

A DESCRIPTION OF THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION.

For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.—
PHIL. III. 3.

AMONG those that entertain thoughts of religion there ever have been and will be many contests who are the true church and people of God. The lazy place their plea and claim in external observations; the serious look to the vitals and heart of religion, and cannot satisfy themselves in an outward form without the life and power. This was the very difference between the true Christians and a certain sort of persons who took upon them to be the circumcision. The Jews are often called 'the circumcision,' therefore Christ is said to be 'a minister of the circumcision,' as being sent to the people that were to be circumcised, Rom. xv. 8. And Peter is called 'the apostle of the circumcision,' Gal. ii. 7, 8, as being appointed to deal with that people. Now these Judaizing Christians, who had a zeal for the ceremonies of the law, did falsely boast themselves to be the only people of God and the true circumcision. This was the difference between them: who were to be accounted the true circumcision, the Jewish zealots, who placed their justification in the ceremonies of the law, or those who adhered to Christ only, and looked for the mercy of God through him? 'We are the circumcision' say they, excluding the other and better sort of Christians. The one had the form, and the other the effect and power; the one were circumcised outwardly, the other spiritually. The apostle judgeth for the latter; the former were *κατατομή*, 'the concision,' who, instead of circumcising themselves, did cut asunder the church of God; but the sound believers were *περιτομή*, 'the circumcision' indeed, as being circumcised by the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by Christ, Col. ii. 11. They were the true children of Abraham, who did indeed perform that for which circumcision was intended, 'for we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.'

In the words we have a threefold description of the true circumcision: how they stand affected to God, Christ, self.

- I. They worship God in the spirit.
- II. They rejoice in Christ Jesus.
- III. They have no confidence in the flesh.

I. They worship God in the spirit. This clause may be interpreted:—

1. In opposition to the legal ordinances. So it is taken, John iv. 23, 24, ‘But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.’ The Jewish worship is in a sense called carnal, the Christian spiritual: Heb. vii. 16, ‘A carnal commandment;’ Heb. ix. 10, ‘Carnal ordinances imposed on them till the time of reformation;’ and ‘shadows,’ Heb. x. 1. Now the Lord would have a spiritual worship, and the truth of what was in these shadows, these external forms, he allowed (instituted in the infancy of the church), so that they ‘worship God in the spirit’ is, they have embraced the true worship of the gospel, and serve God, not by the carnal rites of the law, but by the pure rational worship of the gospel. This is part of the sense.

2. It implieth worshipping God with the inward and spiritual affections of a renewed heart: Heb. xii. 28, ‘Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.’ Worship flowing from grace, engaging the heart in God’s service, is that which God prizeth; therefore a Christian should not rest in an external form: ‘God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit,’ Rom. i. 9.

3. It doth also imply the assistance and continual influence of the Holy Spirit: Eph. vi. 18, ‘Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;’ and Jude, ver. 20, ‘Praying in the Holy Ghost.’

The *doctrine* is this: That a true Christian is known by his worship, or is one that doth worship God in the spirit.

Here I shall show you:—

1. What is worship.

2. Why a true Christian—(1.) doth worship; (2.) why in the spirit.

1. What is worship? It is either internal or external. The internal consisteth in the love and reverence we owe to God; the external in those offices and duties by which our honour and respect to God is signified and expressed.

[1.] Internal. The soul and life of our worship lieth in faith, and reverence, and delight in God above all other things: Ps. ii. 11, ‘Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling;’ such a delight as will become the greatness and goodness of God. Worship hath its rise and foundation in the heart of the worshipper; there it must begin. In our high thoughts and esteem of God especially two things—love and trust.

(1.) Love: Deut. vi. 5, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might.’ We worship God when we give him such a love as is superlative and transcendental, far above the love that we give to any other thing, that so our respect to other things may stoop and give way to our respect to God.

(2.) The other affection whereby we express our esteem of God is trust, which is the other foundation of worship: Ps. lxxii. 8, ‘Trust in

the Lord at all times, pour out your hearts before him.' Delightful adhesion to God, and an entire dependence upon him; if either fail or be intermitted, our worship faileth. If delight: Job xxvii. 10, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?' Isa. xliii. 22, 'But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.' They that love God and delight in him cannot be long out of his company; they take all opportunities and occasions of being with God. So dependence and trust: Heb. iii. 12, 'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God;' James i. 6, 7, 'Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.' Dependence begets observance: they that distrust God's promises will not long keep his precepts. If we look for all from him, we will often come to him and take all out of his hands, be careful that we do not offend him and displease him.

[2.] External. In those offices and duties by which our honour and respect to God is signified and expressed—as by invocation, thanksgiving, praise, obedience. God will be owned both in heart and life, in all these prescribed duties by which our affections towards him are acted. If God did not call for outward worship, why did he appoint the ordinances of preaching, praying, singing psalms, baptism, and the Lord's Supper? God, that made the whole man, body and soul, must be worshipped of the whole man; therefore, besides the inward affections, there must be external actions; in short, we are said to worship God either with respect to the duties which are more directly to be performed to God, or in our whole conversation.

(1.) With respect to the duties which imply our solemn converse with God, and are more directly to be performed towards him—such as the word, prayer, praise, thanksgiving, and sacraments—surely these must be attended upon, because they are special acts of love to God and trust in him. And these duties are the ways wherein God hath promised to meet with his people, and appointed us to expect his grace: Exod. xx. 24, 'In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and bless thee;' and Mark iv. 24, it is a rule of commerce between us and God, 'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given.'

(2.) In our whole conversation: Luke i. 74, 75, 'That we should serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our lives.' A Christian's life is a constant hymn to God, or a continued act of worship; ever behaving himself as in the sight of God, and directing all things as to his glory. He turneth second table duties into first: James i. 27, 'Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world;' Heb. xiii. 16, 'To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased;' Eph. v. 21, 22, 'Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.' Now a true Christian maketh conscience of all this; as of internal worship, so external; as of solemn and sacred acts, so of a constant awfulness of God.

2. Secondly, The reasons.

1st, Why a true Christian doth worship God.

2dly, Why in the spirit.

1st, For the worship itself.

[1.] Because they have a deep sense of his being and excellency impressed upon their hearts.

(1.) His being. These two notions live and die together: that God is, and that he ought to be worshipped and served, Heb. xi. 6; the one immediately floweth from the other. The first commandment is, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me;' the second, 'Thou shalt not worship a graven image.' If God be, worship is certainly due to him: they that have no worship are as if they had no God. The psalmist proveth atheism by that: Ps. xiv. 1, 'The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God;' and ver. 4, 'They call not upon God.'

(2.) His excellency. They have a clearer sight of God than others have, and are more acquainted with him than others are; and, therefore, are more prone to worship. When God had proclaimed his name, and manifested himself to Moses, Exod. xxxiv. 8, 'He made haste, and bowed himself to the earth, and worshipped.' None so ready and forward: Ps. ix. 10, 'They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.'

[2.] Because they have a principle within them which inclineth them to God: their hearts are carried to him, as light bodies are carried upward. There is such a grace as godliness, 2 Pet. i. 6, and distinct in the notion from righteousness and holiness: 1 Tim. vi. 11, 'Follow after righteousness, godliness;' 2 Pet. iii. 11, 'What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?' What is the notion then of it? It is *tendentia mentis in Deum*—an impression left upon their hearts, which causeth a bent and tendency towards God, as the fountain of their mercies, the joy of their souls, and the centre of their rest. There is such an inclination—in some stronger, in others more remiss; but in all that are made partakers of a divine nature in some good degree, so as ordinarily to prevail over the inclinations of the flesh. As holiness noteth purity of life, so godliness an inclination to God.

[3.] Because of their relations to God, which they own. God pleadeth his right: Mal. i. 6, 'If I be a father, where is mine honour? if I be a master, where is my fear?' A father must have honour, and a master must have fear; and God, who is the common parent and absolute master of all, must have both. A worship and honour in which reverence and fear is mixed with love and joy; or, as the owning of a king implieth submission to his government, so the owning of a God adoration and worship.

2dly, Why in the spirit?

[1.] Because worship without the spirit is like a body without the soul; it is but the carcase of a duty. The heart must be the principal and chief agent in this business: Mat. xv. 8, 'This people draweth nigh to me with their mouths, and honoureth me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.' There is no love to God, rather an habitual aversion from him.

