

Manuscript Sermon on Psalm 126:7 (BCP)¹

This is another sermon known from the longhand manuscript by CW, that Sarah Wesley Jr. found among her father's papers and delivered to Joseph Benson for publication in the 1816 collection of *Sermons by the Late Rev. Charles Wesley*.² It is the last of that set which was clearly composed by CW. The manuscript survives at the Methodist Archive and Research Centre (MA 1977/608/1).

On the cover of the manuscript CW wrote the Scripture reference and the text. He then listed the initial places where he preached the sermon:

Preached at Frederica, April 18, 1736, in the afternoon IIIId.³

At Savannah June 6, 1736, in the M[orning].

At Christ Church in Boston, N[ew] E[ngland], Oct. 10, 1736, M[orning] [[Price's]].⁴

Duke Street Chapel [Westminster], Aug. 14, 1737.

St. John's [Church, London], Aug. 28 [1737].

A later hand repeated the dates at Frederica and Savannah and added "An Excellent Discourse. — M." There is also the annotation, "Ex[amine?]d, W. P."⁵

Kenneth Newport included a transcription of the surviving manuscript (omitting the final collects written in shorthand) in his *Sermons of Charles Wesley*.⁶ The transcription which follows was prepared independently (with a few silent corrections of Newport), focussing on the final text after CW's revisions (ignoring some changes introduced by a later hand), and indicating the page transitions (in **red** font) of the original manuscript.

¹This document was produced by the Duke Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition under editorial direction of Randy L. Maddox, with the assistance of Aileen F. Maddox. Last updated: Sept. 27, 2024.

²Sermon VII, in *Sermons by the Late Rev. Charles Wesley, A.M. Student of Christ Church, Oxford. With a Memoir of the Author by the Editor* (London: Thomas Blanshard, et al., 1816), 114–24.

³The annotation "IIIId" likely is to note that this is the third time (according to his MS Journal) that CW preached on Sunday morning in Frederica.

⁴Roger Price was rector of King's Chapel in Boston. CW is clear in MS Journal that he preached the sermon at both churches this day.

⁵The identity of this person apparently assisting in the 1816 publication is unknown.

⁶Kenneth G. C. Newport, *The Sermons of Charles Wesley: A Critical Edition with Introduction and Notes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 123–29.

Psalm 126:7 (BCP)

“He that now goeth on his way weeping, and bearing forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him.”

[I.1.] Experience shows us that even they who are Christians indeed, who serve God with all their strength, may go on their way weeping perhaps for many years, perhaps to the end of their lives. They are followers of him who was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.² And if any man will come after him, he must deny himself, and take up his cross.³ He must suffer with his master more or less; being, like him, to be made perfect through sufferings.⁴

2. Indeed for this very cause are those sufferings sent, to lead them to higher perfection. They go on their way weeping, that the good seed they bear forth may yield them the more fruit. And that good seed, even all those Christian virtues which are perfected by affliction, shall in due time grow up into a plentiful harvest of rest and joy and life eternal.

3. The certainty of this great truth is pointed out to us by the very manner wherein it is revealed. Heaven and earth may, nay they must, pass away; but not one tittle of this shall pass. As sure as God is, and as he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,⁵ so sure no one virtue of any follower of Christ shall in any wise lose its reward. Only let him bear forth this good seed unto [p. 2] the end and, though he may now go on his way weeping, he shall doubtless come again with joy and bring his sheaves with him.

[II.1.] What I intend at present is briefly to explain how every virtue is the seed of joy eternal. A great truth! Such as deserves your frequent thoughts, and deepest consideration. The time indeed will not suffer me to consider now every particular Christian virtue, but only those general graces which we can never consider enough: humility, and faith, and hope, and love. Yet this is almost the same thing, since these are the common root of all the particular virtues; none of which has any worth, nor in truth any being, unless it spring from these. It will therefore suffice to show in few words that each of these is the seed of joy. That every one of these graces, although when first sown it may be small as a grain of mustard-seed, yet as it groweth up shooteth out great branches, full of delight and blessedness.

2. This joy I therefore called eternal, because the Holy Scriptures assure us that it is the same in kind, though not in degree, with that we shall enjoy to eternity. For it should be well observed and always remembered that heaven is begun upon earth. And accordingly our Saviour often means by “the kingdom of heaven” that temper of mind which a Christian now enjoys. He begins to enjoy it when he begins to be a Christian, when Christ begins to reign in his soul. And

¹“In the name of God.”

²See Isa. 53:3.

³See Matt. 16:24, Luke 9:23.

⁴See Heb. 2:10.

