

## SERMON UPON JOHN VIII. 56.

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*Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see my day ; and he saw it, and was glad.*—JOHN viii. 56.

THE next instance and pattern of a strong faith we find in Abraham. We must consider his faith in two things—

1. His clear sight of things to come, before the exhibition of Christ or his coming in the flesh.

2. His overlooking the difficulties which seemed to obstruct the accomplishment of the promise. A believer hath two great works to do—to open the eye of faith, and shut that of sense. In both Abraham was eminent. His opening the eye of faith is spoken of here, ‘He saw my day.’ His shutting the eye of sense in Rom. iv. 13, ‘And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb.’ The former falleth under our consideration now, Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see my day ; and he saw it, and was glad.’ The Jews were always cracking and boasting that they were children of Abraham. Christ disproveth their claim because they did not his works : John viii. 39, ‘If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham ;’ and in particular, because they imitated not his faith with respect to Christ ; they despised what Abraham made great account of. Abraham rejoiced to see what you see, but they rejoiced not in him, and the privileges of the gospel offered by him. He desired to see me, though future and absent, and you despise me now present. He valued what you scorn, and therefore they were degenerate children of Abraham.

In the words observe three things—

1. The earnest desire Abraham had to see Christ’s day, ‘Abraham rejoiced to see my day.’

2. His obtaining his desire in some sort, and in that way which pleased God, ‘And he saw it.’

3. The effect of that sight : it bred joy and contentment in his mind, ‘And he was glad.’

Some explicatory questions shall be handled—

[1.] What was Christ’s day ?

[2.] In what sense he earnestly desired to see it ?

[3.] How he saw it ?

[4.] The gladness which was the fruit of it.

[1.] What was Christ's day? I answer—His coming in the flesh, and setting up the gospel dispensation. *Day* in scripture is put for all that space of time wherein any one hath lived, together with the state of things during that time. So Christ's day was the time when Christ came to fulfil his office of a redeemer, and the state of the gospel kingdom there begun.

[2.] How he earnestly desired to see it. His earnestness is employed in that word *ἠγαλλιάσατο*, 'He rejoiced to see my day.' With great pleasure of mind he thought of Christ's coming into the world to save sinners, and desired it might fall out in his time. He had no greater desire than to see Christ's kingdom set up and flourish in the world. He rejoiced, he vehemently and with ardent affection desired this might come to pass.

[3.] How he saw it? Not with bodily eyes; that negative is proved: Luke x. 24, 'Many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.' Abraham was one of these. But affirmatively he saw it with the eye of faith: Heb. xi. 13, 'All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.' There it is explained. The object to be seen was revealed and set before them in the promise, and their eye and visive power was faith. Thus God granted him his desire in a better way. God may suspend the satisfying the desires of his people in their own way all their days, and yet in effect grant them in a way that is as good, and better for them. Moses would fain enter into the land of Canaan, but God would only give him a Pisgah-sight. The exhibition of Christ in the flesh was denied to Abraham and the patriarchs during their lives, but yet he gave that which was better than a simple bodily sight, a spiritual sight of him in the word of promise. We desire the restoration of the church speedily, but it may be it doth not suit with the harmony of God's providence; therefore we must submit our will to the wisdom of his counsels.

[4.] He was glad, and heartily rejoiced at it: Gen. xvii. 17, 'Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed.' Not as Sarah laughed, as doubting of the event, Gen. xviii. 12, but wondering, rejoicing at it, being strong in faith that God could and would make good his promise. There is the laughing of exultation, and the laughing of derision, when one telleth an improbable thing. Sarah's was the laughter of derision and unbelief; Abraham's was the laughing of exultation. The exhibition of the Messiah, and the setting up his kingdom in the world, was matter of great joy and consolation to him.

*Doct.* That a strong faith giveth such a clear sight of Christ as produceth an holy delight and rejoicing in him.

In handling this point—

1. I shall speak of the ground of Abraham's faith.

2. Of the strength of it, set forth by a double effect—(1.) His clear vision and sight of Christ; (2.) His deep affection, or rejoicing in it.