[2.] External worship is but a means to the internal; as prayer, hearing, reading, receiving, tend to promote love, trust, heavenly-mindedness, self-denial, mortification, purity of life and conversation. Now, as the means are only valuable with respect to their end, so are these duties of hearing, reading, singing. Diligence in the use of means is good, but those acts that are conversant about the end are better,—such as the love of God, and delight and trust in God; for *finis est nobilior mediis*. Nay, amongst the internal acts, as they are means to one another, so the nearer respect they have to the last end, the more noble they are; as faith is more noble than bare knowledge, because knowledge tendeth to faith, Ps. ix. 10; love than faith, because faith tendeth to love, Gal. v. 6; 1 Cor. xiii. 13. Faith causeth love, and serveth as the bellows to enkindle this holy fire; and in love, desire maketh way for delight, as its noblest act. And accordingly must all things be valued as they suit the great end, which is the enjoying of God.

[3.] A man doth not partake of the gospel blessing till he doth serve God in the spirit; that is, till he be made partaker of the regenerating grace and actual influence of the Holy Spirit.

(1.) Of his regenerating grace: Rom. vii. 6, 'That we should serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter.' New life is the principle of evangelical obedience; and when we are renewed by the Holy Ghost, we walk in newness of conversation. The gospel is a ministry of the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 8. It not only requireth duty, but giveth power to perform it. The letter of the law requireth, but giveth no principle or inclination to do it; that is from regenerating grace, or the law written upon our hearts: John iii. 6, 'That which is born of Spirit, is spirit;' that is, suited, inclined, disposed, fitted for a spiritual life.

(2.) Actual influence. He still worketh in us what is pleasing in God's sight; helpeth to mortify corruption: Rom. viii. 13, 'If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' To perfect holiness, Heb. xiii. 21, that so we may serve God in all purity of life. We cannot get, nor keep, nor act, nor increase grace of ourselves, if forsaken by the Spirit of grace; the foulest sins would become our pleasure, and the most unquestionable duties our burden. If he withdraw his quickening influences, you can do nothing.

Use 1. It reproveth those that either do not worship God, or by halves, or not worship him in the Spirit.

1. It disproveth their confidence that do not worship God. There are an irreligious sort of men that neither call upon him in public or in private, in the family or in the closet, but wholly forget the God that made them, and at whose expense they are maintained and kept.

[1.] Let me reason with you as men. Wherefore had you reasonable souls, but to praise, and honour, and glorify your Creator and Preserver? If you believe there is a God, why do you not call upon him? The neglect of his worship argueth a doubting of his being. If there be such a supreme Lord, to whom you must one day give an account, how dare you live without him in the world? All the creatures glorify him, Ps. cxlv. 10; they passively, but you have a heart and a tongue to glorify him actually. Man is the mouth of the crea-

tion, to return to God the praise of all that wisdom, glory, and power which is seen in the things that are made. Now, you should make one among the worshippers of God.

[2.] Let me reason with you as Christians. Are you a Christian, and have such advantages to know more of God, and will you be dumb and tongue-tied in his praise? Have you the discovery of the wonders of his love in your redemption by Christ, and do you see no cause to own and acknowledge him? Have you no necessities to bring to the throne of grace? In Christianity, you know his particular providence and redemption by Christ, and should you eat, and drink, and trade, and sleep, and never think of God? Have you no pardon to sue out, no grace that you stand in need of, that you should live like a brute beast, go on in the circle of trade, business, comforts, and never think of God? You profess you know him, but in your works you deny him, and sin doubly, both against the light of reason and Christianity. All that are not avowed atheists must have some worship.

2. It cutteth off their confidence that worship him by halves. They are of many sorts.

[1.] Some worship him in public, but never in private and secret; though Christ hath given us direction to enter into our closets, Mat. vi. 6. And surely every Christian should make conscience of secret duties. There are many disputes about praying in families, though those that take their daily bread should seek God together; but there can be no dispute about praying in secret, for the precept that requireth prayer first falleth upon single persons before it falleth upon families and churches: 1 Thes. v. 17, 'Pray without ceasing.' This cannot concern families and churches; they are done at stated times, when they can conveniently meet; but every man in secret is to be often with God. Christ was often alone: Mark i. 35, 'He went out into a solitary place, and there prayed.' Surely Christ had not such need to pray as we have, nor such need of retirement, his love to God being always fervent, and so in no danger of distraction. God poured out the Spirit that we might go apart and mourn over soul-distempers, Zech. xii. 10-14. Now, God's precious gifts are not given in vain. So, Acts x. 2, Cornelius 'prayed to God alway.' Therefore, certainly, secret prayer is a necessary duty of God's worship, to be observed by all that acknowledge God to be God, and the world to be ruled by his providence, or themselves to have any need of his grace and pardon, or hope for anything from him in the world to come. Therefore, if you have any sense of religion, or think you have any need of particular commerce with God, you should make conscience of secret prayer.

[2.] Others that make conscience of external worship, prayer, hearing, reading, singing of psalms, but not of internal worship, faith, love, and hope. The external forms were appointed for the acting or increasing of internal grace; and so they superficially are conversant about the means, and never mind the end. External worship is sensible and easily done, but internal worship is difficult. External worship may procure us esteem with men; but internal, acceptance with God. External worship satisfieth blind conscience, but doth not better the heart. External worship may puff us up with a vain confidence,

but internal worship maketh us lament spiritual defects. We have not that purity of heart, that deep sense of the world to come, that absolute dependence upon God, which may quiet our souls in all exigencies. Surely they are better Christians that have the effect of the ordinances than they that have only the formality of them. The external duty may procure us toil and wearisomeness to the flesh, but the internal worship bringeth us comfort and peace. The more faith in Christ, and love to God, and lively hope of eternal life, the more is the soul comforted. Therefore, if you will always lick the glass, and never taste the honey, go on in a track of duties, but you will have no comfort in them. In short, they that go on in external duties may be said in some sense to serve God, but they do not seek after him. In pretence they make God the object of their worship, for they do not worship an idol; but they do not make him the end of their worship. A man maketh God the end of his worship when he will not go away from God without God; when he looketh to this, that his delight in God be quickened, his dependence upon God strengthened, his hatred of sin increased, and by every address to God is made more like God.

[3.] It reproveth and disproveth those that put on a garb of devotion when ministering before the Lord, but are slight and vain in their ordinary conversation. A man should be in some measure such out of duty as he giveth out himself to be in duty; for his whole life should be, as it were, a continued act of worship: Prov. xxiii. 17, 'Let not thy heart envy sinners, but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.' We should still live in a dependence upon God, and in subjection to him: Ps. xvi. 8, 'I have set the Lord always before me: he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.' In point of reverence, and in point of dependence, because we are in danger to miscarry, both by the delights of sense and the terrors of sense. If a reverence of and a dependence on the great God do still possess our hearts, we shall carry ourselves more soberly as to the comforts of the world, and not be easily discouraged and daunted with the fears of the world. This is our preservative, and maketh us true and faithful to our great end.

3. Those that do not serve God in the spirit. You should worship God so as it may look like worship and service performed to God, and due to God. It is spiritual worship God requireth, and is ever pleased withal. He 'seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth,' John iv. 23; and this is most agreeable to his nature: John iv. 24, 'God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.' When hearts wander, when affections do not answer expressions, is this like service and worship done to an all-seeing and all-knowing spirit? Is there any stamp of God upon the duty, of his majesty, goodness, and great power?

Use 2. For the comfort of good Christians. Here is their carriage towards God briefly set down—they 'worship God in the spirit.' A Christian is described by his proper act, *worship*; and by the proper object thereof, *God*; and by the proper part and seat thereof, *in the spirit*. Do you worship him with reverence, and with delight and affection, with a trust, hope, and confidence?

1. With reverence. Considering God's majesty and our own vileness. The majesty of God: Mal. i. 14, 'For I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts.' Slight worship argueth lessening thoughts of God. Do you know to whom you speak? It is a contempt of God if you think anything will serve the turn; you have mean thoughts of him, and do not consider him as you ought to do. So our vileness: Gen. xviii. 27, 'Who am I, that am but dust and ashes, that I should speak unto God?'—dust as to the baseness of his original, and ashes by the desert of sin. In our nearer approaches to God, thus should we think of ourselves.

