

the gospel, who in Christ's name and in his stead do so earnestly beseech me once more to make trial of the freeness of his grace." Tell Jesus Christ *who* sent you : we will own it at the last day, and justify our message to you. Tell him, then, what thou hast heard this day, and that thou couldest not make away with thyself, and throw thyself headlong into hell, till thou hast once more exposed thyself to his wonted pity and commiseration to such as thou art. Tell him, thy soul is ready to break for the longing desire it hath for Christ ; cry out and say, " How long, Lord, holy and true ? When wilt thou shine out upon thy poor creature, who is walking in the valley of the shadow of death, and can see no light ? O, make haste to help ! O, arise and save me ! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly with relief and succour to my poor soul ! "

Offer thyself in this manner to Christ, present thyself thus before the Lord ; and if thou findest thyself " pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that thou despairst even of life," (as 2 Cor. i. 8, 9,) O, then, cast thyself, burden and all, upon Jesus Christ. (Matt. xi. 28.) And when thou canst not gather comfort from any present sensible impressions made upon thy heart, then argue from promises made to thy coming ; take them as an answer from God to thee ; and make thy best of them, as David did, Psalm cxix. 81 : " My soul fainteth for thy salvation : but I hope in thy word." Hath not Christ said ?—" Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John vi. 37.) If he should never speak one word more to thee all thy days, here is enough said already to support thee. We say, *Omne præteritum est necessarium* : " That which is past can never be recalled : " Christ will never unsay what is passed out of his lips ; keep thy hold here, and thou art safe to eternity. Nothing but raptures and particular revelations, some strong sensible feelings of comfort, will satisfy some ; whereas, indeed, God hath revealed his whole counsel to us in the scriptures, and has nothing more to say to sinners than what is already expressed in the gospel. The particular answers that God gives his people sometimes, what are they, but inward repetitions of gospel-promises to the heart, sealed up there by the Spirit ?

SERMON XXV.

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HOW A CHRISTIAN MAY GET SUCH A FAITH THAT IS NOT ONLY
SAVING, BUT COMFORTABLE AND JOYFUL AT PRESENT.

Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.—
1 Peter i. 8.

THE question which this text was chosen to resolve is, *How a Christian may get such a faith as is not only saving at the last, but comfort-*

able and joyful at present. This case has two things in it; one it takes for granted, the other it doth suppose may, and sometimes doth, come to pass.

1. It takes, first, for granted, *that joy and comfort arise from faith.*—Namely, “faith unfeigned,” as the apostle speaks, which purifies the heart, and sets love a-work to obey the law; and so the commandment hath the end for which it was made. (1 Tim. i. 5.) And this is very sure; for all comfort must begin in God, and be derived from him. He is “the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort;” (2 Cor. i. 3;) and he “hath given us everlasting consolation through grace.” (2 Thess. ii. 16.) But it is not from God absolute, or without a mediator: alas! there is no comfort in that. What comfort can a malefactor, that hath myriads of indictments against him upon the file, the least whereof must take away his life, expect from a just and righteous judge? The case is thine and mine, infinitely more dreadful than between a malefactor and a magistrate. My sins are innumerable, the least is mortal; God is judge, and hell is the prison; wrath, horror, fire, the worm, and all endless,—that is the punishment. The Judge is, and cannot be otherwise than, most true and righteous; what comfort can I think to find now from God absolute, that is, without relation to Christ? Behold, instead of comfort, a devouring flame, and, instead of joy, a consuming fire. I speak this because of abundance of our people; they say, “God is merciful,” and they do their best; they hope God will be their comfort, and they serve him: and all this while they think not of Jesus Christ. We are all naturally Socinians: those that never heard their names, much less read their books, live in their heretical and blasphemous principles.

O the amazing stupidity of the world called Christian, that we can smile, and laugh, and hug ourselves in deceiving comforts upon the brink of hell! There can be nothing comfortable to us, without the God of all comfort; and no comfort can be to us from God, but by the Lord Jesus; and no Jesus to us without faith. “We rejoice in God,” saith the apostle; but how? “By Jesus Christ.” Why? “By him we have received the atonement;” he hath made it by his blood, and we receive it by faith. (Rom. v. 11.) He is the “salvation” of God, and “the consolation of Israel;” (Luke ii. 25, 30;) he is our comfort by being God’s salvation. That the business of Christ in the world was to teach us no more humbling precepts than Plato or Moses, and then to seal them with his death, there is little comfort. This comfort and joy is the affections; it is wrought by the blessed Spirit: “Joy in,” or by, “the Holy Ghost.” (Rom. xiv. 17.) “The fruit of the Spirit is joy.” (Gal. v. 22.) It is joy in the Father by the Mediator, through the Comforter: this tells that joy and comfort are noble and divine goods; they are not little debonaire, or complacency with some facetious or gentle garb that is but thin and beggarly; nor are they friends to a sour face and cloudy countenance; it was inward comfort that made Stephen’s face to shine as an angel. This joy is not a joy in the face and not in the heart, as some did rejoice, who put-on a good face under the strokes of an angry conscience, and reproached Paul for a frantic. (2 Cor. v. 13.)

Neither is this comfort a floating thing in the mouth: (when persons without good cause are prating their assurance and comfort, it seems to

argue too much froth and lightness. *Res severa*, saith Seneca, *est verum gaudium* ; [“ Reserve is always a concomitant of true joy ; ”] the richest mines lie deep, and the deepest rivers *minimo labun tur sono*, “ make the least noise : ”) but it is narrow and fatness to the soul : “ The joy of the Lord is your strength.” I cannot express the excellency of it ; the text saith, it is “ joy unspeakable, and full of glory.” The sum is this : a Christian that would live comfortably, must live holily ; if he will live holily, he must live so primarily “ by the faith of the Son of God ; ” and he must endeavour after such a degree of faith, as to say, “ Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Gal. ii. 20.) That comfort in life and to and in death is the joy of faith, the victory of faith, the triumph of faith : “ All joy and peace in believing.” (Rom. xv. 13.) A special application of the righteousness of Christ to a man’s own soul,—*there* is the rise and origin of joy and comfort, if the scripture may take place.

OBJECTION. I see an objection which it will not be unseasonable nor impertinent to refute, namely, “ Here is a noise of faith, faith believing ; and the righteousness of another is the way to drive all good works out of the world.”

ANSWER. The clean contrary is most true : it is the only way to bring all good works and all comfort into the world. A man not sanctified by faith in Christ cannot do a good work, but spoils it in the doing ; neither can he see a comfortable day, while he is such. This objection is hugely irrational : a man may as well argue against marriage, and say that marriage is the ready way to drive all lawful seed out of the world, and bring-in bastards : it is the same case. (Rom. vii. 4.) Or he might as well plead against the rising of the sun, and say it was the way to drive all light out of the world, and to bring-in darkness : it is the same case. (2 Cor. iv. 6.) He may as well say, that eating of bread is the way to drive out all vigour and strength of the body out of the world, the way to bring-in starvedness : it is still the same case. (John vi. 54.) The truth is, children before marriage are spurious, the world without the sun is darkness, and without eating no living : so without union to and interest in Christ Jesus, who is “ Jehovah our righteousness,” there is no holiness or comfort in the world. To set-up any thing for righteousness in the sight of God but the righteousness of Jesus, that is the way indeed to drive the doctrine of the Church of England, and all the Reformed churches with all their most eminent doctrines, out of the world : nay, to drive all good works and all comfort out of the world ; nay, to drive the gospel and Christ and salvation by him out of the world. If the Galatians, that were professed believers, received Paul as an angel, received the Spirit, shall turn aside to their own works, and make them concurrent with Christ, though but as a less principal part ; (which was their case ;) then mark the issue : the grace of the Father is frustrated, the death of Christ is “ in vain,” *frustra, sine fructu* ; (Gal. ii. 21 ;) Christ is of none effect ; they are fallen from grace ; Christ profits them nothing : and all this Paul doth testify with a great deal of vehemence and solemnity, once and again, and with such apostolical majesty as seldom occurs : “ Behold, I Paul testify unto you.” (Gal. v. 2—4.) I suppose that no man that understands Paul will say, that he disputes only against the ceremonial law ; therefore I will leave it, and

conclude this with that, 1 John v. 12 : "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." And this is written to them that believe, that they might know that they have eternal life; and they that know it cannot altogether want this in my text, "joy unspeakable and glorious."