1. The ground of his faith; for except the thing to be believed be represented to us in a divine revelation, it is not faith but fancy. This

sure ground was the promise of God. And if you ask, What promise had his faith to work upon? I answer—That which you have: Gen. xii. 3, 'In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' 'In thee,' that is, in thy seed, as it is explained, Gen. xxii. 18, 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' Now, to open this promise we must inquire—(1.) What this seed was; (2.) What this blessedness was.

1. What was this seed? We must distinguish of a twofold seed of Abraham—his seed to whom the blessing was promised, which was to be blessed, and his seed in whom both Abraham himself and also his seed and all nations were to be blessed. The promise of blessing to his seed is spoken of, Gen. xvii. 7, 'I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.' Now this promise to his seed was either to his carnal seed which descended from his loins (God was there God, in visible covenant with them), or his spiritual seed: Gal. iii. 7, 'Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham;' because they walked in the steps of Abraham, and did receive and obey the doctrine of faith or covenant of grace which he himself believed and received. But then there was another seed, in whom he himself and all the families of the earth were to be blessed, that is, in the Messiah who was to come, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. The promise of multiplication and blessing of his seed was but an appendage of this promise, and the means to effectuate it, and so subservient to it.

2. What was this blessedness? All that good which resulteth to us from God's covenant; chiefly reconciliation with God and life eternal.

[1.] Our reconciliation with God, which consists of two parts—remission of sins, and regeneration; without these two no man can be capable of blessedness, and both these are included in the covenant made with Abraham.

(1.) Remission of sins. Certainly they are blessed whose sins are forgiven: Ps. xxxii. 1, 2, 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.' And this is included in the blessing of Abraham; for it is said, Gal. iii. 8, 'And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.' So that justification by faith, a principal part of which is remission of sins, is that gospel blessing which was purchased by Christ for Abraham's seed.

(2.) Regeneration was included also, as a considerable part of the Mediator's blessing: Acts iii. 25, 26, 'Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thee shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.' There the blessing is interpreted.

[2.] That eternal life is included in it also is evident from the nature of the thing; for this being the chief blessedness, it cannot be excluded; and may be further proved from the double reasoning of the apostle from this covenant.

(1.) Because the patriarchs sought it by virtue of this promise: Heb. xi. 13-15, 'All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country; and truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.' The argument is, they did not think themselves to be at home in Canaan, but sojourned there as in a strange country. The apostle is speaking of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were heirs of the same promise, namely, of blessedness in the seed of Abraham; they still sought another place.

(2.) Because else God could not act suitably to the greatness of his covenant love and relation, and did not make good his title: ver. 16, 'Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.' God, having made so rich a preparation for them, may be fitly called their God. Note our Saviour's reasoning: Mat. xxii. 31, 32, 'But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.'

II. Come we now to the strength of his faith; that is seen in two things—(1.) His clear vision; (2.) His deep affection.

1. His clear vision and sight of Christ: 'He saw my day.' The eagle eye of faith will see afar off and through many impediments, and draw comfort not only from what is present, visible, and sensible, but from what is distant and future, and but obscurely revealed. The sight of faith may be illustrated by bodily sight.

Three things argue the strength of bodily sight—

[1.] When the things are afar off that we see; for a weak eye cannot see afar off.

[2.] When there are clouds between, though the things be clear; to pierce through these clouds argueth the sight is strong.

[3.] When there is but a little light to see by. To see a thing at a distance, either in the morning or evening twilight, argueth a strong sight. All these concur here.

[1.] The things to be seen were at a great distance, not to be accomplished in their time, nor a long time after. Thousands of years and many successions of ages intervened ere the Messiah was exhibited to the world, and came in the flesh to erect his gospel kingdom; yet they went to the grave in assurance of this promise, that in due time the redemption of sinful man should be accomplished. Well, then, we see the nature of faith, that it can look upon things absent and future as sure and near; and without it man looketh no farther than present probabilities: 2 Peter i. 9, 'But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off,' τυφλός καὶ μωπάζων. A purblind man cannot see things at a distance from him; but faith surmounts all successions of ages, and can fly over many thousands of years in a moment to the object expected; as the apostle John: Rev. xx. 12, 'I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.' He saw it in the

