is told without holiness no man shall see the Lord and in proportion as he becomes more holy his happiness will increase-his peace flows as a river and his righteousness as the waves of the sea-But notwithstanding the assurance of increasing enjoyment upon a faithful discharge of duty, he contents himself with a mere superficial knowledge of God, just like the man who owns the field of gold and satisfies himself with the small particles which lie scattered upon the surface of the earth---the cur[?] profession[?] He ~~keeps~~ as mere form of godliness-attends the [word torn off]

[?] partakes of the holy communion, and gives a little of his abundance to charitable purposes the people of this world regard him as honest and moral man-he feels & acknowledges his [?]ness in religion, and hopes the time will arrive when he shall become more spiritual and enjoy more of the life and power of godliness-

Such an individual we are persuaded cannot be fully awake to the paramount importance of spiritual and eternal things-He has not considered the value of his soul and the momentous consequences involved in its future and eternal destiny—

2. We remark in the [?]place, that the persons specified in our text are generally the subjects of some constitutional weakness or peculiar treatment called by Saint Paul “the sin which doth so easily beset us” —with some it may be pride-with some it may be anger —with others it may be love of riches-with others it may be the love of honor (?)- but some it may be indolence and with some it may be intemperance- Whatever may have been our weakness before we made a profession of religion is generally our besetting sin afterwards. There are many persons in the church who we become [?] Christians were it not for ~~their propensity to [spe]ak evil of their neighbors~~ the improper use which they make of their [?] — obey law [?] every other temptation, sooner than their propensity to speak evil of their neighbors- And whenever you hear a man or woman, relating the faults of other people in their absence, you may rest assured that they will speak evil of you whenever they can find an opportunity
There are others who would become pious, were it not for their love of money, but their strong attachment to the unrighteous mammon, chills their religion, [?] up their compassion against the poor, who are suffering for the comfort of life- Because they love their money they have lost the Spirit of prayer, and the spirit of benevolence- and because they love the world the love [of] the father is not in them-
There are others who would become consistent Christians were it not for the pride of their hearts, but because of this disposition, they are constantly on the stielch to keep pace with the fashions of the world. Their personal appearance is the great object of their study and attention, and to attract the eyes of the world they do not hesitate to violate a plain command of God in the wearing of gold as an outward adorning — Because of these things many are at ease in Zion- they have lost the spirit of Christ, and have not felt the love of God shed abroad in their hearts for many months- If we expect to enter in at the straight gate, we must lay aside every wright, and the sin that doth so easily beset us & run with patience the race that is set before us looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross- despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God-

3. Those who are at ease in Zion feel no concern for the prosperity of the Church, or for the Salvation of sinners- They can see their neighbors, their friends, their relatives, and the members of their own families, living in sin and travelling the road to ruin without a single admonition, and without offering a single prayer to God on their behalf- When broken hearted sinners, are enquiring what they shall do to be saved- they [feel?] no sympathy for them, and no heart to encourage them to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ- they neglect the duty of prayer- they neglect to read the Bible- they neglect to visit the sick, they neglect to examine their hearts, and the consequence is they rot their relation to God, whether they are in his favor or not- They have little or no confidence in their own religion, and were they call upon exchange worlds, their faith would fail them, and they would be left cheerless and hopeless in the gloomy hour of death-
 4. Those who are at ease in the Church, are disposed to procrastinate what they know to be their present duty- Every professor of religion perhaps in this assembly expected to have been a great deal more per?ns and devoted to the service of God, than they find themselves on the present occasion-
- Other observations might be made, but these may suffice on this part of the subject-

