

# SERMONS UPON 1 THESSALONIANS V. 16.

## SERMON I.

*Rejoice evermore.*—1 THESS. v. 16.

THE words are brief and short, and therefore they may be easily carried away. They are independent on the context, and therefore will need no long deduction. They press you not to a painful, but pleasant duty; therefore you should be readily induced to practise it. But yet, when we look more intrinsically into the nature of it, it is not so easy as we first imagined. Every one cannot receive this saying; it is hard to keep the heart in such an exact frame as to 'rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything to give thanks;' as Christ saith in another case, 'He that is able to receive it, let him receive it,' Mat. xix. 12. But what if we prove it to be a duty incumbent on all christians, and that at all times? The text seemeth to enforce it, 'Rejoice evermore.'

In which words take notice of two things—

1. The duty to which we are exhorted, 'Rejoice.'

2. The constancy and perpetuity of it, in the word, 'Evermore.' Delight and pleasure are greedily sought after; in christianity it is not only part of our wages, but much of our very work.

*Doct.* That God's children should make conscience of rejoicing in God at all times and under all conditions.

Here is a precept for it; not only a liberty given, but a command. If you look upon the words as a licence or liberty given, you may conceive of them according to the apostle's speech of marriage: 1 Cor. vii. 39, 'She is at liberty to be married to whom she will, *μόνον ἐν κυρίῳ*, but only in the Lord.' But it is not only a liberty given, but a command; for he addeth, ver. 18, 'This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.' The will of God is the supreme reason of all duties, and the will of God in Christ Jesus falleth upon the conscience with a double force; the law of the mediator binding us to delight in God, as well as the primitive duty which we owe to God as the Creator. And that this clause respects all the three duties is evident to any considering mind. In the opening of this duty I shall show you—(1.) What rejoicing the apostle intendeth; (2.) How this must be constant and perpetual; (3.) The many reasons which do enforce this duty upon us.

I. What rejoicing the apostle speaketh of. There is a double rejoicing—a carnal rejoicing, and a spiritual rejoicing.

1. The carnal rejoicing is in the world, and the good things of this

world apart from God : Luke xii. 19, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease ; eat, drink, and be merry.'

2. The spiritual rejoicing is in God : Phil. iii. 1, 'Finally, my brethren : rejoice in the Lord ;' Phil. iv. 4, 'Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice.' These two sorts of rejoicing must be carefully distinguished, for they differ in their causes. To the one we are prompted by carnal nature, which taketh up with present things, and the other is excited in us by the Spirit of God, therefore often called 'joy in the Holy Ghost.' The one is called the joy of sense, the other the joy of faith. The joy of faith is in God, the joy of sense in the creature ; the joy of faith is most in future things, the joy of sense in present things ; the joy of faith is in the good of the soul, the joy of sense in the good of the body or the provisions of the flesh ; the joy of faith is built on the covenant and the promises of God : Ps. cxix. 111, 'Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever ; they are the rejoicing of my heart.' The joy of sense on the blessings that flow in the channel of common and general providence. Now the first sort of rejoicing the apostle would not press us unto. Nature there needeth a bridle rather than a spur ; but to the latter, delight in God, and in all things that come from God and lead to him.

This delighting ourselves in God must be the thing, which must be further explained.

[1.] God himself, as God, is a lovely nature, and the object of our delight ; for he is good, even before and without the apprehension of his doing good : Ps. cxix. 68, 'Thou art good, and doest good ;' and 'of him, and to him, and through him, are all things,' Rom. xi. 36. God's essential goodness is not, I confess, the first inviting motive to draw our hearts to him, but his beneficial goodness ; yet the infinite perfection of his nature is also an object of our love and delight ; for the creature was made for him, and our good and benefit is not the last end. As the angels admire and adore God not only for his benefits, but also for his holiness and sovereign majesty and dominion : Isa. vi. 3, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts ; the whole earth is full of his glory ;' so should we, who are to laud God and serve God on earth as he is served in heaven, Mat. vi. 10. Admire him, and delight in him for his holiness and the infinite perfection of his nature. Surely we are not only to bless him, but praise him : Ps. cxlv. 2, 'Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever ;' and ver. 10, 'All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints shall bless thee.' These two words have their distinct reference ; blessing to his benefits, and praise to his excellences ; and when we praise God for his glorious being, we should do it in a delightful manner : Ps. cxxxv. 3, 'Praise ye the Lord, for the Lord is good ; sing praises unto his name, for it is pleasant.' It is pleasant and delightful to think of, or speak of, or show forth the excellences of his heavenly majesty. Again, his holiness is an amiable thing, and therefore the object of our delectation. If we must delight in the saints because of their holiness, though they have never done us good : Ps. xvi. 3, 'But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight ;' if we are to account them the excellent ones of the earth because of the image and beauty of God that is upon

them, then surely we are much more to love God, not only because of his benefits, but because of his holiness. Yea, if we are to love the law of God, and to delight in it, as it is pure: Ps. cxix. 140, 'Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it;' then surely we are to love God also because of the immaculate purity of his nature, and to delight in him. At least this is one, though not the only nor the first reason of our love to him and delight in him.

[2.] We are to delight and rejoice in God as he hath discovered himself to us in Christ. That was the foundation of his beneficial goodness, and the greatest discovery of the amiable nature of God that ever was made to the creature: John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son;' Rom. v. 8, 'But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' That we might not conceive God to be all wrath and inexorable, unless upon hard terms, therefore Christ came as the express image of his person, full of grace and truth. Well, then, God reconciled in Christ is the life and spirit of all our joy and gladness. In Christ we see him accessible, near to us, and within the reach of our commerce, as dwelling in our nature. In Christ we see him gracious and propitious to us, ready to do us good: Luke i. 46, 47, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.' We have a great and a good God in Christ; he is God and our Saviour.