light of prophecy ; but the light of faith and prophecy differ little. They agree in the general ground, viz., divine revelation ; they differ only as the general revelation is the ground of faith ; a particular revelation is the ground of prophecy. They agree in the manner of perception, by divine illumination ; the Spirit enlighteneth believers, and the Spirit enlightened the prophets, for they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But only believers by that general way of illumination which is common to all the saints ; the special illumination is peculiar to prophets. They agree in the object, things absent and future and at great distance ; here there is no difference. They agree in the certainty of apprehension ; only by prophecy they may define particular events ; by the other, the accomplishment of general promises. They agree as to the affections of the heart, but they differ in the degree ; the one hath more ecstatic motions, the other is a more temperate confidence. So that you see by this comparison a strong faith can see things at a distance, and we are affected with them in some manner as if they were present.

[2.] When clouds come between faith and the object to be seen. When the promise was given to Abraham, he was childless, and so remained a long time. In the course of nature his own body and Sarah's womb were dead ; and after he had a son, God commands him to slay him and offer him in sacrifice ; a command not only against his natural affection, but hope. And then afterwards his seed was few in number for a long time, and when they did multiply they were oppressed, which was revealed to Abraham. Now, to strive against all these difficulties was 'to believe in hope against hope,' Rom. iv. 18. But this I must reserve to the next time. However it is said of Abraham, 'He saw my day ;' he rested in the truth and power of God, and by it resolved all difficulties. To see through such natural impossibilities argueth a strong sight of faith.

[3.] For their light to go by, it was but a little ; the revelation was but obscure ; the patriarchs had only that promise, Gen. iii. 15, 'And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.' Abraham's was a little clearer ; all that he had was but this, 'In thy seed all nations shall be blessed.' Yet this was but a small glimmering light in comparison of what we enjoy, far short in clearness and plainness of the many precious gospel promises which are made to us. The daylight is not only broken out, but it draweth nigh to high noon. Though they saw not Christ so nearly and clearly revealed as we do, yet they could do more mighty things with their faith than we can do with ours, and did more excel both in comfort and holiness.

You will say, What is this clear vision of Christ to us ? How shall we judge of the strength or weakness of our faith by this ?

*Ans.* 1. As to Christ, there is a sight of Christ past, present, and to come, which still belongeth to faith.

(1.) Past : To see him whom we have not seen, that is, so to be affected with his miracles and acts of mediation as if we had seen him in the flesh, is still the work and exercise of our faith. So the apostle telleth the Galatians, chap. iii. 1, 'Before whose eyes Christ Jesus hath been evidently set forth crucified among you ;' that is, before you he

hath been convincingly declared, as if he were set before your eyes nailed to the cross. We should receive Christ as it were crucified in the midst of us; and the more lively and impressive thoughts we have of this in the word and sacraments, the stronger is one's faith. We do so believe it, and our hearts are so warmed by it, as if it were all done before our eyes. Such evidence and conviction should we have as to warm our hearts.

(2.) Present: To see him so as to make him the object of our love and trust: John vi. 40, 'And this is the will of him that sent me, that he that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.' There is a clear sight of Christ still necessary to believing; we must see him and know him spiritually. Though he be removed from us within the curtain of the heavens, yet we must see him, and such worth and excellency in him as may draw off our hearts from other things; see him so as to believe that he is at the right hand of God, negotiating for us, that we may trust ourselves and our all in his hands. Stephen said, Acts vii. 56, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.' He saw the Lord Jesus as in a posture of readiness to assist and help him; that was by extraordinary vision, for it is said, 'The heavens opened.' But faith doth the like in its degree and proportion. Especially must we see him at the right hand of God ready to receive us when we die.

(3.) Future: We must see him; that is, be assured of his second coming, and thoroughly persuaded that we shall see him; as Job, chap. xix. 25-27, 'For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand in the latter days upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold him.' At the resurrection we shall get this sight and blessed vision of God. Now faith must overlook all impediments to assure ourselves of this.