2. The second thing in the question is supposed; namely, *that a Christian may have faith that is saving in the end, which is not comforting in the way.*

I answer, First, you must not so understand it, as though saving faith and comforting were two kinds of faith; nor, Secondly, as if saving faith in the close were in some believers altogether and always void of all light and comfort; but how a Christian, who is saved when he dies, may live comfortably while he lives. Then the resolution of the case is this,—that that faith which is saving in the end, is also sanctifying in the way, and would be comfortable also, if the Christian did not *ponere obicem*, "hinder" it himself; and therefore, that he may live joyfully, he must remove these hinderances, and use the means proper to the end: of which anon. At present he must do as these believers in the text did, and he shall find comfort as they did, in these four particulars:—

(1.) *They did persist in the simplicity of the gospel, as it is in Christ.* (2 Cor. xi. 3.)—"False apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into" the ministers of Christ, began then. (Verse 13.)—Paul was jealous of the church of Corinth, lest that "chaste virgin" should be corrupted, (verse 2,) as the churches in Galatia were bewitched with these jugglers. (Gal. iii. 1.) The great design of the old serpent from that day to this hath been to adulterate the doctrine of faith in a crucified Redeemer, knowing full well that this is the most effectual course to ruin all true holiness and solid comfort. But these believers received the grace of God in truth, as it was fully and plainly proposed to them. They did not spin-out the high and vital truths into needless disputes, nor darken them with nice distinctions and sub-distinctions: this serves for little else but to distract the mind, and disturb the quiet of men's souls.

(2.) *They did "taste that the Lord," namely, Christ, "is gracious."*—To whom coming as the living stone, they as lively stones were built upon him a spiritual house for God. (1 Peter ii. 4, 5.) They did not content themselves with orthodoxy, to rest satisfied in this, that they were not Simonians, or Ebionites, or Menandrians, or the sectators of them that did destroy Christ's righteousness by dividing it. Let us not only profess Christ, but feel him. "It is one thing to preach Christ, and another thing to feel him," were the last words of Mr. Ash.

(3.) *They minded the mystery of the gospel.*—The eternal deity, grace, and righteousness of our Lord Jesus; as Peter prayed for them, (2 Peter i. 2,) and exhorts them to grow in this. (2 Peter iii. 18.) As for church modes and membership and privileges, they did enjoy them without censuring and animosity; but knowledge of and communion with Jesus Christ, accompanied with love, and obedience, and peace of conscience, was the main business of their life. This is the way to comfort; let us do so. Assure yourselves, there is little joy in a ceremony to a dying man; modes and membership are but sorry comforters.

(4.) Lastly, *As they had faith and love, so they did exercise them.*—They did believe, and they did go on to believe, and so to be acquainted with the “righteousness of God, from faith to faith.” You may observe how the apostle remembers the works of “faith, love, and patience in Christ,” of the Thessalonians; (1 Thess. i. 3;) and in 2 Thess. i. 3, he thanks God, their faith did grow exceedingly. There was but a little time between the writing of these two epistles, this latter being written shortly after the first, to rectify their mistake about the day of Christ. The primitive Christians did not content themselves with habits, and let them be as fire under the ashes, or as seed under the clods; but did stir them up, that they might warm, and they did water them, that they might spring, and blossom like a rose. If a man that hath the power of seeing should walk up and down the streets from morning to night with his eyes shut, without any actual seeing, would you not suspect him to be distempered? What comfort can this man take in the light of the sun? Much like this is a believer that hath faith habitual: he riseth in the morning, and lies down at night, and hath not an act of faith upon, nor a privy thought of blessing, Jesus all the day; how can any comfort be expected in such a strangeness as this is?

So, then, the sum is this: These believers received the gospel of salvation by Christ, pure as it was proposed to them: they gave the apostles this honour,—that they had wisdom enough to express themselves plainly, fully, significantly; and honesty enough, that they would not deal fallaciously or ambiguously; they valued not the tradition of their fathers, nor the fancies of philosophers; they had no vain janglings amongst themselves, but coveted the sincere, unmixed milk of the word, that they might grow thereby. (1 Peter ii. 1, 2.) The gospel came to them “not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;” assurance of understanding, assurance of faith. Their communion was with the Father, and fellowship with Jesus Christ; that made their joy to be rich and plentiful. Their privileges and ordinances were their delight, but not their confidence; they came to God by them, and waited upon God in them in dangerous times, for the enlarging and confirming of their knowledge, faith, and comfort. Let us be exhorted to do as they did, and doubtless we shall speed as they sped. My business now is to speak something to the text, and then more to the practical case in hand. Only, first, I would crave leave to speak a few words to the context; for this reason,—because, as my text is the true portraiture of *practical* godliness, so the context gives us a system of godliness *doctrinal*.

The epistle is written “to the strangers;” (verse 1;) Jews and Gentiles, say some, but especially Jews scattered in four now Roman provinces, not long before distinct and considerable kingdoms, together with Asia; that is, the Proconsular or Less Asia, yet including also those parts in and about Chaldea. Peter was at this time in or about Babylon, in which parts were many myriads of the Jews, of whom he was the apostle, with James and John. (Gal. ii. 9; 1 Peter v. 13.) That Babylon in the text should mystically be Rome, is a mere conceit, and a groundless fancy; this epistle was written thirty years at least before John had received the Revelation. Grotius and others are quite beside the truth; it is forty to one odds that Peter was never there.

Well, these Jews were effectually called, according to God's election: the *terminus*, or the thing to which, not for which, or upon which, but to which they were chosen and called, is said to be this; namely, "to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus." The great efficient of this in them is the blessed Spirit: "Through sanctification of the Spirit." (Verse 2.) Being thus sanctified, they had hope: where observe, 1. *The property of this hope*: it was "a lively hope." 2. *The term, or object*: "An inheritance." 3. *The way whereby they obtained this hope*: they were "begotten" of God as a Father to it. 4. *The cause moving God to this*: "His abundant mercy." 5. *The ground of this hope*: it was "the resurrection of Christ from the dead." (Verse 3.) 6. Then *the fruit of it*: which was great joy. And then, 7. Here is their *perseverance*, and how that is effected: they were "kept by the power of God unto salvation." (Verse 5.) No doubt but holiness is loseable: the angels lost theirs, and we lost ours: and the saints at this day would quickly lose theirs totally and finally, if they were left to a stock of grace received, to trade for another world. To grace received, there must be grace supplied: the grounds of perseverance are without us; namely, the promise of the Father, the purchase and intercession of the Lord Jesus, the power and supply of the blessed Spirit; a doctrine full of comfort, but, for certain, as full of grace and humility too; indeed, if the comfort were not sanctifying, it were not sound.