2. With delight and affection, as our reconciled father in Christ. So he is to us as the well-spring of all grace and goodness. The great work of the gospel is to bring us to God as a father, Gal. iv. 6. God as a judge, by the spirit of bondage, driveth us to Christ; but Christ, by the spirit of adoption, bringeth us back again to God as a father. This is the evangelical way of worshipping, that in a child-like manner we may come to God.

3. With trust, hope, and confidence. He knoweth all our wants, can relieve all our necessities: Ps. lvii. 2, 'I will cry unto God most high, who performeth all things for me.' Worship would be a cold formality if we had to do with one that knew us not, or had not sufficiency and power to help us. But God is omniscient and all-sufficient, and hath promised to hear and help us in our straits; he knoweth our necessities when we know them not.

II. We come now to the second character: *And rejoice in Christ Jesus.*

Thence observe:—

Doct. That the great work of a Christian is a rejoicing in Christ Jesus, or a thankful sense of our Redeemer's mercy.

In opening this point I shall use this method:—

1st, Show you what is this rejoicing in Christ.

2dly, I shall prove that Christ is matter of true rejoicing in his person, offices, benefits.

3dly, That Christians are not sound and sincere in their profession, unless they do keep up this rejoicing in Christ.

First, What is this rejoicing?—(*καὶ χῶμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*). The original word implieth such a degree of joy as amounts to glorification or boasting, or such an exultation of mind as breaketh out into some sensible expression of it. There are in it three things:—

1. An apprehension of the good and benefit which we have by Christ; for otherwise how can we rejoice and glory in him? 1 Cor. i. 30, 31, 'But of him ye are in Christ Jesus, who of God is made to us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption; that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.' Christ is all that our whole rejoicing may be in him, who hath enlightened us with the knowledge of the gospel, and showed us the way of salvation, and is the author of our justification and sanctification, and of our deliverance from all calamities, and from death itself. These benefits are the cause of our rejoicing—namely, the promises of the gospel, sealed by his death, and the graces conveyed to us by his Spirit. We rejoice and glory in him, as the only and all-sufficient

Saviour. They that gloried in circumcision gloried in their entrance into the legal covenant; they became debtors to the law, but Christ hath ratified it in the new covenant by his blood; therefore here is more abundant cause of rejoicing.

2. Due affections of contentment, joy, love, exultation of heart, that followeth thereupon. A blessing ourselves in our portion, that this great happiness is fallen to our share, offered to us, at least, if not possessed by us. The very knowledge of Christianity breedeth joy: Acts viii. 8, 'And there was great joy in that city,' that is, upon the tendering of the gospel; much more when we believe in Christ, and embrace his religion, and resolve to become his disciples. They received his word gladly, Acts ii. 41. His doctrine must be welcomed with the heart, with all love and thankfulness. It is said of the jailor, Acts xvi. 34, that he 'rejoiced, believing in God, and all his house.' He was but newly recovered out of the suburbs of hell, ready to kill himself but just before; so that a man would think it were easier to fetch water out of a flint, or a spark of fire out of the bottom of the sea, than to expect or find joy in such a heart; yea, though still in danger of life for treating those as guests whom he should have kept as prisoners, yet he rejoiced when acquainted with salvation by Christ. More especially should we rejoice when the comfort is sealed up to our consciences: Rom. v. 11, 'Not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.' The eunuch, when he was baptized, he 'went on his way rejoicing,' Acts viii. 39.

3. An expression of it, by an open profession of Christ's name, both in word and deed, whatever it costs us. They are said to rejoice in Christ Jesus who in those times could profess his name, though with hazard and self-denial. As the Thessalonians, who received the word with much affliction, and much assurance and joy in the Holy Ghost, 1 Thes. i. 6. And it is expressed by the parable of the man that found the true treasure, and for joy thereof sold all that he had to buy the field, Mat. xiii. 44. They are willing to lose all other contentments and satisfactions for this; Christ is enough. They needed this joy to encourage them against the trials which they then underwent for Christ's sake and the gospel's sake.

Secondly, That Christ is matter of true rejoicing, for they are fools that rejoice in baubles and trifles. A Christian's joy may be owned and justified. When Christ's birth was celebrated by angels, it is said, Luke ii. 10, 'Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy.' Here is joy, and great joy in salvation by Christ. And Mary: Luke i. 46, 47, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour.' Surely there is no cause of joy wanting in God, and in God coming as a Saviour. In short, in Christianity, all is fitted to fill our hearts with delight and joy.

1. The wonderful mysteries of our redemption by Christ. Thereby, [1.] A way is found out for our reconciliation with God, and how that dreadful controversy may be taken up, and heaven and earth may kiss each other, 2 Cor. v. 19. Surely this is glad tidings of great joy to self-condemned sinners, who stood always in fear of the wrath of God and the flames of hell. What joy is it to a condemned man,

that is ready every day to be taken away to execution, to hear that his peace is made, that pardon may be had, if he will seek it and sue it out!

[2.] A distinct relation of a defeat of the great enemies of our salvation—death, hell, the devil, and the world. He hath not only made our peace with the Father, by the blood of his cross, but vanquished our spiritual enemies, and triumphed over them, Col. ii. 14, 15. Long enough might we have lain in prison before the utmost farthing had been paid, or done anything to procure our deliverance, if our compassionate Redeemer had not taken the work in hand: had he turned us to any creature, we had been helpless. It was he purchased grace to overcome the devil, the world, and the flesh; that quickened you when you were dead in sin; that put Satan out of office, and ‘delivered us from the present evil world,’ Gal. i. 4. And is not this matter of rejoicing to us?

[3.] That hereby he hath not only abolished death, but brought life and resurrection to light, 2 Tim. i. 10. By entering into that other world, after his sufferings, he hath given us a visible demonstration of the reality of the world to come, and in his gospel discovered a blessedness to us, which satiateth the heart of man and salveth the great sore of the whole creation. If God had made nothing richer than the world, the heart of man would have been as leviathan in a little pool.

2. In the promises of Christ there is matter of joy. In the general, God is your God, and that is more than to have all the world to be yours: compare 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 thy seed after thee,’ with Ps. cxliv. 15, ‘Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.’ We have an eternal and all-sufficient God to live upon, and from whom to derive our joy and comfort; a God infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness to be our portion. And where is matter of joy and comfort, if not in God? Behold the difference between carnal men and the children of God; the world is their portion, and God is ours; and who is better provided for? More especially we are told, 1 Tim. iv. 8, that ‘Godliness hath the promises of this life, and that which is to come.’ Heaven and earth are laid at the feet of godliness; what would you more? Surely we have full consolation offered to us in the promises of the gospel; he can want nothing to his comfort who hath an interest in them. To instance, in the lowest blessings, those which concern this life: God is our God, that can cure all diseases, overcome all enemies, supply all wants, deliver in all dangers, and will do it so far as is for our good; and desires of anything beyond this are not to be satisfied, but mortified, Ps. lxxxiv. 11. But then for the more excellent promises of the new covenant, which concern another world, such as the pardoning of our sins, the healing our natures, and the glorifying of our persons: 2 Pet. i. 4, ‘Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.’ The pardon of all our sins, which are the great trouble and burden of the creatures. Who will rejoice like the pardoned sinner,

who is discharged of his debt, eased of his burthen, and hath his filth covered? Ps. xxxii. 1, 'Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.' Oh, the blessedness of the man! He is like one fetched back from execution. Then the taking away of the stony heart, and the giving of an holy and heavenly heart. Oh, what matter of joy is this, to have all things necessary to life and godliness! What is the trouble of a gracious heart, but the relics of corruption? Rom. vii. 24. Paul groaneth sorely, but yet blesseth God for his hopes by Christ, ver. 25. Renewing grace is dearly bought, and plentifully bestowed, Titus iii. 5, 6; and graciously offered to those that will seek after it: Prov. i. 23, 'Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you.' And this promise to be fulfilled by a divine power, 2 Peter i. 3. Oh, what a comfort is the Redeemer's grace to a soul that hath been long exercised in subduing sin! It is true it groans while it is a-doing, yet the very groans of the sick show that life and health is sweet. Healing, renewing grace maketh other things sweet; as your whole duty to God, it maketh it become your delight. But the great promise is eternal life: 1 John ii. 25, 'And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.' That is a matter of joy indeed. What! to live for ever with God! the forethought of it reviveth us; the foretaste of it is a kind of heaven upon earth, 1 Peter i. 8. The certain hope of it will swallow up all grief and sorrow, Rom. v. 2, 3. So that there is no question but that in the promises of Christ there is matter of great joy.