[3.] We rejoice in God as we rejoice in the fruits of our redemption, or in all those spiritual blessings which are offered or given to us by Christ; such as reconciliation, or God's admitting of us into the privileges of his holy covenant: Rom. v. 11, 'We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.' Clear that once, and the cause of all our sadness and drooping discouragements is taken out of the way. The bottom cause of our bondage and fears is the quarrel God hath against us by reason of sin; we can never be soundly merry and comfortable till that be taken up; for as long as we apprehend him an enemy and an avenger, how can we rejoice in him? So Ps. xxxii. 11, 'Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.' The Psalmist speaketh of the pardon of sins; it is David's Maschil, an instruction from his own experience; he begins the psalm, 'Blessed is he whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered: blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not sin.' Then he concludeth, 'Rejoice, ye upright.' A man that is condemned for some criminal offence, and ready to be executed, oh! what joy hath he when he hath received his pardon! So we should rejoice in God, who are as it were brought back again from the gibbet, and have received our atonement. So also in the gift of the Holy Spirit to sanctify and heal our natures; if the angels, who are but the spectators and lookers-on, rejoice in the conversion of a sinner, should not the parties interested: Luke xv. 10, 'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.' So in the hopes of glory: Luke x. 20, 'Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven;' Rom. v. 2, 'We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.'

[4.] We rejoice in God when we delight to do his will, and are fitted

for his use and service. To be set and kept in the way to heaven is a greater comfort to us than if we had all the world bestowed upon us: Ps. cxix. 14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches.' David had experience of both as a puissant king, and as God's servant. So 2 Cor. i. 12, 'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.' In carnal rejoicing men seek to conceal and hide the grounds of their joy, as being ashamed of them; the worldling in his bags, the voluptuous in the instruments of his pleasure. The glutton will not point to his dishes, nor the drunkard to his pots, and say, This is my rejoicing; but a christian dareth own his joy, This is my rejoicing, that God hath taught me his ways, and enabled me to walk in them.

[5.] We also rejoice in God when we rejoice in the blessings of his providence, as they come from God and lead to God: Joel ii. 23, 'Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God; for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.' So God's care in protecting us: Ps. v. 11, 'But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice; let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.' These common favours and benefits manifest God's respect to us, and should be as a step to the Lord's people to lead them up to rejoice in God. This was God's quarrel with his people: Deut. xxviii. 47, 48, 'Because thou servest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things, therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger and thirst and nakedness, and in want of all things; and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he hath destroyed thee.' Whatever we have, we should look upon it as a token of God's love to us, and so rejoice in them; not as satisfied with these worldly things, but as they direct us to God. Carnal men rejoice in the creature, but in a carnal and sensual manner; their joy neither ariseth from God, nor endeth in God; they neither look to God as their author, nor make him their end; and it is a naughty heart that can rejoice in anything without God and apart from God.

II. How this must be constant and perpetual, 'Rejoice evermore.'

1. In all estates and conditions; this joy must not be infringed. God's children have or may have cause of rejoicing in God, whatever their outward condition be; and therefore they should make conscience of it, whether their affairs be adverse or prosperous.

[1.] A state of worldly sorrow and affliction is reconcilable and agreeable enough, or consistent with our rejoicing in the Lord. The scriptures abound in the proof of this: 2 Cor. vi. 10, 'As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;' 1 Peter i. 6, 'Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations;' 2 Cor. vii. 4, 'I am filled with comfort, and am exceeding joyful in all our tribulations. So David: Ps. xciv. 19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.' Paul and Silas sung in the dungeon at midnight: Acts xvi. 25, 'At mid-

night Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God.' Tribulation disturbeth not the harmony of a well-composed mind. The reason is, because there is more matter of delight in God than can be taken from him in the creature: John xvi. 22, 'Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.' Whatever falleth out, God's all-sufficiency and heaven's happiness are everlasting grounds of rejoicing. (1.) God's all-sufficiency: Hab. iii. 18, 'Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation.' Your right and interest in God is not made void by the blasting of the creature. So (2.) Hopes of glory remain unshaken: Mat. v. 12, 'Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.' Though the world be bent against us with all manner of spite and hatred, yet there is more cause of joy than sorrow. There cannot be more evil in our sufferings than there is good in God and happiness in heaven.

[2.] A state of sorrow and affliction is not only consistent with this holy rejoicing, but doth much promote it; partly as afflictions conduce to refine, and purge the soul from the dregs of sense, and make it capable of the comforts of the Spirit: Jude 19, 'Sensual, having not the Spirit.' Till our taste be clarified from the feculency and dregs of sense, we cannot relish spiritual comforts, nor know their worth and value. Whilst we flow in worldly comforts, the carnal gust and taste is too strong upon us, and so we have mean thoughts of God's consolations. They do best relish with the afflicted, as cordials are for the fainting, not for those whose stomachs are full of phlegm and filth. Partly as they occasion greater experiences of God: 2 Cor. xii. 10, 'Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.' So Rom. v. 3-5, 'And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope: and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.' Partly as they are sanctified, and increase grace; and an increase of grace will bring with it an increase of comfort: Heb. xii. 11, 'Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.' Now from all these considerations, though afflictions may a little damp it, yet they do not extinguish it.

2. We must rejoice evermore, because it is not a duty to be done now and then, or which doth only belong to some eminent christians, that are assured of God's love; but from our first acquaintance with Christ till the last period of our lives it is of use to us.