So that here we may see the doctrine of the glorious Trinity, and every Person in his work, according to the most wise and divine economy and propriety in working toward fallen men quite dead in sin and dead in law, and that irrecoverably as to themselves, or any created power in heaven on their behalf. Here is, I say, the Father, electing to life and glory; here is Jesus Christ, dying and rising; here is the blessed Spirit, sanctifying; here the three graces, Faith, Hope, and Love, inseparably accompanied with obedience, cherished with joy and comforts, and crowned with perseverance by the power of God, all arising from the sovereignty of God's will and his rich abundant mercy, to the praise of the riches of his glorious grace, that they that glory should glory in the Lord. Pelagius was the first that set up nature; for which the church of God abhorred him, saith Austin; and the Fathers call it *virus illud Pelagianum*; ["that Pelagian poison;"] the most learned Usher called it *detestandam illam hæresin*; ["that detestable heresy;"] "that pestered the church of Christ" *olim et hodie*, ["formerly and at this day,"] saith that holy man in his *Historia pestiferæ Hæreseos a Pelagio Britanno in Ecclesiam inductæ*.

But, to proceed: these strangers, notwithstanding their holiness, were under "manifest temptations;" (verses 6, 7;) persecutions in a tumultuary way were raised against them by the unbelieving Jews, who were egged thereto by the priests, who did stir up the people against them. There was no imperial edict at this time against the Christians: Nero was the first, he was *dedicator damnationis nostræ* ["the first author of our condemnation"]. I need not quote Tertullian; every lad of the upper form may know this out of Suetonius and Tacitus. God kept the gospel, in the first publishing of it, free from any disturbance

by the civil powers about thirty-four years : that Claudius banished John into Patmos, and that then he had the Revelation, is a mere figment of the learned Grotius, and his Annotations built upon it have neither sap nor sense. Under these persecutions their faith did not only continue, but shine, and their love was evident, and their comforts were so far from abating, that they did "rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorious."

"But," you will say, "what is this to the question?"

I answer, Here are two directions how a Christian may get that faith whereby he may live comfortably, as well as die safely.

1. *"Be clothed with humility."* (1 Peter v. 5).—Ascribe all thy gifts and graces, thy profiting under afflictions, ordinances, thy peace and comfort, wholly to the grace of God by Jesus Christ through the Spirit of holiness. If there be any way in the world to get special faith, and to live comfortably, it is this,—to live humbly; the evangelically humble soul is the serene, cheerful soul. Heart-pride doth not only deprive believers of comfort, but brings vexations, disappointments, and disgusts, which are a torment to pride wherever it is. It is a sin that is very incident, very pleasing to us, very displeasing to God, and very disquieting: it is an easy thing to preach, and hear, and discourse humility; but, believe it, it is not so easy to live it. A man's soul is never so fit to receive the shines of God's love, as when he is nothing in himself. Be sure to crush the sprawlings and motions of this cursed pride: see God in all, bless him for all; see the Lord Jesus the Purchaser of all, and the blessed Spirit the Sanctifier of all. Study this well, and live that text in Rom. xi. 36: God is *principium, efficiens, et finis*: "Of him, through him, and for him, are all things." Give him the glory: reduce this to practice; this is every day practicable, and, were it practised, would make every day comfortable. Envyings and provokings arise from vain-glory. (Gal. v. 26.) *Indè nata sunt schismata, quippe cum dicunt homines, Nos justificamus impios, nos sanctificamus immundos.** We would be somebodies: away with these thoughts! Let God have the glory, and thou wilt have the comfort. In this way God will give faith special; and that is the faith that brings comfort.

2. The way to comfort is to *do as these believers in my text did.*—They did choose rather to forego their earthly comforts than their consciences, made choice of affliction rather than iniquity, esteemed the reproaches of Christ rather than their safety. Prisons are not so terrible as they are imagined; the best men have rejoiced in the honour of suffering; they suffered joyfully the spoiling of their goods: "All patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." (Col. i. 11.) Scripture history, primitive and modern, abounds with instances of all sexes, ages, conditions, in this particular. The noble Galeacius had that joy in Christ at Geneva beyond all the marquisates in Italy or the whole world. In suffering comes assurance; and that is comfort. You will say, "We are not called to suffering;" and I say, "The God of peace give us truth and peace always!" But then, if you would live comfortably, live in religious honesty, choose poverty before knavery, an honest meanness before secretly sinning gains. Conscience is the best friend, next to

* HIERONYMUS. "Hence have schisms arisen,—men say, 'We justify the ungodly; we sanctify the unclean.'"—EDIT.

Jesus Christ. "Our rejoicing is this ;" not that we are preachers,—so was Demas ; nor an apostle,—so was Judas ; but "the testimony of our conscience, that not with fleshly wisdom, but in godly sincerity, by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." (2 Cor. i. 12.) "Light," that is, comfort, "is sown for the righteous, and" joyful "gladness for the upright." (Psalm xcvi. 11.)

Now I come to my text.

The words contain the essence of Christianity or godliness. The constituent parts of it are faith and love: the necessary consequences are obedience evangelical, and joy unspeakable. Faith in Jesus is the great command of the gospel: (1 John iii. 23 :) it is the work of God: "This is that work." (John vi. 29.) Love is the great command of the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul." (Matt. xxii. 37.) Faith acts upon Jesus, and sets love on work: love desires after him and delights in him, and sets obedience on work: divine comfort flows in proportionably. In this is the formal nature of Christianity; and whatever is not this, in truth is but nature. The revelation left in nature tells us that there is a God, that he is to be worshipped, that the soul is immortal, that there is a state of bliss in another world, that righteousness is the way to that bliss. Now as there are but two righteousnesses,—the righteousness of Christ, (of which the whole creation is silent, and nature altogether ignorant, and angels knew it not until it was revealed to them,) and a man's own righteousness; so there are but two religions in the world; namely, Christianity and nature. Call religions by what names you list,—Judaism, Turcism, Paganism, Popery, common Protestantism; it is still but nature. The sea hath many names from the countries and shores; but still it is the same sea. These two righteousnesses cannot be mixed in the business of justification in the sight of God. If it be of Christ, as the scripture saith, it is no more of works: if it be of works, as nature saith, it is no more of Christ: we cannot be justified in his sight partly by the righteousness of Christ's obedience, and partly by our own: "The law is not of faith." (Gal. iii. 12.) "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." (Verse 10.) "The just shall live by faith;" *ergò*, not by law: this is Paul's logic. (Verse 11.) A man cannot be son of two mothers: "Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." (Gal. iv. 30.) And a woman cannot be wife to two husbands together. (Rom. vii. 4.) There is but one strait gate, (Matt. vii. 13,) one door, (John x. 9,) one way, (John xiv. 5,) one name. (Acts iv. 12.) Paul is the most lively instance in this great case: while he was alive to the law, he was dead to Christ; and when he was alive to Christ, he was dead to the law; (Gal. ii. 19;) dead to the law as a rule of righteousness, and alive to the law as a rule of obedience; dead to the law in point of dependence, and alive to the law in point of love and practice. His Christianity did ennoble and heighten his morality: he was just and sober and temperate, "blameless," while he was a Pharisee; but when he was a believer, he did the same things from a noble principle, in a spiritual manner, for the right ends. Before, he did act from himself, for himself: now, from Christ and for Christ. The deduction from hence is this:—