3. The enjoyments of Christianity are very pleasing. I add this to show you, that it is not all in expectation, if we consider not only what we shall be, but what we are. For the present:—

[1.] We have peace of conscience, Rom. v. 1; Mat. xi. 29; Phil. iv. 7. Rest for our souls is anxiously sought after in other things, but only found in Christ's religion, and living according to the precepts and institutions thereof. As Noah's dove found not a place whereon to rest the sole of her foot, so we flutter up and down, but never have any firm peace of heart and conscience, till we submit to Christ, and take his counsel.

[2.] A sense of the love of God: Rom. v. 5, 'Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given unto us;' and 1 Peter ii. 3, 'If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.'

[3.] God's presence with us, and our communion with him: 1 John i. 3, 4, 'And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, that your joy may be full;' and John viii. 29.

[4.] Access to God, with assurance of welcome and audience: John xvi. 24, ' whatsoever ye ask in my name, ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.'

[5.] The foretastes of the life to come, Rom. viii. 23, and 2 Cor. iii. 5. So that all is to stir up this delight and joy in the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. The precepts of Christ show that we have matter of rejoicing in him. What are the great duties required? To love God! Now what pain is it to delight in the Lord as our all-sufficient portion? To be mindful of him, and meditate of his excellencies and benefits: Ps. civ. 34, 'My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.' Is it any toilsome thing to come in a childlike manner and

unbosom ourselves to him, and beg the renewed testimonies of his love to us, especially when set awork by the Holy Ghost? Gal. iv. 6. To believe in Christ is difficult, but pleasant; to consider the Lord Jesus as the suitable remedy for the lapsed estate of mankind, both as to his work with God and us, Heb. iii. 1. He came to destroy sin and misery. Whenever we reflect upon Christ, what do we find but ample grounds of joy? John xiv. 2. 'Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me;' that is, to get off our trouble, consider we have an all-sufficient God, and an all-sufficient mediator: Rom. xv. 13, 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.' Repentance requireth sorrow for sin, only as it tendeth to joy and comfort, Mat. v. 5. It is a tormenting, but a curing sorrow. The word of God taketh care that a penitent, who hath foully miscarried, should not be swallowed up of over-much grief, 2 Cor. ii. 7. In the general, repentance and mortification are our physic to expel the noxious humours that would bring us, not only to death, but to damnation, and to keep the soul in due plight and health. And then, for self-government, we are to bridle our passions and appetites: Gal. v. 24, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.' The bridling our passions, it is but forbidding us to be miserable, and throw out everything that would disquiet the soul. Christ's great care was that the reasonable creature might live in peace and holy security, therefore hath discharged our cares, and sorrows, and fears: our cares, that they might not distract our minds: Phil. iv. 6, 'Be careful for nothing;' and 1 Peter v. 7, 'Cast all your care upon the Lord.' These prohibitions show you the goodness of Christ. He hath made it unlawful for you to be troubled, and to perplex your minds with anxious and distrustful thoughts. Oh! what pleasant lives we might live if we could entirely cast ourselves into the arms of God, and refer all things to the wisdom and powerful conduct of his providence! The scripture is as plentiful also in forbidding sorrow: 1 Thes. iv. 13, 'Sorrow not as those that are without hope.' Dejection and anguish of spirit is your sin. So for fear: Isa. xli. 10, 'Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God;' Heb. xiii. 6, 'So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me.' What should a Christian fear? Dangers by the way?—God is his helper. To be cast into hell when he goeth out of the world?—Christ hath showed him how to flee from wrath to come; he feareth it with a fear of caution, so as to shun it, but not with a fear of perplexity, so as to disquiet and perplex his soul, for Jesus hath delivered him from wrath to come, 1 Thes. i. 10. Christianity is as contrary to sadness and misery, as life to death, and light to darkness. For the other, the crucifying and bridling of our lusts, which carry us to the good things of this world, why, that is troublesome, to be debarred of the delights which nature affects; but here are no rigorous exactions, but such as are agreeable to the reasonable nature. Christ hath forbidden us no pleasure but what may be a sin or a snare to us; he would not have man to degenerate and turn beast. All Christ's restraints are but necessary cautions for our safety. Is it burdensome to a man to keep out of danger's way, and to avoid

such things as are destructive to his soul? If a friend will take out of our hands the knife with which we would not only cut our fingers but our throats, is he to be blamed? or is he your enemy who forbiddeth you to drink poison? Forbidden fruit costs dear in the issue.

5. For those duties which concern our neighbour. To love all men, to do good to all men, it is a blessed and godlike thing to be giving rather than receiving, Acts xx. 35. The delight of doing good is much more than the cost; it is to be as earthly gods among our neighbours. This work rewardeth itself, because it is such a contentment and satisfaction to our minds. For justice: To do as we would be done to; what more pleasant? We would have others bound by these laws, why not ourselves? It is horrible to require one measure of dealing from them to us, and use a quite contrary ourselves. Would men hate, defraud, oppress others, and expect nothing but kind and righteous dealing from them? this is a gross partiality. Therefore, as our interest calleth for justice, so doth our conscience, and it would be a trouble and an affront to reason not to do it. So for fidelity in our relations. These things maintain order of families, and conduce to our safety and private peace, as well as they belong to our duty to God; so that on which side soever we look, we see what matter of joy there is in Christ.

I come now to show you:—

Thirdly, The reasons why Christians are not sound and sincere in their profession unless they keep up this rejoicing in Christ.

1. We do not else give Christ his due honour, if we do not esteem him who is so excellent in himself and so beneficial to us, even to a degree of rejoicing. The magnifying of Christ was intended by God in the whole business of our redemption and deliverance, that we might esteem him, delight in him, count all things dung and dross that we might gain him. Now we do not comply with this end, but have mean thoughts of his grace, if we be not affected with joy at it.

It argueth a double defect:—

[1.] That we are not sensible of our great misery without him; nor—

[2.] Affected with the great love he hath showed in our deliverance, and the felicity accruing to us thereby.

[1.] We are not duly sensible of our great misery without him. Alas! what could we have done without his passion and intercession? If he had not died for sinners, what had you to answer to the terrors of the law, the accusations of your consciences, the fears of hell, and approaching damnation? How could you look God in the face, or think one comfortable thought of him? Had we wept out our eyes, and prayed out our hearts, and never committed sin again, this would not have made God satisfaction for sin past: paying new debts doth not quit old scores: long enough might we have lain in our blood ere we could have found out a ransom which God would accept; besides him there is no Saviour. And then for his intercession: If he did not hide your nakedness and procure you a daily pardon, you would not be an hour longer out of hell. If he did not bring you to God, you could have no comfortable access to him; your prayers would be cast back as dung in your faces, if the merit of his sacrifice did not make

them accepted. And shall all this be told you, and owned by you for truth, and will you not rejoice that God hath found a ransom and provided an intercessor for you? Surely it cannot be imagined that you are sensible of your case if you be not thankful for your remedy.

[2.] You are not affected with the great love which Christ hath showed in your deliverance, nor the felicity accruing to you thereby. It is said, Eph. iii. 19, 'That you may know the love of God, which passeth knowledge.' Before he had pressed them to make it their study to comprehend the height, length, and breadth; and when they have all done, the love of Christ passeth knowledge. Christ would pose men and angels with an heap of wonders in delivering us from misery and sin. Now should not we rejoice and make our boast of this? Surely we vilify and 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. Shall angels wonder, and we, the parties interested, not rejoice? Certainly we are not affected with the great felicity accruing to us. Felicity cannot be sought after without the highest affections and endeavours. Now, if we can rejoice in trifles, and not rejoice in the love of God, how can we be said to mind these things?