[1.] Some act of joy our first entrance into christianity is begun with, before our interest is well settled and cleared. There are general grounds of rejoicing which oblige all; as that there is a good God, and poor drooping spirits should apply themselves to him who hath comforts for his mourners: Isa. lvii. 15, 'For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.' That there is a merciful and able Saviour

a gospel, or new covenant, that bringeth glad tidings to sinners: Luke ii. 10, 11, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' The world being fallen under God's wrath and deserved condemnation, it is matter of joy that God hath found a ransom, and that he offereth pardon and life to those who will seek it and accept it upon his blessed terms. It is matter of joy before we have interest in these things; a possible conditional reconciliation with God, that dreadful controversy taken up, heaven and earth kissing each other, that life and immortality is brought to light, and such a blessedness discovered as satiateth the mind of man, without which man would have been but as leviathan in a little pool. In short, the gospel showing a sure way of reconciliation with God, and the everlasting fruition of him in glory; the very offers of it stir up a joy in us. And wherever the gospel cometh, it hath at its first coming upon these accounts been entertained with joy. As when Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, Acts viii. 8, 'There was great joy in that city;' not only joy, but great joy. So it is said of the jailer, that new convert, Acts xvi. 34, that 'he rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house;' he was but even recovered out of the suburbs of hell, ready to kill himself just before, ver. 27, so that a man would think he should easier fetch water out of a flint, or a spark of fire out of the bottom of the sea, than to find joy so soon in such an heart, yet he rejoiced, though he was still in danger of his life, for treating those as guests whom he should have kept as prisoners. So 2 Cor. viii. 2, we read of 'the abundance of their joy,' and 'deep poverty,' because they were acquainted with the gospel. So Zaccheus received Christ joyfully, because salvation was come to his house: Luke xix. 6, 'He made haste and came down, and received him joyfully.' And the man that found the true treasure, 'for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath,' Mat. xiii. 44; he parted with all his satisfactions, comforts, and contentments. This is so sure a truth, that wherever the gospel of Christ is received in any degree and proportion, though not to a converting degree, there is some joy. In converts I have showed you, and you may cast in that text by way of overplus: Acts ii. 41, 'Then they that gladly received the word were baptized; and the same day there were added to the church about three thousand souls.' It is a degree not amounting to conversion. Luke viii. 13, the stony ground 'received the word with joy.' Herod had some kind of joy in hearing John the Baptist: Mark vi. 20, 'He did many things, and heard him gladly;' and his other hearers 'rejoiced in his light for a season,' John v. 35. These had a joy, but not in such a predominant degree as to be able to control their affections to other things, and so this joy could not maintain itself or keep itself alive. Therefore it is said, that 'we are his house, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end,' Heb. iii. 6. The first offers of pardon and life by Christ do stir up this joy in us, as the gospel showeth us a way how to come out of the greatest miseries, and get an interest in the greatest happiness. The possible hope of relief and deliverance cannot but affect us if we be serious.

[2.] As to our progress in the duties and hopes of the gospel, it is

still carried on with joy. Therefore believers are described by it as their vital act: Phil. iii. 3, 'We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.' What is the constant work of a christian but a rejoicing in Christ Jesus, or a thankful sense of our Redeemer's mercy? And therefore the whole life of a christian is represented by keeping a feast: 1 Cor. v. 7, 8, 'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast.' Seven days the Jews kept their feast of unleavened bread, which figureth the whole time of our pilgrimage till we enter into the everlasting sabbath. Every day is a holyday and a feast-day with a christian, now Christ his passover is sacrificed for him; partly through a sense of God's love, partly through the testimony of a good conscience, and partly through the hopes of glory. He is always rejoicing in God, if he be in a right frame and liveth up to his gospel-privileges. Let me chiefly instance in two duties—of prayer, and praise or thanksgiving, which take up a great part of our commerce with God; and especially because they are connected with the duty we are upon, for we must 'Rejoice evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything give thanks.' The duties that follow serve to act and cherish this joy.

(1.) Rejoice evermore so as 'to pray without ceasing.' They that delight in God will be often with him, and can come cheerfully, and unbosom themselves to him, as a man would to his friend. They are not dragged into his presence as into the presence of a judge, but they come freely to him as children to their father. They that love God as their portion and happiness will much converse with him; they are out of their element but when they are praying to God, or speaking of God, or thinking of God; therefore they are still with him. But this is denied of the hypocrite: Job xxvii. 10, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?' They may sometimes cry to him, not because they love him and his service, but because they love their own ease, and to be free from trouble; their straits may force a little service from them. Well, then, without delight we cannot keep a continual course of communion with God in prayer.

(2.) For praise or giving of thanks: 'In everything give thanks;' that is both the fruit of our delight in God and a means to quicken it. One that delights in God will have cause enough to give thanks, whether the creature come or goes. Whatever is taken from him, his joy is not taken from him. He can bless God for his mercies in Christ when retrenched and cut short in the world; though he hath lost some comforts, yet others are yet remaining. Shall one cross embitter all our comforts, as one string broken puts the whole instrument out of tune? They can bless God for taking as well as giving: Job i. 21, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' If the Lord gave all, why may he not take away a part? A thankful heart can praise God for God himself, for choicer mercies yet continued, for some outward mercies remaining. If God gave all, and take but a part, have we any cause to complain?

[3.] Still I prove this joy must be continued throughout the whole course of the spiritual life, because the beginning, progress, and ending is carried on by it; the joy of God is our support in our declining

time, the staff of our age ; for then christians grow more dead to the world and worldly things, and are less moved by them, whether they keep or lose, have or want them ; and then they are nearer to eternity, and have more of that 'Rejoicing in hope' spoken of Rom. xii. 12. This joy is a beginning of the joys in heaven ; here we have a sip, there a full draught. Our delight in God now is of the same nature with that which the saints and angels have in heaven. There is indeed a vast difference in the degrees ; here a little joy entereth into us, but there we 'enter into our master's joy,' Mat. xxv. 23. But though they differ in degree, yet the object and affection is the same. It is the same God and the same glory which delighteth us ; only now they are seen by faith, then they shall be objects of direct sight and fruition ; we shall see him face to face. In short, rejoicing in God is a beginning of the employment we shall then have in heaven. Therefore, when we expect in a few days to be swallowed up of this joy, shall we be no more affected with it now ? We that shall so shortly be so full of joy, shall we be empty now ? Shall not we rejoice, who have now a title to heaven, and shall in a little time be in the full and perpetual possession of it ?

III. The many reasons which show we should have a greater inclination to this blessed work than usually we have, and be oftener in it.

1. Because God hath done so much to raise it in us. All the persons of the Godhead concur and contribute their influence, in that way of operation which is proper to each, to give us grounds of joy.