II. We shall notice in the second place some of the causes which serve to produce the state described in our text-

1. It may sometimes arise from the popular favor which Christianity has gained in the estimation of the irreligious- There are times when the Church becomes popular with the world, and religion walks in silver slippers- There are times when it becomes fashionable and highly honorable in the eyes of the ungodly for persons to profess religion and join the Church. In ~~seasons~~ times of such prosperity many become charmed with the great subject of salvation- nominal Christians move forward with pleasing delight in the performance of Christian duties, and many are elated at the idea, that Christianity is becoming the great Dianna by which the craftsmen live- They are ready to exclaim who would not be a Christian in these prosperous days- The narrow way is wonderfully widened; its roots are hewn to pieces; and the rushed traveller walks therein uninjured! Storms and tempests no longer assail the heaven bound mariner, but he sails on a peaceful and flowing sea many [?—] ~~religion~~ embrace the gospel under such circumstances, but their profession is frequently short feeble, and withering like Jona's gourd which shriveling Up in a night, and perished beneath a mar? [?] There is little ~~persecution~~ reproach in the ~~world church~~ [?] present age of the world connected with religion, and the consequence is the church is a great deal more honor in the estimation of the ungodly, but from such an influence the church has frequently gained nothing but carnal security, and the [?] of the world _ Where shall we find that gospel simplicity which characters the first Christians? Where shall we find that all conquering faith that slays our fallen nature , and buries our wisdom, and our greatness in the grave of oblivion? Where shall we find that strict observance of the Christian Sabbath required in the word of God? Where shall we find that benevolence and holy ardor that adorned the [character of X?] and his apostles?_ Alas! how defective for the most part is the church in the present age of the world_ How few seem to be regulating their lives by the requirements of the Bible! How few seem to be hungering and thirsting after righteousness!

How few seem to be clothed with humility! How few denying themselves taking up their cross and following the example of Christ, and how many are at ease in Zion with a name to live while they are dead to God. We do not pretend to say that the want of persecution is the cause of all this evil, neither should we seek the reproaches of the world; but we are persuaded if [?] of religion were to keep the commandments of God_ visit the abode of wretched men and [?], reprove the wicked whenever they sin in their presence, they would find that the following scripture is not without its meaning. They that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution—Hence says the Apostle Peter, “Beloved think it not strange, concerning the fiery trial which is to [?] you, as tho some strange thing had happened unto you_ If ye be reproached for the name of Christ [happy are ye?]; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.

2. Another cause of carnal security may arise from worldly prosperity _ Religion can bear anything better than affluence_ They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish & hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition_ Religion will afford comfort in the midst of persecution, in the midst of adversity, in the midst of danger, in the midst of affliction, in the midst of bereavements and misfortunes; but let riches increase, let the waves of prosperity begin to rise, and the heaven bound mariner is tossed upon a perilous ocean which threatens his destruction on every billow. Many men of talents and piety have been ruined by a change of fortune. While they possessed just enough to afford them a competency, and to prevent distressing solicitude, they have enjoyed the comfort of religion_ They have been useful members of the church active, zealous, & pious. But as soon as the full horn of plenty has been poured into their [lap?], how frequently have you seen them become lukewarm, penurious & proud_ Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Riches darken the soul, harden the heart, destroy our peace, increase our perplexities, multiply our sorrows, burden the mind, alienate our affections from God, weaken [?] faith, and set us down at ease in Zion_
3. Another cause of this evil may arise from a mistaken view of the practical duties of religion_ Thinking it an easy matter to be religious, whereas it is not a state of peace but a perpetual warfare with enemies within and without, not a state of lust but laboring for the meat which endureth unto eternal life, not a state of idleness, but working out the salvation of our souls with fear and trembling_ Idleness in religion undermines every virtue of the soul violent passions are like rapid torrents which run their course, but after overflowing their banks their [? ?] subsides; but sloth is like the slowly flowing putrid stream, which stagnate in the marsh, breed [?] animals, and poisonous plants, and infects with pestilential vapor the whole country around it. Having once tainted the soul, it leaves no part of it sound, while at the same time, it does not give those checks of conscience, which the eruption of fiercer emotions frequently occasion. Almost on every page of this Book was are exhorted to strive, to labor, to wrestle, to run, to fight with all our strength, and lay hold on eternal life_ From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven [? ? ? ?] take it by force_

III. We shall notice in the last place the influence and danger of those who are in the state which we have described_

1. They are a hinderance to all who behold their conduct_ had it not been for the bad example of professing Christians, the religion of the Bible w^d have triumphed over the whole earth long before this time. The corruptions of the church have done more to retard the progress of the gospel than all the ~~infidels~~ enemies who have written against [?]. Those who are at ease in the church, [like?] the poisonous [?] tree exerting a withering influence upon every thing around them_ They are frequently stumbling blocks in the way of others_ They will not enter into the kingdom themselves, neither will they suffer others to enter in. They are instrumental ~~of~~ in ~~carrying~~ leading their friends, [^] to the place of torment for no man we believe will perish alone in his iniquity
2. Those who are at ease in Zion are in danger of dying impenitent
3. They will loose their reward
4. In the day of judgment they will be classed [?]

5.