If we would live in true comfort, we must be true Christians.—A man may be a Protestant, yet not a Christian indeed; a man may be blameless and Christless, and by consequence Godless. Remember the parable of the foolish virgins: they were not harlots, profane, but “virgins:” they were not persecutors, or blasphemers, or malicious, but “foolish,” that is, supine, careless, negligent: they had lamps in their hands, but no oil in their hearts. [Remember] the parable of the builders, the sandy believers, of the king’s supper, the man that had not on a wedding-garment. Indeed, most of the preaching of the Lord Jesus tends this way; and these parables live to this day, and as much at this day. Let us look to ourselves; the oil of faith and comfort go together, the oil of holiness and the oil of gladness; true Christians are anointed with both. Consider, the man that wanted the wedding-robe was not discerned by any at the table; the Lord espied him quickly. Who would have thought such a professor should go to hell? “Bind him hand and foot.” He did pretend to Christ, and it was but a pretence. I may dispute for, preach-up, Christ’s righteousness, active and passive, and the imputation thereof, according to the scripture and the judgment of the best learned that ever the churches have had; and yet I may go about to establish mine own: I may lift-up Christ to you, and pull him down in mine own heart. The sum is this: *Nullum bonum sine Summo Bono.**

I will expound it thus: “No good work without God,” no God without Christ, no Christ without heart-faith, no faith without love, no love without obedience, no such obedience without comfort more or less.

This brings me to the DOCTRINE: *It is the property and practice of believers to love the Lord Jesus, and to rejoice in him and in the hope of eternal life by him.*

1. First. *It is their property.*—They, and all they, and always, and none but they. There is no man in the world that loves God and the Redeemer Jesus, but a believer; the philosophers were “haters of God,” (Rom. i. 30,) the Gentiles and their wise men; for it is plain that the apostle speaks of them; (not of the Gnostics; that is an idle conceit;) and I am bound to believe Paul’s characters of the Gentiles and their philosophers, before Diogenes Laërtius, Plutarch, or any man else. The Jews hated Jesus Christ; (John xv. 24;) the world hated him. (John vii. 7; Luke xix. 14.) “All gospel atheism,” said that incomparable Dr. Twisse, “is against Jesus Christ.” So for joy: there is never a joyful man alive but a believer. Will you say that men take pleasure in their sins? Why, that is the devil’s joy. Or that they rejoice in full barns and bags? That is the fool’s joy. Or that they rejoice in wine, that is, all dainties that gratify the palate? That is a Bedlam joy. “I have said of mirth, Thou art mad.” Read and believe Eccles. ii. 2; indeed, from verse 1 to 11. The whole book, but especially that chapter, is the divinest philosophy that ever was or will be.

2. *It is their practice.*—They “love the Lord Jesus in incorruption,” or “sincerity.” (Eph. vi. 24.) The church, that is, believers jointly and singly, say of Jesus, that he it is whom their soul loves. (Canticles i. 7.) In the first four verses of Canticles iii. we have it four times, and none

* AUSTIN.

but that: "I sought him whom my soul loveth." (Verse 1.) "I will rise, and seek him whom my soul loveth." (Verse 2.) "I said to the watchmen, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" (Verse 3.) "After a little while, I found him whom my soul loveth." (Verse 4.) Here is no super-numerary repetition; every believer's soul bears a part in this divine song. So for joy; that is their practice too. We "have no confidence in the flesh," but "rejoice in Christ Jesus;" which joy in him did plainly flow out of their confidence of an interest in him. (Phil. iii. 3.) "As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing." (2 Cor. vi. 10.) "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" (Rom. v. 2;) "and we rejoice in God by Jesus Christ." (Verse 11.) With many more texts to the same purpose: there need no more. Only observe, it is, "*We* rejoice;" it is not only Paul or the apostles, but the Philippians, Romans, and so all believers: "*We* rejoice." I shall speak something, I. *For the explication of the doctrine.* II. *For the vindication of the truth.* III. *For the resolution of the case.*

I. FOR EXPLICATION.

These two affections, LOVE and JOY, will be best described by their PROPERTIES, OBJECTS, CAUSES.

(I.) LOVE is the return of a holy affection to Jesus Christ, with desires after him, and delight in him; whose PROPERTIES are these:

(1.) It is a *sovereign* love.—He it is whom the soul loveth; (as before, out of Canticles i. 7;) a *transcendent* love, arising out of some due apprehension of his own excellency, and those most inestimable benefits procured by him. He is "the standard-bearer among ten thousand;" (Canticles v. 10;) "as the apple-tree" for shade and fruit to the weary travellers, above all the trees of the forest. (Canticles ii. 3.) Saints and angels are but shrubs and fruitless things to him; they have fruit for themselves from him, but none for us.

(2.) It is *unsatisfiable* with any thing besides him.—Love is a restless affection, therefore compared to the grave and death. (Canticles viii. 6, 7.) *Amor semper querit nova*; ["Love always seeks fresh objects;"] it cannot say, "I have enough," till it be terminated on Jesus Christ and God by him.

(3.) It is *ardent*.—And therefore it is compared to "coals of fire" in the text, Canticles viii. 6. It is not a flat and faint thing; but it warms and enlarges the heart.

(4.) It is very *chaste*.—It is not to be frightened away by the troubles and affrightments of the world; neither is it to be bribed-off by the blandishments and allurements of it: "Many waters cannot quench" it; and if any would offer all the substance of his house to corrupt it, to withdraw it, "it would utterly be contemned." (Canticles viii. 7.)

(5.) And chiefly it is *obediential*.—What would not a man do or suffer for such a Saviour? for such a salvation as from sin and hell, and such a salvation as into grace and eternal glory? It is "the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. xiii. 10.) A man that loves the Lord Jesus would fulfil every one of his commands: "The law of his God is in his heart;" (Psalm xxxvii. 31;) and his heart is to the law. There is a kind of perfection *secundum intentionem*; ["with respect to intention;"] and he goes on gradually *quoad perfectionem* ["with regard to perfection"]. Love makes the yoke easy: "His commands are not grievous;" that is,

They are precious. "O how love I thy law!" says David. (Psalm cxix. 97.) "I delight in the law of God in my inner man," saith Paul. (Rom. vii. 22.) Try yourselves by this: compare yourselves with that of Christ in his farewell sermon, John xiv. 15, 21, 23. Withal remember and dread that text, 1 Cor. xvi. 22: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus," that is, malign him, oppose him, "let him be accursed till the Lord comes."

2. THE OBJECT OF THIS LOVE.—We have it in the text; namely, the Lord Jesus, and all of him: he is altogether lovely. A believer loves him as King, loves his laws and institutions, and none but his; loves him as Priest, in the holiness of his nature and life, in the suffering of his soul and death: how "precious" is Jesus! (1 Peter ii. 7.) [He] loves him as a Prophet, revealing the mystery of salvation, the glorious mystery of the gospel hidden from generations, hidden from the wise and prudent. Believers love him most intimately as a King for holiness, as a Priest for righteousness, and as a Prophet for wisdom. Lust, like the harlot, divides him; but love, like the true mother, will have him whole,—as well holiness to save from sin, as righteousness to save from hell.

3. THE CAUSE OF IT is the blessed Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love." (Gal. v. 22.) "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart," and cause thee "to love the Lord thy God." (Deut. xxx. 6.) Alas! it is not in corrupt nature, the wisdom of the flesh: the best in that hedge is enmity; not a bare enmity, but "enmity against God:" it is "not subject," that is, ordinarily, regularly subject to his "law, neither can be;" there is a *remotio actûs* and *posse* too:* it is a divine work.

(II.) The other holy affection is JOY: in the text we have the PROPERTIES of it.