2. A man's joy distinguisheth him. There is a seeking joy and a complacential joy: Ps. cxix. 14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.' It is good to observe what it is that putteth gladness into our hearts: the love of God, and his goodness in Christ. Every man is discovered by his complacency or displacency: Ps. iv. 7, 'Thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased;' 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.' To rejoice in the creatures, as accommodating or pleasing the flesh, is the joy of the carnal; to rejoice in outward ordinances and privileges, without other things, is the joy of the hypocrite and common professors. Let us carry it a little farther. The devils and damned are out of all hope and possibility of joy; the angels and glorified saints rejoice in the full fruition of God: there is *gaudium vite* and *gaudium patrie*; there is the joy of the way, and the joy of our home at our journey's end. The latter is set forth, Ps. xvi. 11, 'In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.' The other is in Christ, and the use of his healing and recovering methods, and the desires and hopes of the glory to come. This is the joy, or well-pleasèdness of mind, which is proper to us in our journey: 1 Pet. i. 8, 'In whom believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' The comfort of travellers differeth from that which a man hath in heaven: it is a joy that he hath as he is going home; and therefore how should the serious Christian be described, but by his rejoicing in Christ Jesus?

Use 1. To reprove those that cannot keep up their rejoicing in Christ Jesus as soon as they are mated with any calamity or affliction in the world. Is not grace better than any natural comfort taken from us? Heb. xii. 11. 'No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable

fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Surely, when we have such cause of rejoicing in Christ, to be dejected with every little adversity showeth weak faith. Have you peace with God and communion with him at every turn, and shall a blasting of the creature destroy all your comfort? Have you hope of glory, and cannot you bear a disappointment in the world? Are you assured of the care of your heavenly Father, and his particular providence over you, and yet so full of grudging and repining thoughts when he retrencheth you a little and blasteth your worldly probabilities? Surely it argueth too much addictedness to present comforts and love of the ease of the flesh. Have you a due sense of the world to come, and that better and enduring substance, and yet complain so bitterly of worldly losses? Have you a God in covenant with you who hath engaged all his love, wisdom, and power, to help you, and to turn all things to your good? Rom. viii. 28. What though the trial of your faith and patience be very sore? Did you capitulate with God and bargain with him how much you would suffer the flesh to be crossed, and that in such sharp afflictions you would be excused, that your gourd should not be altogether smitten and dried up? You can bear any other cross but this; but was this excepted out of your resignation?

2. It reproveth those that cherish a carnal rejoicing. A believer should rejoice in Christ Jesus: Luke x. 19, 20, 'Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, &c. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.' Rejoice not in this, that you are in dignity and honour; this is not your felicity, nor the direct way to your felicity. The higher you climb, your station is the more dangerous: they are safer that stand on the ground, than those that are on a pinnacle. Rejoice not in that you have abundance of earthly riches, but that you have a taste of higher and better things. Be not affected so deeply with lower mercies as to overlook the special mercies that accompany salvation. Rejoice not in this, that you have convenient habitations in this world, but in that you have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; in that you have comely bodies, but that you have hopes of a better resurrection, when this mortal shall put on immortality; not in the nobility of your birth, but that you are born of the Spirit: John i. 12, 13, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' Rejoice not in that you have great friends to stand by you, but that in the new covenant you are made a friend of God, as Abraham was. Not in that you have costly accommodations to please the flesh: no, this may be the bane of your souls: Rom. viii. 13, 'They that live after the flesh shall die;' and Luke xvi. 25, 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things.' (Dives fared deliciously every day, and Lazarus was full of sores, and desirous to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table.) 'Thou hast received thy good things, and Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.'

Use 2. Is to encourage you to rejoice in Christ Jesus. Now, because we are helpers of your joy, 2 Cor. i. 24, and God is best pleased with this frame of spirit, 1 Thes. v. 16, I shall resume the main discourse; and

I. Handle the nature of it.

II. Show you whether this joy may be without assurance.

III. Show you the spiritual profit of it.

IV. The helps or means by which it is raised in us.

I. For the nature of it. It is an act of love, begotten in us by the sense of the love of Christ, revealed in the word, and shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, whereby the soul is more affected with delight in the grace of the Redeemer than with all other things whatsoever.

In which description observe:—

1. It is *an act of love*. The acts of love are two—desire and delight. They both agree in this: that they are conversant about good, and are founded in esteem. We think it good. They differ, because desire is the motion and exercise of love, and delight the quiet and repose of it. Desire is expressed in that speech, Ps. lxxiii. 8, ‘My soul followeth hard after thee.’ A believer cannot forbear to seek after God. Desire of union keepeth us up in the pursuit of him. Delight is expressed in that form of speech, Ps. xvi. 5, 6, ‘The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup. The lines are fallen unto me in a pleasant place; yea, I have a goodly heritage.’ He hath all his joy, and pleasure, and contentment in God. Desire supposeth some want or absence of the valued object; delight, some kind of enjoyment. Either he is ours, or might be ours if we would ourselves; for the offer is cause of joy, as well as the enjoyment. If our desires have reached the lovely object, it is cause of joy, or if it be within our reach; as when Christ and his benefits are offered to us, and left upon our choice. And therefore it is said, Jonah ii. 8, ‘They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercies.’ *Their own*, though not possessed by them, yet they are offered to them: they might have been their own, if they did not exclude themselves. The object is in a sort present, and brought home to us in the offers of the gospel.

2. It is an act of love *begotten in us by the sense of the love of Christ*. For love only begetteth love: 1 John iv. 19, ‘We love him, because he loved us first.’ The object of love is goodness. Now, we loved God in Christ, for the goodness that is in him, the goodness that floweth from him, and the goodness we expect from him; all these attract our love.

[1.] The goodness that is in him, moral and beneficial. Moral, which is his holiness: Ps. cxix. 140, ‘Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.’ If we love his law for the purity thereof, then certainly we must love God. How else can we study to imitate him? for we imitate only that which we love and delight in as good. Then for his beneficial goodness, Ps. c. 5, ‘For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations;’ and Ps. cxix. 68, ‘Thou art good, and doest good.’

[2.] The goodness that floweth from him; not only in our creation, but our redemption by Christ, which is the stupendous instance of his

goodness to man: Titus iii. 4, 'After the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared,' &c. (In the creation there was *φιλαγγελία*; in redemption, *φιλανθρωπία*.) That God found a ransom for us, and so great as his only-begotten Son, this was love and goodness indeed.

[3.] The goodness we expect from him, both in this world and the next. Here reconciliation and remission of sins, which is a blessing that doth much draw the heart of man to delight in Christ; for she loved much to whom much was forgiven, Luke vii. 47. We keep off from a condemning God, but draw nigh to a pardoning God. Therefore the apostle saith, Heb. vii. 19, The bringing in of this better hope by the gospel doth cause us to draw nigh to God. Being at peace with God, and reconciled to him, we may have access with confidence and boldness to the throne of grace; are no more at distance with God, looking upon him as a consuming fire. The gospel giveth us liberty to come to him, and expect the merey and bounty of God, through Jesus Christ. So in the next world eternal life and glory, which is our great reward, merited by Christ: Mat. v. 12, 'Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.' This is a solid, lasting, satisfying, substantial good. Worldly joys are but seeming, they appear and vanish in a moment, every blast of temptation scattereth them. Well, then, offers of pardon and life by Christ are the matters of this joy, as they free us from the greatest miseries, and bring us to the enjoyment of the truest happiness. If you ask me, then, Why is a Christian described rather by rejoicing in Christ than by rejoicing in the pardon of sins and eternal blessedness? I answer, Because Christ is the author and procurer of these things to us; and by our joy we express not only our esteem of these benefits, but our gratitude and thankfulness for the merey and bounty of God, and the great love of our Redeemer.

3. The description showeth how the sense of this goodness is begotten in us. The love of Christ is *revealed in the word and shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost*; and I add, *believed by faith, and improved by meditation*.

[1.] It is revealed in the gospel, or word of salvation which is sent to us. Therefore it is said, Acts xiii. 48, 'When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' Surely the mind of man, which is naturally discomforted and weakened, and strangely haunted with doubts and fears about the pardon of sin and eternal life, is mightily revived and encouraged with these glad tidings of this salvation dispensed to us by a sure covenant, Heb. vi. 18. And if the Gentiles that heard these things were glad, proportionably we should be glad, for the gospel should never be as stale news to sinners, or as a jest often told. Our necessities are as deep as theirs, and the covenant standeth as firm to us as it did to them; therefore if we have the heart of a guilty man, it should be as welcome to us.