[1.] The Father giveth himself to us, and his favour as our felicity and portion. God's love is the bosom and bottom cause of all our happiness, which sets all other causes at work ; and when we have the sure effects of it, can anything so bitter befall us that will not be sweetened by the love of God ? or so evil that this shall not be ground of comfort to us : Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'There are many that say, Who will show us any good ? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.' Carnal men must have something good to sense, but godly men take their full delight in God. This doth them good to the heart ; it is not like a little dew that wets the surface, but like a soaking shower that goeth to the root. And 'more ;' enough to draw us off from the world, enough to swallow up all our infelicities ; yea, to encounter the thoughts of death, hell, and judgment to come.

[2.] The Son is also matter of rejoicing to us, as our Redeemer and Saviour. You are to consider what the Lord Jesus hath done to deliver you from sin, and the bitter curse of the law, and the fears of death, and the flames of hell. The eternal Son of God came to heal our wounds : Isa. liii. 5, 'By his stripes we are healed ;' to make our peace with the Father by the blood of his cross, Col. i. 20 ; to vanquish our spiritual enemies, and triumph over them, Col. ii. 14, 15 ; to be the ransom of our souls, 1 Tim. ii. 6 ; the captain of our salvation, Heb. ii. 10 ; the head of his church, Eph. i. 22 ; the treasury and storehouse of all our comforts, John i. 16 ; and, in short, he hath recovered us to God, and hath given us an interest in the comforts of



his gospel and the promises thereof, which are in him Yea, and in him Amen; and is not this matter of joy and rich comfort? The whole covenant breeds 'strong consolation' in the hearts of God's people, Heb. vi. 18; and David saith, Ps. cxix. 111, 'Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart.' It doth our hearts good when we take these things for our happiness. Abraham rejoiced in the forethought or foresight of Christ's day: John viii. 56, 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad.' And should not we rejoice, that live under the clearest dispensation of it? The benefits of our redemption by Christ should be so esteemed that no affliction should be grievous. The kingdom of Christ is everywhere represented as a kingdom of joy and comfort: Rom. xiv. 17, 'The kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' And if we be real members of it, we should see more cause of rejoicing in Christ Jesus.

[3.] The Holy Ghost concurreth in his way of operation, as a sanctifier, guide, and comforter. As a sanctifier he layeth the foundation for comfort; for it is the spirit of delusion that comforts us in our sins, that by imaginary comforts he may keep you from those that are real, solid, and everlasting; but the true Spirit is a sanctifier, and therefore a comforter; he first poureth in the oil of grace, and then the oil of gladness. Comfort and joy follow holiness, as heat doth the fire. And then as a guide, either in his restraining motions, as he mortifieth sin, or in his inviting motions, as he exciteth and quickeneth to holiness; these are helps to our comfort. Cannot a man live merrily without sin? And do you think a life of holiness irreconcilable with a life of rejoicing? No such matter; it is the ready way to joy, especially to joy spiritual. But chiefly as a comforter; he is purposely given us to keep in this holy fire, and maintain a constant delight in God in our souls. And therefore it is called 'Joy in the Holy Ghost.' Where God himself taketh upon him the office of a comforter surely there will be comfort. Life will quicken, light will illuminate, and the comforting Spirit will comfort in that season and degree God seeth fit and we are capable to receive. Now he comforteth partly as sealing, partly as giving earnest: 2 Cor. i. 22, 'Who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.' As sealing us, by stamping the impress and image of God upon us, which is the mark of his children, the sure evidence of his love, and the pledge of our happiness; and as giving us the earnest of a blessed estate to come; that life is begun, which there shall be perfected. Now consider all this. When God himself will be our portion, our saviour, our comforter, should not all this cause us to rejoice in God, whatever our condition be in the world?

2. All the graces tend to this—faith, hope, and love.

[1.] Faith, that is a dependence upon God for something future that lieth out of sight. Now these invisible and future objects are so great and glorious that they support and comfort the heart, how afflicted soever our present condition be: 1 Peter i. 8, 'In whom believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;' Rom. xv. 13, 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believ-

ing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.' In both these places faith implieth a firm belief of and dependence upon Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, by whom alone God will give us eternal life. This faith will breed a perpetual rejoicing in the soul, if it be firm, strong, and operative.

[2.] Hope breedeth this joy also: Rom. xii. 12, 'Rejoicing in hope;' and Rom. v. 2, 'We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' Though we be pressed with miseries for the present, yet there is a better estate to come, the excellency and certainty of which causeth us to rejoice, and giveth us a foretaste of it. Joy is chiefly for enjoyment, but there is a partial enjoyment by hope, which is not only a desirous expectation, but delightful foretaste or preoccupation of the thing hoped for.

[3.] Love to God also causeth us to rejoice in him, for it showeth itself in a complacency and well-pleasèdness of mind in God as our chief good: Ps. xvi. 5, 6, 'The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup; thou maintainest my lot: the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places.' Certainly they do not love God that do not value and esteem him as better than all worldly things. Other things without him cannot give any solid contentment to the soul, but he without other things is enough; he is all in all to the heart that loveth him. Therefore if we be rooted and grounded in love to God, he will be the delight of our souls and our exceeding joy, whatever we lose in the world. Thus you see faith, hope, and love have a great influence upon this joy.

3. All the ordinances and duties of religion were appointed to breed, and feed, and act, and increase this joy in us. Reading, hearing, praying, meditating, the Lord's supper; all these duties were appointed to quicken the soul to delight in God, and they must all be used to this end. Reading; wherefore were the scriptures written but to beget in us a comfortable sense of the love of God in Christ? 1 John i. 4, 'These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.' The word doth beget and keep up our delight in God by those discoveries which it maketh of his goodness to us, in doctrines, counsels, and promises, that every time we look into God's blessed book we might have a fresh delight acted and stirred in us. So for hearing; its main end is to increase our joy, therefore was the ministry appointed: 'not for that we have dominion over your faith, but as helpers of your joy,' 2 Cor. i. 24. That is the main end of our ministry, because the gospel dispensation is a dispensation of grace. We must press repentance, but it is to cure you of your vain rejoicings in order to more solid comfort; to put you out of your fool's paradise, that you may prize and esteem your Saviour, and set more by him than by all the pleasures, honours, and riches of the world. Holy mourning is in order to comfort, the vain delight and carnal rejoicing is checked and deadened, that we may raise in you the true joy. We are helpers of your joy in God's way, and truly that is the only way. We need not over-gospel the gospel, as honey needs not to be sweetened with other things. So prayer; we put promises in suit that we may have new experiences of the love and bounty of God: John xvi. 24, 'Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.' In prayer you come to solace yourselves with God and to