(1.) It is "*unspeakable*."—The joy of harvest, rich spoils, great treasures, when they are right, that is, when they are derived from God by Jesus Christ, they have their weight; but what are these to the joy of a pardon to a trembling and condemned man? And what is this to the joy in Christ to a man that understands and is sensible what damnation is, what hell is, what eternity is? The highness, the sweetness, the revivement is indeed ineffable; no man that feels it can find words fully to express it.

(2.) It is "*full of glory*."—That is, say some, "A stander-by cannot judge of it." That is true, but is too short; it is *initium vitæ æternæ*, ["a beginning of life eternal,"] it is *glorificatum gaudium*, ["a glorified joy,"] it is a part of heaven. Austin seems to think, that is too much: our present comfort, saith he, is rather *solatium præsentis miseriæ*, ["the solace of our present misery,"] than *gaudium futuræ beatitudinis*, [the joy of future bliss;] rather a collation or refreshment upon our journey, than a set meal at our journey's end. What, if we should take the word here, "glorious," for strong, "full of glory," full of divine power, a holy joy, a heart-enlarging joy, strong to do, and strong to die? Certainly sin is never more odious, the heart is never more soft, the commandments never more precious, the world never more regardless, Jesus never more glorious, than when we humbly rejoice in the sense of God's love by Jesus Christ, through the witness of the blessed Spirit. If our comforts be not heart-enlarging to love and duty, they may be suspected for unsound.

* "A removal both of its actual exercise and of its possibility."—EDD.

(3.) I will add one property; namely, the joy of believers is *soul-satisfying* joy.—It fills the heart and every chink of it; it is abundantly, nay, victoriously satisfying [to] the soul of itself, without praying-in the help of the creatures. Light all the candles in the world, and they will not, cannot make it day: let the sun arise, and that will do it without their help. Read Hab. iii. 17—19: in our phrase, our manner of speech, it is this: “If no bread in the cupboard, nor money in the purse, nor friend to help; ‘yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the God of my salvation.’”

2. The OBJECT of this joy is present interest in Jesus, and a lively hope of glory, or glory hoped for.

3. The CAUSE *efficient* is the blessed Spirit: “Joy in the Holy Ghost,” that is, by him. The *inward* instrument is faith, faith special, or assurance: “Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Gal. ii. 20.) The *outward* instrument is the gospel: the angel called it, “Tidings of great joy.” I pray you, try again: where is your joy? whence doth it arise? upon what is it fixed? of what kind is it? what is the power of it? Joy is natural and pleasing; every man seeks it. “Many there be that say, Who will show us any good?” They are for sensible, palpable good,—corn, wine, or oil, riches, honours: here they think to find joy and comfort. Alas! they seek the living among the dead; they suck an empty breast. David had all this, but he sought far higher, he was of a more noble and heavenly temper; “Lift thou up the light of thy countenance;” cause thy face to shine upon thy servant; that will “put gladness into my heart.” (Psalm iv. 6, 7.)

II. The second particular, or VINDICATION.

Out of these premisses we conclude that *Christianity is a glorious thing*: which is the second particular, which I call “a vindication of the truth.” Religion is not a little formality in duties, joined with some morality in life; but it consists in the new creature, or faith working by love. (Gal. v. 6; vi. 15.) It consists in the exercise of repentance, self-loathing, hatred of sin as such, (for these are necessarily implied,) faith actual in Jesus, love to him, obedience before him, communion with God by him, peace and comfort from him, and well-grounded hope of eternal life through him: the smell of his garments, (Psalm xlv. 8,) the savour of his ointment, (Canticles i. 3,) the taste of his preciousness, makes a believer think he can never do enough for Jesus. If his holiness were as an angel’s, and his days as the days of heaven, yet all were too short, too little for such a Saviour; the love of Christ constrains him. He is a debtor to the Spirit, to live after the Spirit; and whatever is not this in truth, (there is a difference in degrees,) is, as you heard before, but nature raised and varnished and modified with distinctions; still it is but nature. Wash and dress a swine as you please, it is a swine still. The Fathers, when the breaking-out of Pelagianism made them more studious in the point of grace, and more wary in their expressions, have left us their judgment in this case. “You bring-in a kind of doctrine,” saith Austin to the Pelagians, “that men do righteousness, and please God, without faith in Christ, by the law of nature: this is that for which the church doth most of all detest you.” *Hoc est undè vos maximè Christiana detestatur ecclesia.* (Lib. iv. cap. 3, *Contra duas Epistolas Pelagianorum ad Bonifacium.*) Again, saith he, “Far be it from us

to think that true virtue should be in any man, unless he were righteous; and far be it from us to think, that any man should be truly righteous, unless he did live by faith; for 'the just shall live by faith.'" *Absit autem ut sit justus verè nisi vivat ex fide.* And again: "Who would say that a man," *diabolo mancipatus*, "a slave to the devil, were a righteous man, though he were Fabricius or Scipio?" "To clothe the naked," saith he, "is not sin, as the fact is considered in itself; but of such a work to glory, and not in the Lord, none but a wicked man but will grant this to be sin." Thus far Austin, with more to the same purpose in the same place: and upon this account he did correct some expressions, lib. i. cap. 3, *Retractationum*. The whole chapter is seasonable; the sum this: Austin had called the Muses "goddesses," had highly advanced the liberal sciences; now corrects it, upon this reason, namely, that many godly men knew them not, and many that did know them were ungodly. The same he doth about Pythagoras's books, "In which," saith he, "are," *plures*, "many errors," *idemque capitales* ["and those capital ones"]. Especially this he recants, that he formerly said, The philosophers, who were not pious, were yet shining in virtue: no faith in Christ, no virtue; it is *spectrum*, it is but *simulacrum*, but *imago virtutis*; it is not virtue; painted fire is not fire. Jerome to the same purpose in *cap. iii. Galat.* "Paul," saith he, "blameless did not live; he was dead while blameless. Paul the Christian was indeed alive. Men speak of temperance and justice without faith; that cannot be; none live without Christ;" *sine quo omnis virtus est in vitio*: "without Christ all virtue is accounted vice." Thus he.

It is most evident, there dwelleth no virtue in the minds of ungodly men: their wisdom is not heavenly, but earthly; not from "the Father of lights;" but from "the prince of darkness;" *ac sic vitium, quod putatur virtus*; "and so that is a vice which is accounted virtue." *Non deo serviunt, sed diabolo*; "They serve the devil, not God." * *Tota vita infidelium est peccatum*; "The whole life of unbelievers is sin." † To the same purpose saith Fulgentius, with others. The scripture is full and clear: "An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit." "The carnal mind cannot please God." (Rom. viii. 7, 8.) 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3, the apostle doth raise his discourse to the highest strain: "Though I speak with the tongue of angels," which no man doth; "if I had all knowledge," which no man hath; "if I could move mountains," which no man can; "if I give all my goods to feed the poor," the highest beneficence; "and my body to be burned," the greatest suffering; "yet if I have not love, I am nothing." He doth not say, "These things are nothing;" he doth not say, "Knowledge is nothing," or, "Giving to the poor is nothing;" but, "I am nothing; I have no profit, I am a hollow tub, an empty vessel; I make a noise amongst men while I live, and go to hell when I die." And according to scripture and Fathers, the doctrine of our church hath determinated in her thirteenth article thus: "Works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasing to God, forasmuch as they spring not from faith in Jesus Christ; yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." And this is the judgment of the Reformed churches also. Sirs, be sure you get and

* PROSPER, *Contra Collatorem*, cap. 28.