[2.] It is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. So much is asserted by the apostle: Rom. v. 5, 'The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.' Our dry reason cannot give such a lively sense of these comforts as

the revelation of the Holy Ghost. And this is the difference between a believing by tradition and believing by inspiration. Believing by tradition giveth us but cold thoughts of these mysteries, but believing by inspiration warmeth the heart, and reviveth it with an unspeakable joy, and is called 'tasting the good word,' which is the privilege of those who are enlightened by the Spirit, Heb. vi. 4; and a tasting that the Lord is gracious, 1 Peter ii. 3; which much differeth from the common reflection upon those things which flesh and blood may give us, or the bare reports of men stir up in us. The Spirit's light is lovely, and ravisheth and transporteth the soul; and where it is permanent and rooted, it effectually changeth the soul. Some are altogether careless, not affected at all with these things, as the habituated worldly sinner, 1 Cor. ii. 14. They are folly to him; for spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. Some are to a degree affected by the common work of the Spirit, Heb. vi. 4-6; but it is not rooted, it is not predominate¹, so as to control other affections and delights; they have a rejoicing in the offers of pardon and life, but it is a joy that leaveth some darling sin still predominant. But there is a third sort that have such a taste of these things that they are renewed and changed by it, Heb. iii. 6. Now, then, if you would have this rejoicing in Christ Jesus, you must apply yourselves to Christ, in the use of the appointed means, for the renewing of your natures; for love and delight are never forced, nor will be drawn forth by bare commands and threatenings, yea, and not by the proposal of promises, though the enjoyments be never so great and glorious. This may a little stir us, and this is the matter of joy, but not the cause of joy. But this joy proceedeth partly from the inclination when the heart is suited, and partly from the attractive goodness of the object; and both are powerfully done by the Holy Spirit, as the heart is renewed, and the object is most effectually represented by him, Eph. i. 17, 18. And this we must wait for.

[3.] It is *received and believed by faith*. This is often told us in the Scripture: 1 Peter i. 18, 'In whom believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory;' and Rom. xv. 13, 'The God of hope fill you with joy and peace in believing.' We cannot be affected with the great things Christ hath done and purchased for us till we believe them. There is in faith three things—*assent*, *consent*, and *affiance*.

(1.) *Assent*, or a firm and certain belief of the truth of the gospel concerning Christ as the only sufficient Saviour, by whom alone God will give us the pardon of sins and eternal life: John iv. 42, 'We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world;' and John vi. 69, 'We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.' When we are verily persuaded of this, as we are of anything that appeareth true to us, this stirreth up joy. Others have but a hearsay knowledge, not a believing assent. Surely Christ is a delectable object; what hindereth, then, but that we rejoice in him? Nothing but want of faith; for if this be true, we so necessitous, and he so all-sufficient a remedy, why are we not so affected with these things as the worth of them doth

¹ That is, 'predominant.'—ED.

deserve? Nothing can be rationally said but that we are not soundly persuaded of the truth of it.

(2.) A *consent*. This grace is dispensed by a covenant which bindeth mutually, assureth us of happiness, and requireth duty from us. Therefore an unfeigned consent, or a readiness to fulfil those terms expressed in the promise, is required of us, or a resolution to repent and obey the gospel. Christ hath offices and relations that imply our comfort, and other offices and relations which imply our duty; or rather, the same do both. He is our teacher and king, as well as our priest; and we must submit to be ruled and taught by him, as well as depend upon the merit of his sacrifice and intercession: Heb. v. 9, 'And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.' And they are so taught the truth that is in Jesus, that they put off the old man, and put on the new, Eph. iv. 20, 21. True believers must be scholars, daily learning somewhat from Christ; yea, his priesthood implieth duty, dependence, humble addresses; a broken-hearted coming to God by him; as his kingship and prophetic office implieth privilege also. His defending and teaching us by his Spirit.

(3.) There is *affiance*, which is a reposing of our hearts, or a relying upon God promising remission of sins and eternal life for Christ's sake alone—that he will be as good as his word, while we diligently use the means ordained to this end, Rom. ii. 7. And this confidence hath an influence upon this joy, Heb. iii. 6, or a delightful sense of our Redeemer's grace.

[4.] It is *improved by meditation*; for the greatest things do not work unless we think of them, and work them into our hearts. The natural way of operation is, that objects stir up thoughts, and thoughts stir up affections: Ps. civ. 34, 'My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.' The more frequent and serious thoughts we have of the love of God in Christ, and the more deep and ponderous they are, the more do they blow up this holy fire into a flame. Now, for this end was the Lord's Supper instituted, where the whole gospel is applied and sealed to us, that this delight might be afresh acted and stirred in us at the Lord's Table, while our minds are taken up in considering Christ the great apostle and high priest of our confession, Heb. iii. 1. Surely it should not be an idle and fruitless contemplation; it should stir up love, and what stirreth up love stirreth up delight. I come now to the last part of the description.

[5.] The particular affection caused by this sense is mentioned: *We delight in the grace of the Redeemer more than in all other things whatsoever.*

Where—(1.) Take notice of the affection itself.

Then—(2.) The degree of it.

(1.) The affection itself, which is delight, or a well-pleasèdness of mind, in the grace that is brought to us by the knowledge of Christ. This enlargeth the heart, and filleth it with a sweetness and contentment; and the vent of it is praise, for the heart being enlarged, cannot hold and contain itself: Ps. ix. 14, 'I will show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Sion; I will rejoice in thy salvation.' Joy cannot be kept within doors; it will break out in all

suitable ways of expression. The heart doth first rejoice, and then the tongue doth overflow. The heart is filled with joy, and then the tongue with thanksgiving. So Ps. xxxv. 9, 'My soul shall be joyful in the Lord; it shall rejoice in his salvation.' Nothing disposeth the heart to praise so much as this holy joy. There is no true thanksgiving if this be not at the bottom of it.

(2.) For the degree: The heart doth delight in Christ above all other things. As to the sensitive expression in the lively stirring of joy, we may to appearance be more affected with outward benefits, because fleshly objects do more work upon our fleshly senses, as carrying a greater suitability to them. Religion is a grave, severe thing, not seen so much in actual transports, as in the habitual complacency and well-pleasèdness of the mind: yet in solemn duties there may be as great ravishment of soul: Ps. lxxiii. 5, 'My soul shall be ravished as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.' When they feel the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, they are in effect transported with it, more than with all the delicacies and banquets of the world, and cannot hold from praising God. But generally it must be measured by our solid complacency and judicious esteem. What we prize most, and would least want, and would not forego for all other things; so the saints rejoice in God and Christ more than in any worldly matter whatsoever: Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee;' Ps. cxix. 14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches;' Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'There be 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;' Ps. lxxiii. 3, 'Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.' This is that which they love most, and keep best, and are most loth to want. This is that which giveth a value to life itself; and without which that which is most precious and desirable is little or nothing worth; and giveth them more comfort than what is most comfortable in this world; and is the most cheerful employment for their thoughts to think upon. This is delight in Christ.

II. Whether this may be had without assurance? And can those who are dark in their interest in Christ, and know not whether they have any grace or no, rejoice in him? To this I answer, Yes, certainly; for there are general grounds of rejoicing, for the gospel bringeth glad tidings to sinners, as it offereth to them a way how to escape out of their misery, and enter into the peace of God.