⁵See Heb. 11:6.

the more absolutely he reigns there, the more happiness he [p. 3] enjoys. For as all the poor in spirit, all that believe in God, all that trust in him, all that love him, are blessed; so the greater their humility, faith, hope, and love, the greater is their blessedness. And thus as they go on from strength to strength,⁶ they go on from one measure of joy to another, till what was sown on earth be removed into a better soil, and grow up to perfection in heaven.

But before this is explained farther, it may be proper to consider an objection which almost everyone is ready to make. And this is that this doctrine, “every Christian is happy,” is contrary to experience; there being many good Christians who scarce know what joy means. I answer: 1) Is that mind which was in Christ in these they call Christians?⁷ Have they those tempers which he requires? Are they renewed in humble faith, and hope, and love? Else they are no Christians at all. And however unhappy they are, it is nothing to the present question. 2) Supposing they have some degree of these Christian tempers, have they such a degree of them as they might have? Have they so much of them as the first Christians had? Have they so much as God would give them too, if they would receive it? If not, let none wonder that a little holiness gives, if any, but a little happiness. 3) If they have a deep humility, a strong faith, [p. 4] a lively hope, and a fervent love sometimes, do they not at other times droop and so faint in their minds as to become like common men? If they do, no one can expect their joy should reach farther than the cause of it. They cannot be always happy, till they are always holy. When they are always heavenly-minded, they shall then rejoice evermore!

3. Yet it is most true, as was before observed, that till that happy hour when God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, even they who bear forth this seed of joy may go on their way weeping. They may, nay they must, endure affliction—for so did the Captain of their salvation.⁸ But it is as true that a Christian knows to rejoice, not only after but even in tribulation.⁹ As in the laughter of the wicked the heart is sorrowful,¹⁰ so in the tears of the righteous there is joy. He does not stay till his afflictions are overpassed, but in everything giveth thanks. Though he cannot but feel when he is in pain, yet in the midst of it he can “rejoice in the Lord.”¹¹

[4.] Let us now consider this great truth a little more particularly. The first of all Christian graces, and the foundation of all is humility: a deep sense of our spiritual poverty, a feeling knowledge that [p. 5] we are nothing but sin, and deserve nothing but shame. And a clear sight that we have nothing, and can do nothing—no, not so much as think a good thought. And is such a virtue as this the seed of joy? Yea, as surely as it is the seed of all other virtues. As surely as it is contrary to pride, which is the seed of all torment. No sooner does humility enter a soul, which before was all storm and tempest, but it says to that sea “Peace, be still,” and there is a great calm.¹² There is indeed in every branch of humility a sweetness which cannot be uttered. There is

⁶See Ps. 84:7.

⁷See Phil. 2:5.

⁸See Heb. 2:10.

⁹See Rom. 5:3.

¹⁰See Prov. 4:13.

¹¹See Phil. 4:4.

¹²See Mark 4:39.

pain, it is true, in the entrance into it; but that very pain is full of pleasure. There is mourning joined with it, but even that mourning is blessedness. It is health to the soul and marrow to the bones. It heals even while it wounds. It delights at the same time and in the same degree wherein it softens the heart. Humility not only removes all that pain and anguish with which pride drinks up the blood and spirits; it not only plants peace wherever it comes and brings rest to the weary soul; but joy too, and such joy as, together with it, increases more and more unto the perfect day.¹³

5. Humility cannot but lead to faith. A sight of our disease makes [p. 6] us soon fly to the cure of it. Who can feel himself sick and not long to be made whole? What contrite sinner is not glad of a saviour? And he is the more glad, the more firmly he believes that he is able and willing to save to the uttermost.¹⁴ Able to save all that believe, for he is God! And willing, for he is man. Here is joy! Joy which none can divide from faith! Joy unspeakable and full of glory!¹⁵ God, the Lord God, Jehovah, God over all, the God to whom all things are possible, hath undertaken the cause of lost man! He hath promised, he hath sworn to save them! Nay, he hath done more than this. He hath bowed the heavens and come down.¹⁶ He hath been made man! He hath lived, suffered, died to save them! Yea, tell it out in all lands! God hath died!¹⁷ He hath died to save man! Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad.¹⁸ Publish ye, praise ye, and say,¹⁹ this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith.²⁰ If we can believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.²¹ To him it is easy “to rejoice evermore!”²² Yea, he cannot but rejoice in thy strength, O Lord Christ, and be exceeding glad of thy salvation!²³

6. Now if it be so joyful a thing to believe that Christ died to save sinners, what must it be to add to our faith hope!²⁴ To be assured that he died to save us? If the knowing that a ransom is paid for [p. 7] lost man, and a new covenant of mercy given him, be the source of a peace which

¹³See Prov. 4:8.

