

tion, or accomplishment in heaven, when the man is so sanctified as to serve God perfectly, and work perfectly good works. Wherefore, invert not the order of God's covenant, in seeking deliverance by your works. But make use of God's covenant, and the covenant daily, for the deliverance, that you may be holy, and may perform good works.

USE 2. They in whom the spirit of legalism, hypocrisy, and apostasy reigns, have no part nor lot in this matter.

*Lastly,* As ever you would evidence yourselves God's covenant people, partakers of this deliverance, serve no more the devil, and your own lusts. But serve the Lord as his children, universally, and constantly, "without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of your life." Amen.

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*Ettrick, Sabbath Afternoon.*

THE LEADING PRIVILEGE OF THEM THAT KNOW THE JOYFUL SOUND.

SERMON. V.

PSALM lxxxix. 15,

*They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.*

HERE begins the account of the happiness of those that know the joyful sound of the gospel. They have many special privileges, and this is the leading one, "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance."

Here is first their motion at the joyful sound. The gospel is a sound for motion and action. They that know it not sit still, no moving heaven-wards by them: but they that know it are quickened by it, they are set on a march, and go forward. They will walk on, and walk vigorously, as the word imports, through the several steps in the wilderness journey. We have next the advantage which they may have from the joyful sound for their walking. "They shall walk in the light of thy countenance." Light is a great help to walking on a journey. It is neither safe nor comfortable to walk in the dark. They shall walk in the light of the Lord's countenance, or face, which is more lightsome to those that know it, than the united light of sun, moon, and stars. They

shall have the sunny side of the brae, of all the rest of the world. Their way shall be a Goshen for light, while others sit in Egyptian darkness.

The Psalmist's directing his speech to God here, shows his firm confidence as to the thing, and how much his own heart was set upon enjoying that privilege.

DOCTRINE.—As men know and believe the joyful sound of the gospel, so shall they walk on their way heavenward, in the light of the Lord's countenance. In prosecuting this, I shall,

I. Consider the duty to which the joyful sound known and believed, effectually excites men. They shall walk.

II. I shall consider the privilege which they that know the joyful sound, shall thereby have, in their walk heavenwards. I am then,

I. To consider the duty to which the joyful sound known and believed, effectually excites men. They shall walk.

1. They shall not sit still, doing nothing to purpose for God and their immortal souls, like the rest of the world, dead in trespasses and sins. The sound of the gospel is the most powerful of all alarms. The law may terrify a sinner; yea it may toss a dead soul, as a dead corpse is tossed hither and thither in the earth by an earthquake, but can never put life into it. It is not a mean appointed by God for that end. It is the ministration of death and condemnation, not of life, 2 Cor. v. 7—8. But the joyful sound of the gospel, quickens the dead sinner to a spiritual life. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." And this life will exert itself in its proper actions, namely, in holy obedience. So they have not known the joyful sound, who are not excited to walk on the way heavenward. The unholy are without doubt unbelievers.

2. They shall not go back to their former lusts in their ignorance. Apostates were never true believers. "If any man draw back," says God, "my soul shall have no pleasure in him." "But," says Paul, "we are not of them that draw back to perdition, but of them that believe, to the saving of the soul." It was those among the Israelites, that believed not, that were for making a captain, and going back to Egypt. They looked on the promise of Canaan, as a thing that would not hold, and therefore they would see to themselves otherwise. Thus do many bewray their unbelief of the gospel, by a greedy return to the world and their lusts after a communion, looking upon the world as a thing certain, and what is in the promise as a thing uncertain and distant.

3. They shall hold forward in their way in spite of all opposition,

and not give over till they get to the journey's end, whatever weather blow. "The righteous also, shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." The faith of the gospel is the spring of perseverance, according to that saying, "the just shall live by his faith;" and unbelief is the great cause of apostacy. It is "the evil heart of unbelief that leads men to depart from the living God." It was the unbelief of the spies, and of those who credited them, that made their carcasses fall in the wilderness; while Caleb and Joshua believed the joyful sound of the promise, and got safe to Canaan. Faith makes a man righteous in the sight of God, and so frees him of the burden of the curse, and guilt of eternal wrath. And sooner shall a prisoner laden with irons, make his way up a steep hill, and not fall by the way, than an unjustified sinner setting out in God's way, shall hold on. Faith listening to the joyful sound, inspires the soul with new vigour. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

*Lastly*, They shall walk on in the sight of the Lord, as he who walketh in the light, walks in the sight of the sun. "Walk before me," said God unto Abram, "and be thou perfect." Faith believing the gospel, calls the name of the Lord, speaking to the sinner, "Thou, God, seest me;" as Hagar did in another case, Gen. xvi. 13. They will walk before him as under his eye, considering him as the witness to all their actions, and who will be their judge. While unbelievers forget him, and have little or no regard to his all-seeing eye, and all-hearing ear. We now proceed,

II. To consider the privileges which they that know and believe the joyful sound, shall thereby have in their walk heaven-wards: "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance."