But more distinctly:—

1. The scripture speaketh of a twofold rejoicing in Christ—before faith and after faith. Before faith is full-grown and is but in the making, as those, Acts xiii. 48, 'When they heard this, they were glad,' &c.; and he that had found the true treasure, for joy thereof sold all that he had, Mat. xiii. 44. There was joy before the thorough consent—though introductive of it, yet antecedent to it. And the reason is, because God hath showed them the way how to free themselves from misery, and to enjoy true felicity and happiness. Now, if there may be a joy before faith, certainly before assurance. The very

offer of a remedy is comfortable when in misery. And then there is a joy after faith, as joy and peace in believing, when they take the course to get this liberty and deliverance by Christ; yet this is faith, not assurance. As a sick man, when he heareth of an able physician who hath cured many of the same disease wherewith he is oppressed, he rejoiceth, and conceiveth some hope that he may be cured also. When he hath lighted upon this physician, and beginneth to make use of his healing medicines, he is more glad, and expecteth the cure. But when he is perfectly recovered, and feeleth it, then he is glad indeed. So when a broken-hearted creature heareth the glad tidings of the gospel, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, he rejoiceth that God hath found out such a Saviour to recover the lapsed estate of mankind. But when he submitteth to Christ's healing methods, and trusts himself with his skill and fidelity, he is more comforted, and doth more intimately feel the benefit of this course in his own soul; but as he groweth more assured of his health and salvation, his comfort still increaseth, and his joy is more unspeakable and glorious. So that this joy may be without assurance, for the causes of it at first are knowledge and faith.

2. There is a joy that accompanieth seeking, even before we attain what we seek after: Ps. cv. 3, 'Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.' There is a great deal of contentment in this course, though that complacential joy which is our full reward be yet reserved for us. Yet there is a joy in seeking; better be a seeker than a wanderer. This blessed Saviour am I waiting upon! Though we have attained to little communion with him, yet it is a comfort that we are seeking farther measure. Delight and joy keepeth up our endeavours.

3. When our right is cleared, then we have more abundant joy: 2 Pet. i. 10, 11, 'Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, you shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be administered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' Some are afar off, others not far from the kingdom of God; others make a hard shift to go to heaven through many doubts and fears, some sail into the haven of glory with full sails, with much joy and peace of soul.

III. I shall show you the spiritual profit of this joy.

1. It is such a joy as doth enlarge our heart in duty, and strengthens us in the way of God: Neh. viii. 10, 'The joy of the Lord is your strength.' There is a natural deadness and dulness in holy duties, which we often find in ourselves, which cometh to pass partly from the back-bias of corruption, weakening our delight in God, and partly from the remissness of our will towards spiritual and heavenly things. Now, the most proper and kindly cure of it is this delight and rejoicing in Christ; for a man will readily do those things which he delighteth in, though toilsome and difficult. Let the heart be but affected with the grace of Christ, and our joy will soon vent itself in a thankful and delightful obedience: 1 John v. 3, 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous;' Ps. cxix. 14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches;' Ps. xl. 8, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea,

thy law is within my heart.' The hardest services are pleasant to one that delighteth in Christ; they are sweetened by his love, and quickened and enlivened by the sense and esteem that we have of the benefits he procureth for us. Shall we refuse to do anything for such a compassionate Saviour, who died for us to reconcile us to God, and bring us to the everlasting fruition of him? So that the life of all obedience dependeth on this joy.

2. It is our cordial to fortify us against all the calamities and infelicities of the present world, and maketh every bitter thing sweet to us, whether they be the common afflictions incident to man, or persecutions for righteousness' sake.

[1.] For the common afflictions. A Christian is never in a right frame till he hath learned contentment in all estates; that he doth not overjoy in worldly comforts, nor overgrieve for worldly losses, 1 Cor. vii. 30, but carrieth himself as one that is above the hopes and fears of the world. Now, there are many means to be used that we may get this humble and composed frame of heart; but the most constant and effectual cure of worldly sorrow is to keep our rejoicing in Jesus Christ, and to be satisfied with the fruits of his redemption. This, like the wood that was cast in at Marah to make the bitter waters sweet, doth sweeten our troubles, and supply our wants, and swallow up our griefs and infelicities; for we have that in Christ which is better than the natural comfort taken from us: 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 flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' He supposeth not only some want, but an utter destitution and desolation of all things, and yet his heart was kept up by joy in God. So elsewhere, Rom. xii. 12, 'Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer.' The comfort of reconciliation with God, and the hopes of heaven, do most breed patience in afflictions. And, certainly, joy is the best cure of sorrow; *contraria contrariis curantur*. Now, the joy that must be opposed to worldly sorrow is not worldly, but either spiritual or heavenly joy. Spiritual in the present fruits of Christ's death: Heb. xii. 11, 'Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.' Heavenly; surely eternal joys will best vanquish temporal sorrows: 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, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.' This will enable us patiently and cheerfully to bear all things.

[2.] Persecutions. We need to be fortified against this, that we may boldly profess our faith in Christ, without any fear of sufferings, and may not faint under them, but bear them with courage and constancy. Now, this is the fruit of this rejoicing in Christ; witness these scriptures: Acts v. 41, 'They went away rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name;' Heb. x. 34, 'Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye

have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.' So Mat. v. 12, 'Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you;' and in many other places; and 1 Peter iv. 13, 'Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with an exceeding joy;' and James i. 2, 'Count it all joy, when ye fall into divers trials.' Surely, Christ and heaven are worth something, and such trials do in part show how much we esteem him, and value him above any interest of ours.

3. It doth draw off the heart from the delights of the flesh. Not only *contraria contrariis curantur*, but *similia similibus*. Carnal pleasures put the soul out of relish with better things, and draw off the heart from God. A fleshly mind is easily blinded and enchanted with worldly vanities; therefore, it concerneth us to check our inclination to sense-pleasing and flesh-pleasing, which is so natural to us. How shall it be cured but by seeking our delight elsewhere? Every man must have some oblectation, for love cannot lie idle in the soul; either his love is taken up with the joys of sense or the joys of faith—with vain pleasures or with chaste and spiritual delights. The one spoileth the taste of the other. A spiritual mind, that is feasted with higher delights, cannot relish the garlick, and onions, and flesh-pots of Egypt: Cant. i. 4, 'We will remember thy loves more than wine.' And a brutish heart, that is wholly lost and sunk in these dreggy contentments which gratify sense, valueth not the favour of God, thinketh it canting to talk of communion with him, and the joys of hope to be fantastical expressions. They love pleasures more than God, 2 Tim. iii. 4. Now, if we would restrain and check this inclination, we should rejoice in Christ, and delight our minds and hearts in the remembrance of his love and benefits. Whatever pleasure a man doth find or imagine to find in sensual, fleshly courses, that and much more is to be had in Christ, where we rejoice at a surer and more sincere rate: Eph. v. 4, 'Not jesting, but rather giving of thanks.' Carnal mirth doth not so cheer worldlings as the remembrance of the favours and blessings we have by Christ. Keep the heart thankful and sensible of God's goodness and Christ's love, and you will not need vain delights. So Eph. v. 18, 'Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.' These are motives and marks also, for by these three things you may know whether you have this joy, yea or no.

IV. The helps or means by which this joy is raised in us.

1. A sense of sin and misery. This maketh you more sensible of the mercy of the deliverance, and to be more affected with it, as the grievousness of a disease maketh the recovery more delightful. The law condemned you, his ransom must absolve you; sin made you dead, his grace quickeneth and puts life into you. Always as our sense of misery is, so is the sense of the recovery; if one be bitter, the other is sweet. None prize and esteem Christ so much as the broken-hearted and burdened.

2. An entire confidence in Christ: for so it followeth, 'Have no confidence in the flesh.' If we have no confidence in the flesh, and look for all from the mercy and bounty of God through Christ, we shall prize him: 1 Peter ii. 7, 'Unto you therefore which believe, he

is precious ;' Phil. iii. 8, 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.'

3. A constant use of the means whereby this joy may be fed and increased in us ; as the word, sacraments, and prayer, 'The word: Ps. exix. 102, 'I have not departed from thy judgments, for thou hast taught me.' Then prayer, suing out of our right: John xvi. 24, 'Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.' So for the sacraments; baptism: Acts viii. 39, 'When they were come up out of the water, the Spirit caught away Philip, so that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.' The Lord's Supper; it is our spiritual refection.

4. Sincerity of obedience: 1 Cor. v. 8, 'Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleaven bread of sincerity and truth.' Practical delight is the chiefest, above that of contemplation, a more intimate sense.

We come now to the last part of a Christian's character: *And have no confidence in the flesh.* To understand it, consider there are two things called *flesh* in scripture.