unbosom yourselves to him as your best friend. Meditation on God's excellences and benefits, it is still to maintain this delight in God: Ps. cxl. 34, 'My meditation of him shall be sweet, I will delight in the Lord.' The Lord's supper was appointed for the elevation of our joy to the height; it is our spiritual feast and refectation, that we may go on our way with joy; as the eunuch, when baptized, 'He went on his way rejoicing,' Acts viii. 39. Here the whole gospel is applied and sealed to us; and bread and wine doth not so much cheer the body as the body and blood of Christ doth the soul. You come not only to remember your privileges by Christ, but it is your solemn investiture; here you take possession of Christ and all his benefits.

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## SERMON II.

*Rejoice evermore.*—1 THESS. v. 16.

USE. To press you to this spiritual rejoicing. God never hath our hearts till he hath our delight. To enforce this exhortation, I must—(1.) Take off prejudices; (2.) Persuade by arguments; (3.) Direct you in the exercise of this great duty.

*First,* To take off prejudices and objections which may lie in the hearts of men against this duty.

1. Prejudice. How can this rejoicing evermore stand with that sense which we should have of afflictions coming from God? Is it not a stupid thing to be merry when God is angry? Must we rejoice in troubles notwithstanding the breaches God hath made upon us? I answer—

[1.] Carnal rejoicing is a very provoking thing, because it is an affront to God's providence. It is a defiance of the dispensation we are under when we are not affected with our own or our brethren's misery, or our father's anger: Isa. xxii. 12-14, 'In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. It was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely, this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die.' So James iv. 9, 'Be afflicted, and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness;' and chap. v. 1, 'Go to now, ye rich men; weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you;' and ver. 5, 'Ye have lived in pleasure upon earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter.' Now compare this with chap. i. 2, 'My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.' Never any were reproved for rejoicing in God in calamities, but for carnality and for rejoicing in sensual satisfactions. If you say the answer cometh not home; you may rejoice in unjust dealings and persecutions of men, or in trials; but in corrective dispensations from the immediate hand of God how shall we rejoice? I reply—We are directed to this

rejoicing in God in those calamities which come from God's immediate hand: Hab. iii. 17, 18, 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' Surely famine and desolation come from God, and come as a punishment; 'Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.' This spiritual rejoicing is not irreverence, but an honour to God when we are satisfied in him though all creature comforts and means of subsistence are blasted; and we show that we have comfort enough in God, that is out of the reach of trouble, and this can support us when all things beneath God fail: Job v. 22, 'At destruction and famine shalt thou laugh.' Stupidity and carnal mirth are very unseasonable, but to live above the creature and without the creature is an high point of faith and love to God; and to rejoice in him when all outward causes of rejoicing cease, is so far from being a sin, that it is an eminent duty. Our better part and happiness is out of the reach of trouble, though it be never so grievous.

[2.] We must distinguish between the sense of affliction and support under it; for we must neither slight it nor faint under it: Heb. xii. 5, 'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.' These are the two extremes. The sense of our condition is necessary, that we may not slight the affliction; and the support, that we may not faint under it. Both may and must stand together; for in all worldly cases 'we must weep as if we wept not,' 1 Cor. vii. 30; and again, 'Sorrow not as those without hope,' 1 Thes. iv. 13, and so be without all comfort. In short, the sense is necessary for improvement, the support to make trouble easy.

(1.) If we have not a sense, we cannot make a right use of our sufferings and afflictions, but our hearts will be more hardened in sin. God is their author, repentance is their end, and their cause is sin: Lam. iii. 39, 'Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?' And therefore, though we be not to droop and languish under our afflictions, yet we must consider the righteous providence of God; and the smart of his displeasure must awaken us to repentance, otherwise the affliction is frustrated, and you leave the thorn in your foot, which caused your first pain and soreness. If you do not repent of your sins, and no cure is wrought, if you still let out your hearts freely to the world, and the prosperities and delights thereof, this is the highway to security and carelessness of soul concerns.

(2.) You must not faint and despair, as if all joy and comfort in God were lost. For—

(1st.) We are not utterly undone as long as we have God for our portion: Lam. iii. 24, 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him.' Though the creature be blasted, he is alive still, and should be the joy and delight of our souls; for then we are tried, whether he be so or no.

(2d.) God is a loving Father when he corrects. Our chastisements are effects not only of his justice, but mercy; it is a rod in the hand of our Father wherewith we are scourged: John xviii. 11, 'The cup

which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?' and so it is an act of love and kindness to us.

(3*d.*) Our Father hath mercy enough to turn it to our benefit: Heb. xii. 10, 'They verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness.' And shall we mourn for that which is for our benefit? If we rejoice in God and holiness it will not be so. If God will stir us up to more humility, contempt of the world, confidence in himself, and to place our delight in him alone, shall we be dejected and displeased, as if some great wrong had been done us?

(4*th.*) If this affliction fits us for everlasting happiness, there is cause of joy still left: 2 Cor. iv. 17, 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' One that must have eternal glory, and eternal glory promoted by such a means, should not grudge at a little suffering and affliction, which is the common burden of the sons of Adam.

2. Prejudice. Christ hath pronounced those blessed that mourn for sin: Mat. v. 4, 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted;' how then can we rejoice evermore?