*Ans. 2.* There are other objects about which the vision of faith is exercised, as the glory and blessedness of the world to come. Faith is the perspective of the soul, by which it can see things at a distance as present. It can look beyond and above the world, and draw unspeakable joy from the hope of eternal life. Moses, Heb. xi. 26, 'Esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect to the recompense of reward,' ἐπέβλεπεν; he looked to it. The glory of the world to come is represented and set before us in the promise; we see it clearly there: Heb. vi. 18, 'That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us;' Heb. xii. 2, 'Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.' To this we should look, and see it as if it were before our eyes, that we may not be allured or terrified by the things that are before our eyes. But of this I have already spoken in the nature of faith. (See Sermons on Heb. xi. 1.) Only let me advise you now to keep the eye of faith clear, that Christ and heaven may be always in view. The devil seeks to shut it: 2 Cor. iv. 4, 'In whom the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them which believe not,

lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.' He doth it by the world, deluding and bribing the flesh, and enchanting the mind with worldly felicity, so that God and heaven are forgotten, and that necessary care which we should use in preparation for it is neglected and omitted. But it is opened by the Spirit: Eph. i. 17, 18, 'That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' And therefore we should always pray for this spiritual eyesalve, that we may have a due sense of the world to come fresh and strong upon our hearts.

2. The next effect is deep affection or rejoicing in Christ, and all the work of redemption done in his day. Certainly a sight of Christ by faith doth bring true joy and peace into the soul.

Here I shall show—

[1.] That no other affection will become Christ, and the salvation offered by him and received by faith, but great joy. This is evident by the whole drift and current of the scriptures. The angels told the shepherds at Christ's birth, Luke ii. 10, 'And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.' Surely tidings of Christ, the Redeemer of the world, are tidings of great joy, because then there was a way found out for our reconciliation with God, and the taking up that dreadful controversy between us and him, that heaven and earth may kiss each other, and meet again in a covenant of love and peace and grace, purchased by Christ, whereby we might overcome the devil, the world, and the flesh. The great enemies of our salvation are defeated, and a proportionable happiness found out for man, without which he would have been as Leviathan in a little pool. So when this grace was offered to any, as to Zaccheus, by Christ's coming into his house and bringing salvation with him: Luke xix. 6, 'He made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully;' or published in the word: Acts xiii. 48, 'When the gentiles heard these things, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord, and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' Now we are concerned as well as they. The gospel should never be as stale news to sinners, or as a jest often told. Our necessities are the same with theirs, and the benefits are offered to us as well as them. The Virgin Mary was thus affected: Luke i. 47, 'My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour;' that Christ was to be born of her, and was formed in her. The eunuch, when Philip had preached to him Jesus, and he was baptized into this faith, Acts viii. 39, 'He went on his way rejoicing;' as men do that have met with a good bargain, and have sealed it and made it sure. So the jailer: Acts xvi. 34, 'He rejoiced, believing in God with all his house;' he was but newly converted, and recovered out of the suburbs of hell, ready to kill himself just before, so that a man would have thought you might as easily fetch water out of a flint or a spark of fire out of the bottom of the sea, yet he rejoiced when he was acquainted with Christ. So that you see none reflect seriously on the gospel but they find cause of

joy. We cannot consider and believe the great things which Christ hath done and purchased for us, with some hope of the enjoyment of them, without joy.

[2.] The reasons of this joy. These must be considered with respect to the object, the subject, the causes.

(1.) The excellency of the object, which is Jesus Christ, and the incomparable treasure of his grace.

(1st.) He is excellent in himself, as being the eternal Son of God. Now, when he will come down, not only to visit, but redeem a sinful world, this should be matter of joy to us. He came down, was not thrust down; he came as the pledge and instance of the Father's love: John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son.' To make divine nature more amiable, that we might not fly from him as a condemning God, but return to him as a pardoning God, and willing to be reconciled to sinful man: 2 Cor. v. 19, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.' And in our nature died for us: Rev. i. 5, 'Who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.' Christ would show us a love that passeth knowledge, and would surprise men and angels with a heap of wonders in the whole business of our deliverance from sin and misery. And surely we bring down the price of these wonders of love if we entertain them with cold thoughts, and without some considerable acts of joy and thankfulness.