† Idem, *Sentent.* cvi.

exercise this faith unfeigned in Jesus Christ, and love sincere to him. A fair deportment, with great gifts and splendid performances, without Christ, is but a more genteel way to perdition everlasting.

III. THE RESOLUTION OF THE CASE.

I come now to the resolution of the practical case, *how a Christian may get that faith by which he may live comfortably, as well as die safely.*—Where this I think fit to premise: First, he must not only get such a faith, but he must keep it in exercise; for without this there is no living comfortably. Then, this also I premise,—that to get and keep comfort, or that a Christian may have comfort, two things are necessary, namely, proportion and propriety; * *ex parte objecti*, [“on the part of the object,”] it must be a good proportionable; and then *ex parte subjecti*, [“on the part of the subject,”] it must be mine; it must be commensurate and adequate to the soul, and it must be the soul’s own. *Tolle MEUM, et tolle gaudium.* † The comfort and sweetness of the gospel lies in pronouns, as the common saying is; as, for instance, suppose the conquests of Alexander, and triumphs of Pompey, nay, all the world were thine, there is propriety, it is *thine*; but herein would be no comfort at all to thee, because here is no proportion, no suitableness to an immaterial, vast, and immortal soul. On the other side, Christ is proposed to thee, and in him there is proportion; for in him dwelleth all fulness: He is an infinite, spiritual, and eternal good: but what comfort is this without propriety, unless he be *thine*? “My spirit rejoiceth in God *my* Saviour.” (Luke i. 47.) “I will rejoice in the God of *my* salvation.” (Hab. iii. 18.) “Your father Abraham saw my day, and did rejoice to see it:” the plain English is this, Abraham saw Jesus Christ in the promises, to wit, his obedience, and sufferings, and the glory that came by Christ’s righteousness; and did apply it to himself by faith, and was assured of his interest in it, which made him to rejoice in that sight.

Though a prince may have a legal right to a treasure hid in the field, yet, till it be discovered to him, there is no joy: “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost,” and so we “rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” (Rom. v. 2, 5.) I will not dispute whether assurance be of the nature of faith: our Reformers were of renown; and other learned men since, at home and abroad, that are for assurance, do not at any hand exclude adherence. Some think that faith is a mixed habit; adherence and assurance are two acts of the same faith, two flowers from the same root. It is true, there may be adherence without assurance; but it is as true, that there cannot be assurance without adherence. If I know and believe that Christ died for me, I should stick to it in *negotio justificationis*, ‡ without taking notice of any inherent holiness either in men or angels: how do the stars disappear at the rising brightness of the sun! yet no disparagement to the stars at all. But I say, I will not dispute; and if I could, it were both unseasonable and needless; for, whether assurance be of the nature of faith, or whether it be an effect of faith, is all one in this case before us; for there must be something of assurance that must bring-in joy and comfort.

* Proprietorship.—EDIT.

† “Remove the word *mine*, and you destroy all my rejoicing.”—EDIT.

‡ “In the business of justification.”—EDIT.

The believers here in my text,—they loved Christ, and in whom after they believed, they did “rejoice with joy unspeakable:” their first acts of faith might be recumbency, afterwards evidence, then joy. So the Ephesians: after they believed in Christ, they “were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” as an earnest. (Eph. i. 13—15.) The note of the old, learned, and pious Piscator is, *Unusquisque fidelis verus est, not esse potest, or esse debet, but est certus suæ salutis.** I will name but one scripture more; it is Canticles ii. 16: “My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.” *My beloved is mine*—There is the gospel with its marrow in the heart of a believer; there is assurance. *And I am his*—There is the law in the same heart; there is obedience. *He feedeth among the lilies*—There is joy and comfort: he died for me, and I am his, soul and body for his service. Hence comes joy, and sometimes such that even overwhelms. This for the entrance; now to the DIRECTIONS:—

DIRECTION I. *If you would get faith, comforting in life, as well as saving at death, you must not sit down satisfied with a bare recumbence on Jesus Christ.*—Mistake me not: I do not discourage, and I dare not disparage, it. If it be right, as I take that for granted, it is a grace more precious incomparably than all treasures, and happy is the bosom that wears so inestimable a jewel. But when Christians, sensible of their sin and hell, do attain to this, they rest satisfied here. They are told, (and that is truth,) that their state is safe; there they acquiesce, set-up their staff behind the door, and go no further. They do not press-on for assurance; they will rather argue against it, thus:—

OBJECTION I. That “assurance is not so necessary.”

ANSWER. “So necessary!” what do you mean? Is it not commanded? is it not promised? is it not purchased? is it not attained by the people of God? Sure, it is necessary to the vigour of grace, and to the being of joy and comfort: “Be of good comfort; thy sins are pardoned.”

OBJECT. II. “Yea; but many do live, and die, and do well, without it.”

ANSWER. Who told you so? The scripture saith, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” (Rom. viii. 16.) “And we know and believe the love that God hath given us;” (1 John iv. 16;) with many, very many, more texts to that purpose. A tempted believer may bear false witness against himself: sure such a position as this, with mercy upon uncertainties, is not the way to comfort him. The sure way were to advise him to see his sins more, and humble his soul more for them, and to study Jesus Christ, and to come to him more, with the like; and God will return and speak peace; “they that sow in tears shall reap in joy.”

OBJECT. III. “But this joy is not so necessary.”

ANSWER. What do you mean again? “So necessary!” why? 1. *It is frequently commanded.*—Take one text: “Rejoice in the Lord,” that is, Christ, “always; and again I say, Rejoice.” (Phil. iv. 4.) 2. *It is frequently promised.*—“I will make them joyful in my house of prayer.” (Isai. lvi. 7.) “I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.” (John xvi. 22.) 3. *It is practised*

* “Every true believer is,” not “may be,” or “ought to be,” but “is certain of his own salvation.”—EDIT.

frequently.—“We rejoice in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. iii. 3.) 4. *It is often prayed for.*—“The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.” (Rom. xv. 13.) 5. *It is Christ’s office “to give the oil of gladness for the spirit of heaviness.”* (Isai. lxi. 3.) 6. *It is the special work of the blessed Spirit.*—Who is therefore “the Comforter.” Take the word Παράκλητος in what notion you will, his work is either comforting or tending to comfort. (7.) Lastly. *It is the privilege of the gospel-ordinances to feast the soul with marrow and fatness, and with wine well refined.*—That is, God hath not given us “the spirit of bondage to fear again,” as formerly; “but the Spirit of adoption, whereby,” or rather, “by whom,” that is, *cujus ope*, [“by whose assistance,] “we cry, Abba, Father.” (Rom. viii. 15.) Surely joy and comfort is necessary for the measures of grace. If you had a child infirm, sickly, hard-favoured; and a friend should say, “This strength, quickness, and comeliness is not so necessary; your child is alive; is it not?” you would think this were hardly suitable, much less comfortable.

OBJECT. IV. “A Christian that doth come to and rely on Christ for righteousness, may have comfort.”

ANSWER. Yes; but then it must be by the way of a practical syllogism: “He that cometh to Christ shall never perish: (John vi. 50—58:) but I do so: therefore,” &c. Here his coming, together with repentance and obedience, which are concomitants, begets evidence, and from thence comfort.

OBJECT. V. “But many good people want this joy and comfort.”

ANSWER. Confessed; but then it is our own fault: did we use the means, especially secret duties, meditation, prayer, which we neglect, it would be otherwise.

OBJECT. VI. Last. “But those that do these yet are in great darkness.”