*Ans.* 1. Mourning for sin is necessary to cure our vain rejoicing, or delight in carnal vanities; and at our entrance into christianity this is a duty highly incumbent upon us, because of sin and the curse which we naturally lie under. Certainly while we are out of Christ we have nothing to comfort us, nothing to answer to the terrors of the law, or to reply against the accusations of conscience, and the fears of approaching misery and judgment; and what should we do, if we be sensible of it, but bemoan ourselves, and seek after God with weeping and supplications? God's first work in conversion is to put men out of their fool's paradise, who are satisfied with the creature without himself. Therefore humiliation and a broken-hearted sense of misery is required to deaden the relish and taste of sin, and that men may more prize and esteem the healing grace of Christ, and set more by it than all the pleasures, and riches, and honours of the world. Can a man see himself lost, and in danger of condemnation, and not be grieved? But all this while joy is in the making, and we are providing everlasting comfort for ourselves; for God is ready to ease us as soon as our need requireth and our care will permit: Isa. lvii. 15-17, 'For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit shall fail before me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.' And he saith afterwards, ver. 18, 'I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comfort to him, and to his mourners.' The Lord is ready to come in with sweet and heavenly cordials when the physic worketh but a little kindly: Jer. xxxi. 18-20, 'I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I

shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented, and after that I was instructed, I smote upon the thigh, I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy on him, saith the Lord.' Well, then, this sorrow may be well allowed, because it prevents greater sorrow, namely, the pains of hell. It is better to mourn for a while than for ever, better to have healing grief than tormenting grief; to mourn now, while mourning will do us good, than to howl at last, when all sorrow will be fruitless, and only a part of our punishment, not of our cure. And besides, this sorrow maketh for comfort: Mat. v. 4, 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' When the shower is fallen, the sun cleareth up, and shineth in his full strength and beauty. The vain rejoicing being deadened, we have grounds of everlasting joy, by considering the means God hath appointed for our deliverance from sin, and death, and the flames of hell.

*Ans.* 2. Mourning for sin and joy in the Lord may stand well together; for grace and grace are not contrary, but grace and sin. Those who most mourn for sin do most rejoice in the Lord, and those who most rejoice in the Lord do most mourn for sin; as that christian Niobe wept much because she loved much; and 'she loved much, because much was forgiven her,' Luke vii. 47. As many times the sun shineth when the rain falleth, so there is a mixture of spiritual rejoicing and holy mourning; a deep sense of God's love, and yet a mourning because of the relics of corruption. Well, then, carnal rejoicing is opposite to holy mourning, but not joy in the Lord, therefore these two must be mixed. Sorrow is a servant to faith, and love, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and joy and thankfulness for the mercy of God in Christ is an help to godly sorrow: the one serves to mortify sin, the other to strengthen grace. None are so displeased with themselves for offending so good a God as those that have tasted how good and gracious the Lord is. But more thoroughly to reconcile this holy mixture to your thoughts, take these considerations—

[1.] Godly sorrow is better than all the pleasures of sin: 2 Cor. vii. 10, 'For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of.' Many have repented of their vain pleasures or of their carnal mirth, but never any repented of their godly sorrow. Many have cursed the day of their birth, but never any cursed the day of their new birth. Whoever had any loathsome remembrance of those hours which they spent in reconciling themselves to God, though it were done with grief and bitterness of spirit? Oh! the remembrance of that happy time is ever sweet and grateful to them!

[2.] That mourning for sin containeth in itself the matter of joy is evident, because a poor christian is glad when his heart can melt for sin. A day of serious and sound humiliation is more to him than all carnal pleasures whatsoever; he would not exchange the comfort that he findeth in his penitent tears for all the mirth in the world. He findeth this helpeth to mortify sin, which would mar his rejoicing in God; it helpeth him to value Christ and taste the sweetness of his

love; they are more glad of that measure of grace received than if they were masters and rulers of the world. To be affected with the dishonour done to God is included in their love and esteem of him, and floweth from their delight in him.

[3.] Though they groan under the relics of sin, yet they are glad they are but relics; that they are in any measure gotten out of their former estate is a comfort, though that they are gotten no further be a grief to them. The mourning christian would not change estates with the best and greatest of ungodly men, which showeth there is some solid complacency and delight in their present condition, though not that full joy which they shall have in heaven, when sin shall be no more. Joy is not perfect till holiness be perfect, yet there is joy still, though it be not perfect joy. Here there is *gaudium ineffabile cum suspiriis inenarrabilibus*, a joy mixed with sorrow; groans unutterable, and joys unspeakable and glorious.

*Secondly*, Having removed the prejudices, let me now persuade you to rejoice evermore by the two arguments of necessity and utility.

1. The necessity of it.

[1.] That you may own God as your God; delighting in God is a duty of the first commandment: 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me;' that is, rejoice in no other, but in me only, as thy full and all-sufficient portion and happiness; and therefore it is a part, not of instituted, but of natural worship, such worship which we are to give God, though he had never given direction about it, which immediately resulteth from the owning and choosing of God for our God; for if God be not loved and delighted in more than anything, or all things else, he is not our God. Now, then, is there not a necessity, if you would worship God as God, that you should rejoice evermore, and delight in him as sufficient to your happiness, whether the world cometh or goeth, whether your creature comforts and relations continue with you or be taken from you? God still must be the heart's delight and your exceeding joy: Ps. xxxvii. 4, 'Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.'

[2.] The necessity appeareth by this, how can you be thankful, and prize and value those blessings which you have from God by Christ, unless you rejoice evermore, whatever your condition be in the world? Surely Christ when received must be received with all love and thankfulness, else you do not know the worth and value of his grace; and this esteem is never so much shown in words as in deeds, when you can delight in him more than all things else: Ps. iv. 7, 'Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.' Delight in him so as to lose all for him: Phil. iii. 8, 'For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ;' Heb. x. 34, 'And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.' And you can esteem a naked Christ ground enough of comfort, though you be stripped of all things. The heart is not sound with Christ, till we be so taken up with the love and praise of our Redeemer that we have scarce leisure to observe whether we be rich or poor, or to regard the honours and dishonours of the world.