1. They shall be ever in a state of favour, peace, and reconciliation with God. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." God is no more their enemy, but they are in inviolable friendship with him. The darkness of a natural state is over with them, and shall never return. The true light is come, the sun of righteousness is risen on them, in the joyful sound known and believed, and shall never go down on them again. "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of the light."

2. No cloud of revenging wrath shall ever gather above their heads any more, no curse of the law, no guilt of eternal wrath. Such a cloud would extinguish the light of the Lord's countenance, for the time it staid, and reduce them, for the time, to the state of

enmity and wrath, in which they were, before they knew the joyful sound. The joyful sound of the everlasting covenant, secures them for ever, against all such clouds returning after the rain of revenging wrath, poured out on Christ, in their room and stead. "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; saith the Lord: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee."

3. Whatever cloud may gather above their head in their way heavenward, it shall never be so thick, but the light of the Lord's countenance shall shine through it, Psal. lxxxix. 31—34. Though God will never resume the face of a wrathful revenging judge against them, yet he may be an angry Father, and they may be under clouds of fatherly anger. But in the blackest of all these, there are rays of love and favour to be seen. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. As many," saith he, "as I love, I rebuke and chasten." The sharpest arrows shot against them, shall be winged with love; and their bitterest potions shall be medicinal. Though the light of the Lord's countenance do not always shine alike full upon them, it shall never, in their darkest hours, suffer a total eclipse.

4. They shall be directed in their way. "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." They walk through a wilderness, where oftentimes it is hard to know the right way, where there are many to lead them out of the way. But the Lord will be eyes to them in the wilderness. Listening to the joyful sound, they shall hear a voice behind them, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." The way through the world is so filled with stumbling blocks, that they who have not this light, cannot escape to fall over them and perish. But they shall walk in the light and be directed in their way. "For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."

5. They shall be strengthened in their way, for this light is the light of life. Solomon observes, "that in the light of the king's countenance is life, and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain." How much more in the light of the Lord's countenance, is there life and refreshment. The joyful sound of the gospel, known and believed, brings a strengthening light with it. "They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." Many a time hath the child of God, by this

means, out of weakness been made strong; and upon the tasting of the sweetness of the word of promise, been made to say as Jonathan, in another case, "See, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey."

*Lastly*, They shall be cheered and comforted in their way. Solomon tells us, "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." But no such sweetness, no such comfort in any light, as in the light of the Lord's countenance lifted upon a soul. David witnesseth it from his experience. "There be many that say, who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. None can keep the way heavenward, but they will meet with many things from within and from without, tending to their discouragement. But God has secured their comfort in the way of believing, and the faith of the gospel will carry them comfortably through under the heaviest burdens, Heb. xi.

*Use I.* Of information. Hence we may learn,

1. Whence it is that many communicants are nothing bettered by gospel ordinances, but even go away as they come, a prey to their lusts and an evil world. They sit down to the feast, but they rise not up to the journey. They eat, but they are not refreshed, nor strengthened to their proper work after a communion. Why? Alas! they never get into the saving knowledge of the joyful sound. They are ever learning, but they never come to the knowledge of the truth. They hear it, but they do not believe it. They believe it not with application to themselves. Hence it hath no quickening, nor sanctifying influence on them. They go away morally serious, to ply their duty, and to reform their life. But not having the faith of the promises of the gospel, the only channel of spiritual life and strength, they are like a soldier going to the battle without his weapons, who presently gives back. Take heed then, brethren, "lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

2. Whence it is that many of the saints are so weak, and comfortless in their way heavenward, walking so much in the dark. It is all owing to the small measure of their faith of the joyful sound. Whatever be the hard pieces of work put into the hand of any of the Lord's people, whatever be their temptations, trials, and afflictions, there is as much in the joyful sound, as if it were plentifully brought into the soul by a lively faith, would make them go through all these, like a giant refreshed with wine. And the Lord said, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this syc-

mine tree, be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you."

3. That the faith of the gospel is the sovereign remedy in all darkness and distresses, in which a person can be. Believing is a duty that can never be out of season. This is the way to bring one out of darkness into the light. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. The promises of the gospel are full of suitable help for all diseases and distempers; and faith is the mouth of the soul, whereby applying the promise to one's self, the nourishment contained in it is brought into the soul. "The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise him." If then thou art in desertion, temptation, or affliction, go to the promise and embrace it by faith.

4. Hence learn whether you have a right to the seal of the gospel covenant or not. All Christ's sheep have this ear mark. They know the joyful sound. "My sheep," says he, "hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." They have discerned it as the voice of the living God. The gospel is the savour of life unto them. They have been let into the kernel of it, while others break their teeth upon the shell. "For our gospel," says Paul, "came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." It has not been always to them a dry channel, a dead letter, but the ministration of the spirit of faith and holiness to them. "Therefore," says the apostle Peter, "As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." The Lord has drawn aside the vail, and they have seen the hidden beauty of it; opened the cabinet, and discovered the treasure there.