ANSWER. Yea, for some time. The Holy Spirit teacheth many lessons, excellent ones, in this school; chiefly these three: 1. They learn what dismal creatures they must have been for ever without Jesus Christ. 2. They learn to give a guess, what were the unintelligible amazements and consternations that were upon the soul of Jesus Christ in their room. 3. The blessedness that comes by Jesus Christ. And when they have learned their lessons in this school out of the word by this ever-blessed Tutor, God brings them out with silver, joy, and gold, and comfort.

DIRECT. II. *Make serious use of marks and signs.*—The best search is in a man’s own heart; and there the greatest case of conscience is, whether Christ be in you. (2 Cor. xiii. 5.) One of the best uses the preacher can make, is a use of trial. Skilful ones lay open these marks with much evidence and vehemence, beseech, require, charge that impartial search be made; and Christians hear, and affect, and say it is a home-sermon, but do not seriously upon retirement bring themselves to the truth. The minister may preach his lungs out of his body, and it is not minded. If self-trial were impartially practised, the blessed Spirit in this way would give in evidence, and by that comfort: for instance, Jesus Christ tells us, he lays down his life for his sheep. (John x.) There he gives the marks of his sheep: as, 1. *They do not follow the voice of strangers.*—That is, strange doctrines, duties, worship; as Socinianism, Popery,

Pelagianism, new or old, Quakerism : they fly from them : "They know not the voice of strangers." (Verse 5.) 2. *They know Christ with a high, appreciating, and obedient knowledge.* (Verse 14.) 3. *They hear his voice, and they follow him, not a stranger.* (Verse 27.) Now if you would try yourselves by these and many, very many, such like, if you would impartially see the complexion of your souls in the glass of the word, this would beget certainty, and that would beget comfort.

DIRECT. III. *Be not slothful in the business of faith.*—Remove away far from you a sluggish frame ; stir up, blow up the coals, exercise thy faith, exert new acts of application of Jesus Christ to thee daily. We want comfort ; and why ? Jesus Christ is not in our serious thoughts all the day. We eat bread daily for life natural, and clothe ourselves daily to cover our nakedness before men : sure, the soul hath as much need of food and raiment as the body. Jesus crucified is the only, the heavenly food and raiment ; stir up thine appetite, *mitte fidem*, ["exert faith,"] put forth thine hand, put him on : repeated acts of recumbency and application will rise up into acquaintance and evidence, and will let-in this precious joy and consolation. Believe it, sirs, it is a sin of a far greater nature than we are aware of, a sin of horrid unkindness, neglect, slighting of our best friends, namely, that we make sure of every thing but Jesus Christ. A little land, a small tenement, a little money,—there we cry, "Fast bind, and fast find ;" there we have a male in the flock, and can defend our diligence very smartly : but in the great concern of our souls, we are at uncertainties and hap-hazard ; there the blind and the lame is for sacrifice. What a noise is there about a civil propriety in mint and cummin : and what a silence and remissness about the soul's propriety in the Son of God ! It is a prodigious and inexcusable indiscretion and folly, and an unspeakable mischief into the bargain.

DIRECT. IV. *Take heed of thy heart.*—Fetch not thy comforts from, and terminate not thy joy upon, any creature : this were clear idolatry ; therefore check thy joy about these things ; cut off the suckers, and the boughs will be laden with fruit ; stop these back ditches, and the stream will be strong. Remember, Job could approve his sincerity by this : that he did not rejoice because his "wealth was great," and because his "hand had gotten much." (Job xxxi. 25.) Remember, our Lord Christ abated his disciples' joy : "Rejoice not in this, that the devils are subject to you ;" a man may cast out devils, and go to hell ; "but rejoice rather in this, that your names are in the book of life." Act faith, to see God the Giver, Christ the Purchaser, of your daily mercies ; and thence fetch your joy into them : my clothes first must have warmth from my body, and then they warm me.

DIRECT. V. If a Christian would attain to that faith, namely, certainty, that will make his life comfortable, he must go on to be more holy in both the parts of it : *he must die to sin more.*—The scripture calls upon us every where to hate, abhor, mortify, crucify, namely, to death, lay-aside as a dead corpse, put-off as filthy rags, cast-away as a plague-sore,—what, all this while ? Why, lusts, filthy lusts, wrath, anger, vain-glory, pride, impatience, filthy, wanton thoughts. You know, the apostle presseth these things as the main use of the doctrine of Jesus ; Paul is abundant in this in his epistles to the churches. Do it then ;

dwell upon these scriptures much; daily let them dwell in you; be doers of the word. Your ministers are afraid, either of the rickets,—the head is big with airy notions, or but notions, and the joints be weak; or childishness,—that people are more taken with a little gaudy trimming than with the substance of the cloth. Study these truths, and look to your hearts; and conform to them; this is the way for to get, and when you have gotten to keep, some assurance, and that will comfort your hearts. “The pure in heart shall see God;” and any glimpse of that is a most comfortable sight. The scripture saith, especially in gospel times, that the people of God should “walk in the light of his countenance:” if thou put away iniquity from thy heart, “thou shalt lift up thy face.” The more conscience, the more sense of love; and the more sense, the more comfort; the less clouds, the more sun. The old Puritans had a great deal of feeling and much serious joy.

DIRECT. VI. Look well to the other part of holiness: *live to righteousness*.—Live in it; live Col. iii. 17; read it over and over. “As many as walk according to this rule, peace shall be upon them.” (Gal. vi. 16.) To such an one Christ will manifest himself; his Father and himself will come to such an one, and will make their abode with him: the “Father will love him;” (John xiv. 21, 23;) it is meant of love manifestative, not initial; he will manifest his love. There is joy indeed to the upright. “I will show the salvation of God;” not, “I will begin to be,” but “I will show.” (Psalm l. 23.) Look to your trades; let there be “Holiness to the Lord” upon your weights and measures; look to your family duties; study well and observe your relation-duties. Family-passions cloud faith, disturb duty, darken comfort.

DIRECT. VII. All this while I take it for granted that thou art a Christian. Why, then, if thou wilt get and keep this faith that will get and keep comfort alive, the seventh direction is, *to be much and frequent in divine meditation*.—Faith is enlarged and grows-up by converse with divine objects. Meditate upon these things:—

1. *Christ's deity*.—Be well stored with scriptural knowledge of this great truth; set thy heart to it, and let it be fixed in the midst of thy heart. Assure yourselves that the eternal Godhead of Jesus is the most practical point in heaven, and will be so while heaven is heaven.

2. Be intimately acquainted with *Christ's righteousness*.—That it is the only righteousness that can present us holy, unreprouable, unblamable, in God's sight; that it was his business in the world to bring-in this everlasting righteousness; that it is done and finished; that he hath nothing to do with this righteousness now in heaven, but to clothe us with, to present us in, [it] before God.

3. Meditate on *God's righteousness*.—That it is not only his will, but his nature, to punish sin. Sin must damn thee, without Christ: there is not only a possibility or probability that sin may ruin, but without an interest in Christ it *must* do so; whet much upon thy heart that *must*. God cannot but hate sin, because he is holy; and he cannot but punish sin, because he is righteous. God must not forego his own nature to gratify our humours.