[3.] How can you profess to follow the conduct of that Holy Spirit who hath undertaken to be your comforter, unless your solid delight and comfort be in God and heaven? I know the Spirit is not so necessarily a comforter as he is a sanctifier; but I speak of that disposition of soul which belongeth both to his sanctifying as well as his comforting operation, and is necessary to grace; and that is to place your happiness not in this world, but in God and heaven, and so to place it there as that this may be a support to you in poverty and disgrace and pain, that nothing may be able to overcome your joy: John xvi. 22, 'Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.' Surely this is a necessary work of the sanctifying Spirit, to teach you to fix your comforts there, where they may be out of the reach of the world, that you may have everlasting grounds of delight, whatever man can do unto you.

2. The utility of it, both with respect to our spiritual benefit and profit, and our acceptance with God.

[1.] With respect to the temper and frame of our own hearts, or our spiritual benefit. There are two parts of regeneration, mortification and vivification; and this rejoicing evermore promoteth both of them.

(1.) As to mortification. It is most profitable to wean us from carnal vanities. The love of sensitive delights is the root of sin; some carnal lure there is, which enticeth and draweth us away from God: James i. 14, 'But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.' This carnal favour is our undoing; pleasure being born and bred with us, and deeply ingrained in our natures, is hardly removed; yet if it should be cherished, it would wholly fasten our souls to earthly things, to riches, pleasures, and honours. Now that we may not be deceived and inveigled with the delights of the flesh, we should think of another joy, which may be continual and perpetual, that so this higher joy may drive out the carnal joy, as a greater nail driveth out the lesser. Man cannot be without some joy, nor can delight lie idle in the soul; it must be occupied and taken up either with the delights of the flesh, and the toys and trifles of the world, or acted upon God and heavenly things. The brutish part of mankind employ their oblectation about trifles, and love pleasures more than God; but the renewed part make God their exceeding joy, and favour the things of the Spirit: Rom. viii. 5, '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.' These latter employ their oblectation aright, and being acquainted with better things, the carnal gust dieth away in them by degrees; as men left off the use of acorns when they found out the use of wheat or bread-corn, or as dainty fare maketh us despise coarser viands. When our delight findeth a better object, it is a great check to those dreggy contentments and petty satisfactions which obtrude themselves upon our senses at every turn; the taste of them is marred, they become sapless to a christian who hath higher and chaster delights. Every life hath its taste, and every man's joy is in worldly vanities, or in God, and other things as they have respect to God. He that is acquainted with God and hidden manna cannot relish the garlic and onions and flesh-pots of Egypt: 'We will be glad,



and rejoice in thee; we will remember thy love more than wine,' Cant. i. 4. So that you see it is a great help to mortification to rejoice evermore in God. Delight puts out delight, as the sun doth the fire.

(2.) As to vivification. It quickeneth us to the life of holiness; 'The joy of the Lord is your strength,' Neh. viii. 10. There is a natural dulness and deadness in holy duties which we find in ourselves, which is only cured by delight in God, which is as oil to the wheels. Everything goeth on easily and smoothly which is carried on with joy and delight; that maketh us yield to duties which otherwise would be tedious and irksome to us. Shechem yielded to be circumcised for the delight which he had in Dinah, Gen. xxxiv. 19; so the apostle saith, 'But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy,' Acts xx. 24. Whatever is done without delight is ingrate and harsh: the mortifying of a lust is like the cutting off an arm with a rusty saw; the performing of a duty like the bringing of a bear to the stake. Delight sweetens things, and puts a life into them. Obedience is done readily, when it is done out of a thankful and delightful sense of our Redeemer's love: Ps. xl. 8, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is in my heart.' So I John v. 3, 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous.' Well, then, this joy is very profitable, both as to mortification and vivification; it is a joy that maketh us better. Carnal joy maketh us worse; it filleth the minds with vanity and folly, and bringeth a slavery upon the heart: Titus ii. 3, 'Serving divers lusts and pleasures;' but this delight doth not corrupt you, but perfect you.

[2.] With respect to God's acceptance. This rejoicing evermore is more honourable to God, and more pleasing to God.

(1.) It is more honourable to God to rejoice in him evermore, as a cheerful servant is a credit to his master. We show forth the goodness of God by the joy of our faith and continual delight in God, however it be with us in the world. God standeth upon his credit that he doth not weary his people: Micah vi. 3, 'O my people! what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.' He is not a rigorous and an hard master, but every way good and kind. The Thessalonians that received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost, were ensamples of all that believed in Macedonia and Achaia, and from them sounded out the word of God to others, 1 Thes. i. 6-8. These propagate their profession, and recommend it to others. Surely God is a good master; he hath made joy both our work and our wages, our way and our end. What is our great end and hope but 'to enter into our Master's joy?' And what is our constant business and work but to 'rejoice evermore?' Why then should we dishonour God by our uncheerfulness, and justify the prejudices of the world, who draw an ill picture of religion in their minds, as if it always looked sour, and with a tormenting and discontented look?

(2.) It is most pleasing to God, the life that he is best pleased withal God, that loveth a cheerful giver, loveth a cheerful sufferer, a cheerful practiser of godliness. Men love a thing done cheerfully, because it

betokeneth love in the party that doeth it. Surely this rejoicing evermore is very pleasing to God, because he doth so often call for it : Ps. xxxvii. 4, 'Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thy heart;' Phil. iv. 4, 'Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice;' Ps. lxxviii. 3, 'Let the righteous be glad, let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice;' and in many other places. Surely that which God calleth for so often and so earnestly should be more cared for by a christian. Be sure of this, that a cheerful spirit is more pleasing to God than a troubled, discontented spirit. When Isaac longed for savoury meat, such as his soul delighted in, a profane Esau taketh his bow to get it for him. When God hath told us how much this is pleasing to him, should we not make more conscience of it?

*Thirdly*, I must direct you how to perform this great and necessary duty.

1. Be prepared for it. The precept belongeth to the renewed and reconciled : Ps. xxxi. 1, 'Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; for praise is comely for the upright.' Delight is not forced by arguments, but drawn forth by inclination; therefore till we have a nature and heart suited to it, we shall never perform it. *Canticum novum, et vetus homo male concordant*—The new song and the old man do not well agree. Well, then, be prepared. It is easy to rejoice after a natural and worldly manner, but not easy to rejoice in the Lord. We are never prepared till our state be altered, heart altered, and life altered.