(2d.) He is also necessary for us: Rom. iii. 19, 'And all the world may become guilty before God,' *ὑπόδικος Θεῷ*; subject to the judgment of God, or obnoxious to his wrath and vengeance. What could we have done without his passion and intercession? If he had not died for sinners, what had we to answer to the terrors of the law or accusations of conscience, or to appease the fears of hell and approaching damnation? How could you look God in the face, or think a comfortable thought of him, or call upon his name, or pray to him in your necessities? In good sadness what could you do? Would you bewail sins past; but what recompense or ransom for your souls was there? If you had wept your eyes out, it would not have been accepted without a redeemer or some satisfaction to divine justice: Micah vi. 6, 7, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression? the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' Would you commit sin no more, or serve God for the future exactly? If that had been possible with a sinning nature, yet payment of new debts doth not quit old scores; or paying what we owe doth not make amends for what is stolen; you might have lain in your blood. We could not find out a ransom which God would accept: Ps. xlix. 7, 8, 'None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.' No; it is the Lord's mercy to find out a ransom for us: Job xxxiii. 24, 'Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom.'

(3d.) He is so beneficial to us. We have cause to rejoice if we con-



sider the many benefits we have by him : 1 Cor. i. 30, 31, ' But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption : that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.' Ignorance alienates from God ; depraved nature brings doubts and fears, which always haunt us about eternity and the way thither. Now, when God hath provided such a suitable and all-sufficient remedy, should we not rejoice, and esteem him, and delight in him, and count all things but dung and dross in comparison of him, that we may gain him and his grace ?

(2.) The subject.

(1st.) They are affected with their misery ; for according as our sense of our misery is, so is our entertainment of the remedy. Those that heal their wounds slightly little care for the physician. A doctrinal sight of sin maketh way for a dead opinion about Christ. It is they that are often in tears and groans, through the feeling of sin and fears of the wrath of God, who do most esteem Christ and rejoice in him : Mat. ix. 13, ' I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance ;' Acts ii. 37, ' And when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do ?' A saviour is welcome to them, for he is to them a comfortable and suitable remedy.

(2d.) They mind their end, which is to return to God as their proper happiness. When the soul seeth nothing better than God, then nothing is sweeter than Christ. Intention of the end maketh the means acceptable : John xiv. 6, ' Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life ; no man cometh to the Father but by me ;' Heb. vii. 25, ' Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.' Christ is of no use but where God is our chiefest good ; for if we be indifferent as to the favour of God, why should we prize Christ ?

(3d.) Their heart is suited to spiritual things. To excite delight and complacency there are two things necessary—the attractiveness of the object, and the inclination of the faculty. Delight and pleasure is *applicatio convenientis convenienti*. If the object be never so lovely, yet, if the faculty be not suited, there is no delight. We use to say, One man's food is another man's poison : Rom. viii. 5, ' For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh ; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.' Every man's taste is according to his constitution ; some are so lost and sunk in the dregs of pleasures, honours, and profits, that they have no relish for better things. Though Christ be so excellent and so suitable, and so all-sufficient to soul-necessities, yet carnal men cannot savour him : this excellency is only valued by a spiritual mind. Scarlet maketh no more show in the dark than a better colour. The mystery of redemption to the carnal is but a cold story, and the rose of Sharon but as withered flowers, and the promises of the gospel are as dry chips.

(3.) The causes of it ; they are the Holy Ghost, and faith as his instrument. This joy is stirred up by the Holy Ghost, therefore often called joy in the Holy Ghost : Rom. xiv. 17, ' For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost ;' 1 Thes. i. 5, ' For our gospel came not unto you in word

only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost.' And the comforts of the Spirit: Acts ix. 31, 'Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.' But then faith is the means: Rom. xv. 13, 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing;' 1 Peter i. 8, '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.' So that it is a fruit of faith as well as a work of the Holy Ghost. Faith joined with love will bring much love into the heart of a believer, and will cause it to be deeply affected with Christ's grace.