Again, they savour it as the suitable nourishment for their souls. "They know it is not a vain thing for them, because it is their life." As living creatures have their proper nourishment, so one delights in what another cares not for. The new creature is nourished by the gospel, and it is natural, for the saints had their life by it. "They have been born again of incorruptible seed, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." So they have a peculiar savour of it, while others regard it no more than the dogs do hay.

Once more all their hopes are in it. "It is all their salvation and all their desire. They have been beaten off from hopes in the law, in their own works, doings, sufferings and services: and have betaken themselves to the word of God's grace, as the only anchor of

their souls. And all their doings and sufferings, are to them in that point, as if they had done just nothing. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

QUESTION.—The stony ground hearers received the word with joy. How then shall we distinguish betwixt that, and the true knowledge of the joyful sound, the genuine savour of the gospel of God's grace?

1. The true convert receives the joyful sound of the gospel, as the most joyful sound for him, overcoming and overpowering all others, and therefore rests his heart there. "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart." It contains the one thing that is to him the main thing, and instead of all other things. The hypocrite may receive it as a joyful sound, but yet there is still some sound more joyful to him. The bleating of sheep, and lowing of oxen, is a more joyful sound to some; the sound of created comforts, is more taking with the most part, than all the comforts of the gospel. Christ may be sweet to a hypocrite, but the mischief is, still some hue lust or other is sweeter. So like Orpah, they leave him, not without some affection to him.

2. The convert gets his savour of the gospel, by finding the extreme bitterness of sin. Like those who heard Peter and the rest of the apostles, "they have been pricked in their heart, and made to say, men and brethren, what shall we do? Others come more easily by theirs. Like the stony ground hearers, they at once receive it with joy. Many savour the sweetness of the gospel, to whom sin either never was made bitter; or if it was, yet never the bitterest of all things; so their saviour of the gospel is but superficial. But God makes his own feel sin more and more bitter, till it become of all bitters the most bitter, even more bitter than death. And then they know to purpose, the sweetness of the joyful sound.

*Lastly*, The convert savours the whole of the joyful sound. There is always some one note or other in it, that an unsound heart savours not. They have not respect to all God's commandments. They that know the joyful sound, savour it for sanctification, as well as for justification; for the cross as well as the crown. But many are like Herod, who heard it gladly, till his beloved lust was touched.

USE 2. Of exhortation. Believers, you that know the joyful sound, bless God for what your ears do hear, and for what your eyes do see. Seek for more of this blessedness. As ever ye would walk on your way heavenward, safely and comfortably, labour more and more to know the joyful sound; and to know it so as to believe it; and to believe it, so as to apply it to your own souls, according to your several exigencies. Consider,

1. It is too precious and dear bought a sound, to be neglected by poor sinners. It had never been heard in the world, had not the son of God in our nature purchased it by his sufferings and death. There was a dreadful sound of a deluge of wrath falling on him, which made him to groan out his soul on the cross. And had not that been, this had never been. Wo to them to whom it will be a fruitless sound.

2. It is a sound which has the matter of all joy in it, to be drawn forth in the way of believing. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the holy Ghost." It comprehends the whole covenant, with all the benefits thereof, which are suited to all the necessities of a soul, for time and eternity. The gospel is the offer and exhibiting of all to you, the setting before you the whole covenant of promises, and declaring you welcome to intermeddle, take possession of, and use them for your own behoof. They will perish miserably, who perish under such a full covenant table, because they will not put out their hand to take it.

3. It is a sound that will not sound always in your ears. If death come on before ye know it, ye can never know it more. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." In hell it is not to be heard, therefore the light of the Lord's countenance can never rise there; but they are wrapt up there, in the blackness of darkness for ever. The Sinai trumpet will sound for ever most dreadfully through all the corners of that dark vault; but not the least whisper of Zion's trumpet.

*Lastly,* It is both your duty and interest to know it. There is no saving knowledge of God but by it, for by the gospel only we know him in the face of Jesus. The faith of it is the way of sanctification, "we are sanctified by faith which is in Christ Jesus." And it is the way of solid comfort, "we are filled with joy and peace in believing." And the more a person has of the faith of the gospel, he will be the more holy, and the more joyful in the Lord.

Wherefore study the gospel of Christ, and cry for the Spirit to cause you know it. Christ is a veiled Saviour, and the gospel is a veiled gospel to many. It is hid to them that are lost. If you do not believe it, it will be worse for you than if you had never heard it. Cry then for the Spirit, and for God to reveal Christ in your hearts, the hope and the earnest of glory. Amen.