[1.] Our state must be altered. For naturally we are children of wrath, condemned by the sentence of the law, and under the curse; and doth it become condemned men to rejoice, and go to their execution dancing? No; you must take hold of another covenant, the hope that is set before you, and then you provide matter of joy, yea, of 'strong consolation,' Heb. vi. 18. By taking sanctuary at the Lord's grace, the heirs of promise have strong consolation. When the eunuch was solemnly admitted into God's covenant by baptism, 'He went on his way rejoicing,' Acts viii. 39. By repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we enter into the new covenant, and that is a state of peace, life, and joy. In the new covenant God offers himself to be your reconciled Father, Christ your Saviour, and the Holy Ghost your sanctifier; are you willing to consent to this? And then, why should not you rejoice in the Lord? for you have enough in God.

[2.] Our hearts must be altered; for every man's relish and complacency is according to the temper and constitution of his soul : Rom. viii. 5, '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.' Know his complacency, what it is that a man is pleased with most, and you know the man. An old corrupted heart and mind cannot delight itself in God : 1 Cor. ii. 14, 'But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' But those that have a divine nature put into them cannot satisfy themselves in the world : 2 Peter i. 4, 'Ye may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.' They

can easily spare the pleasures of the flesh, and leave these husks for swine to feed on. A change of heart inferreth a change of delights and pleasures; for the new heart is nothing else but new desires and delights; when you have a new understanding and a new heart, then you will discern and relish spiritual things.

[3.] The life must be altered. For holy walking and fruitfulness in obedience raiseth the greatest joy: John xv. 10, 11, 'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full;' Acts ix. 31, 'Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.' The godly life is the only sweet life: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we had our conversation in the world.' If you will but learn what it is to live in the love of God, and the belief and hope of life eternal, and in universal obedience to the laws of Christ, you will soon see what it is to live in a state of joy and comfort. If you fall into great and wounding sins, no wonder if your rejoicing in God be disturbed. Surely a tender heart cannot make light of sin, but it will cost them broken bones and broken hearts.

2. Act it continually. Partly for that the grounds of rejoicing are everlasting, an eternal God, an unchangeable covenant, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and for ever; a kingdom that cannot be shaken, an infinite and eternal weight of glory. Now these things should ever be thought of by us, that we may keep up our delight in the Lord. Partly because we need it continually to enliven our duties, to sweeten our crosses, and to wean us from our carnal vanities; for otherwise our duties will go off heavily, our crosses will swallow us up with too much sorrow, or our hearts will be apt to be ensnared by sensual delights, unless we remember that we are continually to rejoice in God and heavenly things. Partly because this delight cannot be maintained in the soul unless it be continually exercised; by constant acting it we keep it, and increase it, till at length it cometh to be predominant in the soul, and able to control our affection to other things. It is said of John the Baptist's hearers that 'they were willing to rejoice in his light for a season,' John v. 35; and of the stony ground, Luke viii. 13, 'That they received the word with joy, and believed for a while, but in time of temptation fall away.' Herod heard John the Baptist gladly for a while, Mark vi. 20. God's offering eternal happiness in Christ may affect us for the present, but this rejoicing faileth, being over-mastered by the appetites and desires of the flesh. Therefore to root it and increase it, that it may be firm to the end, it must be continually acted and exercised.

3. Take heed you do not forfeit it, or damp it by any great and wounding sin. As David speaketh, Ps. li. 8, 'Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.' Sin cloudeth the face of God, wasteth our comfort and joy: Ps. xxxii. 3, 4, 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer;' Eph. iv. 30, 'And

grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption.' When the Comforter is offended, he showeth his dislike, and withdraweth when we grossly omit any known duty or commit any foul sin; he will show himself displeased with it, and withdraw his gracious and comfortable presence: Isa. lvii. 17, 'For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth.' On such occasions he is wroth and smiteth; he is wroth, and hideth himself, and then our comfort and delight in God ceaseth. Therefore we should deal more dutifully with the Spirit, neither grieving him by the omission or intermission of necessary duties, nor by the commission of any hardening sin, by some error of the concupiscible or pursuing faculty, or the irascible or eschewing faculty; by sins of the tongue, which most easily bewray corruption, for words discover the temper of the heart. I observe that 'grieving the Spirit,' Eph. iv. 30, is put in the middle between a dissuasive from corrupt communication, ver. 29, 'Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying.' When men endeavour to make themselves glad by carnal discourse, which argueth an heart set for carnal delights, and is contrary to rejoicing in the Lord: Eph. v. 4, 'Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks;' and on the other side, ver. 31, 'Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you.' By discontent, impetuous rage, passionate commotions, contumelious speeches, envy, revenge, we hinder our joy in the Lord. Now all this must be carefully avoided, lest we contract deadness and numbness of conscience.

4. If by sin you have wounded your conscience, and brought smart and mourning upon yourselves, abide not in that estate, but humble yourselves; renewing your repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, suing out your pardon, and getting your wounds healed. Beg of God to restore the joy of his salvation, that your broken hearts may be revived, and your broken bones restored and set in joint again: Ps. li. 8, 'Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice;' and ver. 12, 'Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.' Never rest till you come again to delight in God, with an hearty resolution not to break with God any more: Ps. li. 6, 'Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom;' Ps. lxxxv. 8, 'I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints; but let them not turn again to folly.' God is ready to receive lapsed penitents, that are sensible of their errors, and are willing to return to their duty: Ps. xxxii. 5, 'I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid; I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin;' Isa. lvii. 17, 18, 'For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth; and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him, I will lead him also, and restore comfort to him, and to his mourners.' Your case is sad and grievous, but not desperate and

hopeless; you may have comfort upon God's terms, mourning for sin, that sin may be made bitter to you, and you may not hazard your peace for trifles another time; and putting your business into the hands of your Redeemer, the advocate must make your peace for you: 1 John ii. 1, 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.'

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