DIRECT. VIII. *Be well skilled and settled, as it becomes a Christian, in the great article of justification before God*.—Thy faith and duties

and comforts depend might-and-main upon this. Know that no servant of God, be he Abraham, Moses, or Paul, if God enter into judgment with him, can stand justified in his sight. God will not justify us without a righteousness; and that righteousness must be unblamable, and therefore in all numbers perfect: God will not call that "perfect" which is not so; for his "judgment is according to truth." (Rom. ii. 2.) Where shall we find this perfect righteousness, but in Christ? who is "Jehovah our Righteousness," (Jer. xxiii. 6,) and "made of God unto us righteousness." (1 Cor. i. 30.) How shall this become ours, but by imputation? (Rom. iv. 6.) How shall we receive this "gift of righteousness," but by faith? (Rom. v. 17.) Be well skilled in the good old way; go in the footsteps of the flock, and feed beside the shepherds' tents. Believe it, sirs, there is no way but Christ unto the Father; his blood is that "new and living way;" (Heb. x. 19, 20;) there is no standing in God's presence but in him, no acceptance but by him, no comfort but from him. Be wise and wary; there are many adversaries. Only give me leave to say this: I think that the Socinians had never set-up man's obedience for his righteousness, if they had not with wicker hands, *quantum in illis*, ["as much as was in their power,"] first pulled down Christ's Deity; and as they are abhorred for this blasphemy of blasphemies, so I cannot abide them for daubing over man's obedience in this affair so deceitfully and deceivingly, namely, in saying it is not only *causa sine quâ non* in our justification; as if the material cause, or the matter which God imputes for righteousness, were only a poor *causa sine quâ non*: but no more now of this juggling.

DIRECT. IX. *If you would preserve a right understanding of the nature of faith, take heed of advancing it into Christ's place.*—As if God should impute the act of faith for righteousness, or that God should impute faith and obedience as the condition or matter of our righteousness, and not Christ's obedience. For both cannot be imputed: if God imputed Christ's obedience, then not ours; if ours, then not Christ's. The nature of faith consists in coming to Christ for righteousness and pardon: only the man hurt with the fiery sting looks to the brasen serpent for cure. *Fides quæ*, "that faith which" is justifying takes in Christ as Lord, with all the heart; but *quâ justificat*, "in the business of justification," *quâ sic*, it looks only to Christ "as crucified:" this plain old distinction will stand. If the nature of faith did consist in Christianity, I say, if this were true, I believe all believers could be contented to have it so, for any harm they should have by it; for they willingly devote themselves to the obedience of God: only they cannot make this faith or Christianity to be the condition or matter of justification; for this were to fall from grace, to make of none effect the death of Christ, and to drive Christianity and comfort out of the world.

DIRECT. X. *Get and keep this faith, especially by a constant and conscientious living in duty, and living above it.*—Say to the commandments, "You are my rule and love and joy;" to Christ, "Thou art my life." (Col. iii. 4.) It is the height of Christianity to live in duties, and to live above them. It is quickly said; it is an easy matter to distinguish in the Schools or pulpit; but to distinguish in the conscience, practically to distinguish, is not so easy: *Qui novit distinguere inter legem et evan-*

*gelium, sciat se esse edoctum a Deo.** Had I all the holiness of the saints from the beginning to this day, I would bless God for the least, and prize it above all treasures; yet I would lay all aside, and be found in Christ. In the midst of thy duties, ask thy soul the question: "Soul, what is thy title, thy plea? If I were to die this day, what have I to plead? In what shall I stand before God? What have I to plead, why I should not perish in hell?" Ask thyself: "What is thy righteousness?" Ask it solemnly, frequently: "Is it not Christ, and he only?" This would much conduce to confirm thy faith, such a faith that would bring-in comfort. The thoughts of this so affected Dr. Mollius, that he seldom named Jesus with dry eyes.

DIRECT. XI. *Be much in secret prayer, ejaculations.*—This will breed acquaintance, and that comfort: the non-exercise of this breeds a strangeness between God and the soul; and that is uncomfortable. This and meditation who can hinder? The soul is active, breathings and thoughts are quick, it is soon done, it will never hinder your business; and in this way the blessed Spirit causeth us to "know and believe the love that God hath to us," (1 John iv. 16.) and refresheth the soul with joy and comfort in believing. Do not only pray for the comforts and supplies of the Holy Spirit, but pray to him to this purpose: "Blessed Spirit, convince me of my sins more, and convince me more and more of Jesus Christ: Holy Spirit, take of Christ's, and show it unto me;" and the like. To pass-by the profane scoffs of many, and the gross ignorance of more, I take it to be a very great neglect in believers, that they do not glorify the Holy Spirit, as the Lord and Giver of faith and comfort. Remember this: *Qui unum honorat, et omnes*: "He that honoureth one person aright, honoureth every one; and he that doth not honour every person, honoureth none:" *qui non omnes, nec unum.*

DIRECT. XII. *If you would get and keep this special comforting faith, then keep a good conscience in evil times.*—Choose suffering before secular safety; remember who did shrink from the truth, and lost this faith and comfort, even to the gates almost of despair and self-violence, for twelve months together, and never did recover, till, [on] some hints of mercy to him, he began to revive and have some quiet. Spira said, with tears running down his face, that time was when he could have called God "Father," but now he could not.

DIRECT. XIII. *You may and ought to get this special rejoicing faith out of sanctified afflictions.*—Thus: "Whom God doth correct and teach, him he loves, he is blessed: (Psalm xciv. 12; Heb. xii. 6:) but God doeth so to me: *ergò.*" Here are bills and prayers for mercies; but who looks after the issue, the teaching, the holy use? Sanctified affections are very good evidences, and so very comfortable. There are that would not have lost their buffetings, temptations, various temptations, afflictions, for any good. The blessed Spirit hath taught them that way many a divine truth by heart out of the word; they are sensible of it, and from it conclude the love of God in Christ to them; and thence they have joy and comfort,—that joy that angels cannot give, and devils cannot take. Sanctified troubles are tokens of special love.

* "Let him who has the skill to distinguish between the law and the Gospel, know assuredly that he has been taught of God."—EDIT.

DIRECT. xiv. *Give diligent attendance upon the ordinances.*—Set thyself in the sight of God, to hear what God will speak, as Cornelius did; (Acts x. 33;) and rejoice to do it: such “shall walk in the light of God’s countenance.” (Psalm lxxxix. 15.) Take heed of the common humour; we begin to be very squeamish and carnal; one is of Paul, another of Apollos; we attend more the man and his artifice, than God and his word. Mr. Bolton, in his florid but profane wit, thought Perkins was a sneaking fellow; but when God changed his heart, he was of another mind.

DIRECT. xv. Lastly. *Be more intent upon your duty than upon your comfort; and comfort will follow.*—Order your steps in the paths of divine precepts; walk in all relations according to the rule, and be not so earnest after comfort, so solicitous in that behalf. Walk uprightly, and the face of God will behold the upright. You pray for assurance; be sure your ends be right; let it be more for holiness, that the name of Jesus Christ may be glorified by you, than for comfort. I think, some good people are too carnal in their prayers for assurance; they desire it not so much for holiness as for safety. I have known such; take heed, look well to your aims.

I will conclude with Paul’s prayer, 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17: “Now our Lord Jesus, and God our Father, who hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.”

SERMON XXVI.

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HOW CHRISTIANS MAY LEARN IN EVERY STATE TO BE CONTENT.

For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.—
Philippians iv. 11.

THE OCCASION OF THE WORDS.

OUR apostle makes this profession of his high attainments in the grace of contentation upon a very weighty reason or motive; namely, that he might obviate all misconstructions and bad interpretations which possibly some might put upon what he had said in the foregoing verse, and should further say in verses 14—16. In every [one] of which we have him expressing his great and affectionate resentment of the Philippians’ bounty and liberality to him: “I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again. Ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction,” &c. “No church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.” Now he foresaw, that this his just acknowledgment might have some base and ugly censures put upon it, which therefore he makes it