[3.] The nature of this joy and gladness. Here we must distinguish—

(1.) There is a superstitious joy which ariseth from knowing Christ after the flesh: 2 Cor. v. 16, 'Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more;' which is seen in this, it prizeth Christ's name but neglects his office, pretends a fond esteem of his memory but despises his benefits. As the Jews would fly in the face of any that would not count them Abraham's children, yet would not do the works of Abraham, so is the nominal christian's joy. This joy venteth itself in a carnal way, by outward theatrical pomp and ceremonial observances, but not in real affection to Christ; yea, they are rather enemies to his spiritual kingdom and cause and servants, and express their rejoicing rather as votaries of Bacchus than as disciples of Christ, in a gross and carnal way. This joy is a rejoicing in Christ for a day, but we are to make it our daily work, a holy festival that lasteth our whole lives: Phil. iv. 4, 'Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.' This is a different thing from Abraham's rejoicing. He had a prospect of Christ's day, and was exceeding glad; but this is a carnal owning of the god of the country, and no more.

(2.) There is a holy rejoicing which may be considered—(1.) As to the lively acts; (2.) Or solid effects.

(1st.) As to the lively acts, in solemn duties, as the word, and meditation, and Lord's supper, it doth your hearts good to think of Christ: Cant. i. 4, 'We will be glad and rejoice in thee; we will remember thy love more than wine;' Ps. xxii. 26, 'The meek shall eat, and be satisfied; they shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live for ever;' Heb. xi. 13, 'All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them;' that is, when they thought of it; the time of the gospel was a sweet time to them, and so it is to all other believers. A man cannot think of his self or any petty interest in the world without comfort; and can a believer think of the promises and not be affected with them? In solemn meditation and other duties is faith and joy acted.

(2d.) As to its solid effects,

(1st.) It is such a joy as doth enlarge our hearts in duty, and strengthen us in the way of God: Neh. viii. 10, 'For the joy of the Lord is your strength;' Ps. cxix. 14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches.' The hardest services are pleasant to one that delighteth in Christ. This joy is the very life of obedience; a christian cannot be without it.

(2d.) It sweeteneth our calamities and crosses. (1.) Common afflictions. It can never be so sad with us in the world but we have cause of rejoicing in Christ: Hab. iii. 17, 18, 'Though the fig-tree do not blossom, &c., yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation;' for we have better things in him than any natural comfort which can be taken from us. This should not diminish the solid satisfaction of our souls. (2.) The afflictions of the gospel: Luke vi. 23, 'Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for your reward is great in heaven; for in like manner did their fathers unto the prophets;' Heb. x. 34, 'And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that in heaven ye have a better and enduring substance.' They are fit occasions to show how much we value Christ above all our own interests, how near and dear soever they be to us.

(3d.) It draweth us off from the vain delights of the flesh. Every man must have some oblectation; for love and delight cannot lie idle in the soul; either it is taken up with the joys of sense or with the joys of faith. And it is good for every man to observe what it is that puts gladness into his heart, where his solid contentment and pleasure is. A brutish heart fetcheth all its solaces from the world, but a gracious heart from Christ; the one loves pleasures more than God, but to the other Christ and his benefits are matter of joy and comfort; this is that they are cheered with, as they get more of Christ into their hearts: Ps. iv. 7, 'Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased;' as David calleth God his 'exceeding joy,' Ps. xliii. 4. They need not the carnal mirth, without which others cannot live: Ps. iv. 6, 'Who will show us any good?'

*Use.* Well, then, you see faith is not only a sight, but a taste, or a feeding on the promises with delight: Ps. cxix. 111, 'Thy testimonies I have taken for an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart.' And such a delight as draweth off our hearts from other things, as the man that hath found the true treasure, Mat. xiii. 44, 'For joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.'

I observe a double joy in Abraham—

1. In desiring, 'He rejoiced to see my day.' The spiritual desires of God's people after Christ are full of joy. There is a joy that accompanieth seeking before we attain what we seek after: Ps. cv. 3, 'Let the hearts of them rejoice that seek the Lord.' Before complacential joy there is a seeking joy. Better be a seeker than a wanderer, and delight in Christ keepeth up this seeking.

2. There is a joy after faith hath given some satisfaction. First, *ἠγαλλιάσατο*, 'he rejoiced;' and then, *ἐχάρμ*, 'he was glad.' A man sick of a mortal disease, when he heareth of a famous physician, he desires to see him; it is some contentment to a sick man to see him; but when his cure is wrought, he much more rejoiceth. So when we feel the benefit in our own souls, it causes joy: Rom. v. 11, 'And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.'