¹⁴See Heb. 7:25.

¹⁵See 1 Pet. 1:8.

¹⁶See Ps. 144:5.

¹⁷This typical CW language is changed in a later hand (and in the 1816 publication) to: “Christ hath died.”

¹⁸See Ps. 96:11.

¹⁹See Jer. 3:7.

²⁰See 1 John 5:4.

²¹See Mark 9:23.

²²Cf. 1 Thess. 5:16.

²³See Ps. 21:1 (BCP).

²⁴Orig., throughout this paragraph, “?” It was common to use the question mark in 18th-century English to end sentences intended as exclamatory as well as interrogatory; we have used the more common modern ending in cases where CW clearly intended it as exclamatory.

passeth all understanding²⁵—yea, of joy unspeakable and full of glory²⁶—how does he rejoice, who feels within his own soul that this ransom is paid for him! Whose heart assures him that he is within that covenant, and shall find mercy even in the day of vengeance! If the belief that all who are faithful servants of their great Master have an house eternal in the heavens be a continual spring of gladness of heart,²⁷ how shall not his heart sing for joy with whom the Spirit of God bears witness that he is faithful! Who can lay hold of those great and precious promises, and lay them close to his own soul? Whose eye God hath opened to look into eternity, and to take a view of those mansions of glory, into which he knows his blessed Lord is gone before to prepare a place for him.²⁸

7. Such joy have all they that hope in God. And the stronger their hope, the greater their joy. But this is not all. For hope leads to love, and in the love of God joy is perfected. Very excellent things are spoken of the happiness that flows from loving God. But whosoever has this love shed abroad in his heart feels more than can ever be spoken.²⁹ Yea, though he spake with the tongue of men and angels, he could not utter the joy of charity.³⁰ It is the hidden manna, the inexpressible sweetness, whereof none [p. 8] can know but he that tastes it. But some little imperfect knowledge thereof may be had from what appears in outward exercises of it. Not to insist on the joy with which one that loves God shows all love to his neighbour for God's sake, how is he rejoiced whenever he has an opportunity of pouring out his heart before him! How is his soul satisfied, as it were with marrow and fatness,³¹ when his mouth praiseth him with joyful lips! How does his joy still increase when he joins with the congregation of the faithful in prayer and praise, and thanksgiving? He needeth not the exhortations of man, no nor even the *command* of God to drag him to the house of prayer. He needeth not to be assured that if he *does* forbear assembling himself with the people of God, as the manner of *most* is, he thereby breaks the communion of saints. He renounces the privileges of his baptism. He casts himself out of the congregation of faithful people. He excommunicates, or cuts himself off from the body of Christ, and that consequently Christ shall profit him nothing. No; on the contrary he is glad when they say unto him, let us go unto the house of the Lord.³² But his joy overflows all bounds when, in memory of him whom his soul loveth, he eateth the living bread which came down from heaven,³³ and drinketh of the cup of salvation.³⁴

8. Lo, thus is the man blest that feareth the Lord! That beareth forth good seed! These sheaves shall he bring home in this life, however he may now go on his way weeping! These are

²⁵See Phil. 4:7.

²⁶See 1 Pet. 1:8.

²⁷See 2 Cor. 5:1.

²⁸See John 14:3.

²⁹See Rom. 5:5.

³⁰See 1 Cor. 13:1.

³¹See Ps. 63:5.

³²See Ps. 122:1.

³³See John 6:51.

³⁴See Ps. 116:12 (BCP).

the first-fruits which he shall receive even here. But the harvest is not yet. He as yet knows and loves God only in part, therefore as yet he enjoys him in part only. But the hour is at hand when that which is perfect shall come, and that which is in part be done away.³⁵ Yet a little while and he shall come again,³⁶ with fullness of joy to reap his entire harvest. Behold, one standeth at the door who will complete what he hath begun, who shall ripen the seeds of grace into glory! And instead of that dew of heaven which now refreshes his soul, shall give him rivers of pleasure forevermore! [p. 9]

[[Grant we beseech thee Almighty God that the words which we have heard this day with outward ears may through thy grace be so grafted inwardly in our hearts that they may bring forth in us the fruit for good living to the honour and praise of thy holy name through Jesus Christ our Lord.]]³⁷

[[The peace of God which passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be amongst you and remain with you always.]]³⁸

Source: Methodist Archive and Research Centre, MA 1977/608/1.

³⁵See 1 Cor. 13:10.

³⁶See Heb. 10:37.

³⁷BCP, Collect following Communion and Offertory.

³⁸BCP, Blessing concluding Communion.