1. External privileges belonging to the worldly life; such as wealth, greatness, and worldly honour. Now to glory in these is to glory in the flesh, and to trust in these is to trust in the flesh, which should be far from Christians: Jer. ix. 23, 24, 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man glory in his might. Let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he knoweth me, that I am the Lord,' &c. Where the prophet laboureth to beat them off from their vain confidences, that they might not rely upon their power, policy, and wealth, but a saving knowledge of and interest in God, whose goodness and faithfulness could only secure them against all evils, and procure them all manner of blessings.

2. The outward duties and performances of religion, especially the ceremonies of Moses. Those, consisting in external observances, are called flesh; and to have confidence in the flesh is to place our confidence in external privileges and duties. For the apostle explaineth himself, ver. 4, 'Though I might also have confidence in the flesh: if any other man thinketh he may have confidence in the flesh, I more.' He was not any whit inferior to any of the Judaizing brethren in outward privileges and duties; yea, had greater cause of glorying in the flesh than any of the pretenders among them. And then instances, in his Jewish privileges, circumcision, his family, his sect—a pharisee; his partial obedience or external righteousness—'as to the law blameless.' To rest on these things, then, for our acceptance with God is to have confidence in the flesh. And elsewhere he saith, Gal. iii. 3, 'Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?' when they reverted to the ceremonies of the law. This is called flesh, because they consist in outward things. Corrupt nature is pleased with such things, and doth plead and stand for them.

Doct. That a good Christian doth not place his hope and confidence of acceptance with God in external privileges and performances.

In the first character, a Christian is described by his worship ; in the second, by his joy ; in the third, by his confidence.

In handling this point, I shall show you :—

I. What are these externals which are apt to tempt men to a vain confidence.

II. That naturally men are for a mere external way of serving God, and place their whole confidence therein.

III. Why a good Christian should have no confidence in this external conformity to God's law.

I. What are these externals in religion which are apt to tempt men to a vain confidence ? They may be referred to two heads : they are either commanded by God or invented by man—God's externals or man's externals.

1. God's externals : such as he hath instituted and appointed, either in the law of Moses or in the law of Christ. In the law of Moses, such as circumcision, with all the appendent rites. These are called, Heb. ix. 10, 'Carnal ordinances, imposed on them till the time of reformation.' These were to be observed while the institution of them was in force and stood unrepealed, which was done at the coming of Christ : John iv. 23, 24, 'The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.' These made great trouble in the infancy of the church, for the Jews and Judaizing Christians were loth to depart from the rituals under which they were bred and brought up, though Christ fully evidenced his commission from heaven to repeal those laws, and his apostles strongly pleaded the ancient prophecies which foretold it. But these are of no more concernment to us, except to direct us how to behave ourselves in like cases.

2. There are externals in the law of Christ, such as the sacraments—baptism and the Lord's Supper ; hearing of the word, external prayer, and the like. Now the rule is that they must be used, but the outward act not rested in as a sufficient ground of our acceptance with God. Used they must be in faith and obedience, because God hath instituted them under great penalties. As circumcision, while the command was in force : Gen. xvii. 14, 'The man-child whose flesh is not circumcised shall be cut off from his people ; he hath broken my covenant ;' so baptism : Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned.' Not want, but neglect or contempt. Therefore, all these duties must be used as means of salvation, and as expressions of the inward truth of our faith in God and obedience to him. We must not cast off ordinances, but yet they must not be rested in as sufficient grounds of our acceptance with God. While circumcision was in force, they relied on it, as it distinguished them from other nations as the genuine seed of Abraham, and so reckoned to be within the covenant. But the servants of God did always disprove¹ this vain confidence : Rom. ii. 28, 29, 'He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh ; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in

¹ That is, 'disapprove.'—Ed.

the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God.' They rejoiced in a shadow when they wanted the thing signified, if there were no mortification of sin, or putting off the body of the sins of the flesh. But not only the apostle, but the prophet long before disproveth¹ their vain confidence: Jer. ix. 25, 26, 'Behold, the days come when I will punish them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised; Egypt and Edom, with the children of Ammon and Moab, are uncircumcised in flesh, and all the house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart.' God would proceed against wicked persons and people, circumcised as well as uncircumcised. Were those things spoken to them only, and not to us also? Surely all may learn from hence that by a bare submission to outward rites we are not approved of God, without minding the true reformation of heart and life, and expecting the pardon of our sins by Jesus Christ. You are baptized, but are you washed from your sins? You hear the word, but is it the power of God to your salvation? You frequent sacraments, but is the conscience of the bond of the holy oath into which you are entered upon your hearts? There is more required in Christianity than outward profession, whether in word or deed—namely, the conscience of your dedication to God—or else the work doth not go deep enough: 1 Cor. xiii. 3, 'Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' You content yourselves with your tale and number of duties, praying morning and evening, and reading so many chapters; but where is the spirit and the fruit of all that you do? They that are given to fasting think themselves very devout if they fast often, be their hearts never so full of rancour. Many huddle over many prayers, but they do not go from their heavenly Father with a heavenly mind. They give alms, but live loosely. As Michal laid a statue in David's bed, and covering it with David's apparel, made Saul's messengers believe it was David himself sick in bed; so many persons cover themselves with certain external actions belonging to religion, and the world believeth them truly sanctified and spiritual, whenas, indeed, they are but statues and apparitions of devotion to God. But this is but a vain show, a placing the means instead of the end—the subordinate instead of the ultimate end.

2. Man's externals, invented by themselves, by laws of their own, and outward observances of their own devising. Men's whole religion running out into externals, they are not contented with the forms of worship instituted by God, but add somewhat of their own, and love to bind themselves in chains of their own making: as the Jews, not being perfect as appertaining to the conscience, by the use of the instituted ceremonies of Moses, invented other things to make them more perfect.

Now, as to this, I shall only observe:—

[1.] That as the outside of worship is most minded by a carnal Christian, so the inside by a renewed Christian: Mat. xv. 8, 'This people draweth nigh to me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.' Their hearts are averse from God. The carnal Christian is all for uncovering the head, and

¹ That is, 'disproveth.' —Ed.

bowing the knee, but taketh no care of the heart: Isa. lviii. 5, 'Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day unto the Lord?' The pharisees were zealous for washing before meat, as if it were an holy religious act, because it was one of their own traditions, Mat. xv. 2, but took no notice of inward defilement.

[2.] They are more zealous for human inventions than moral and commanded duties, Mat. xv. 3, 4—for the rudiments of the world, as the apostle calleth them, Col. ii. 8, than the unquestionable ordinances of Christ; for a worldly religion must be supported by worldly means.

[3.] I observe, that the more external pomp there is of man's devising, the less spiritual truth; for it gratifieth the natural corruption, which is all for the outside. Some few externals God intended for an help, but when men will be adding, they become a burden and an impediment. God did not abrogate his own ceremonies for men to appoint theirs.

II. That naturally men are merely for an external way of serving God, and place their confidence therein.

Here I shall show you:—

1. That their hearts are set upon external worship.

2. That therein they place all their confidence.

1. That naturally men's hearts are chiefly set upon external services; and that—

[1.] Out of laziness; externals being more easy than worshipping God in the spirit: Mat. xxiii. 23, 'They tithe mint, and anise, and cummin, but omit the weightier things of the law, τὰ βαρύτερα τοῦ νόμου, judgment, mercy, faith.' Conscience is like the stomach, which naturally desireth to fill itself, and when it cannot digest solid food, filleth itself only with wind. So here, outward things are more easy, but mortifying sin, and solid godliness, is more difficult; this the natural man cannot digest, and therefore culleth out the easier and cheaper sort of religion, which puts him to no great trouble or self-denial.

[2.] Out of their indulgence to the flesh. A man can spare anything better than his lusts, his estate, the present ease of the body, their children, anything for the sin of their souls, Micah vi. 6–8. The question is not how to satisfy justice, but how to appease conscience, while they retain their sins. They would buy out their peace with vast sums of money, mangle their flesh, like the priests of Baal, to spare the sin of their souls, do anything, endure anything, but the subduing the heart to God. The sensual nature of man is such, that he is loth to be crossed; if he must be crossed, only a little, and but for a while; and therefore affects an easy religion, where the flesh is not crossed, or but a little crossed. Now, slight duties performed now and then do not much trouble the flesh, where there is no mortifying of lusts, no serious godliness.

[3.] Out of pride. Man is a proud creature, and would fain establish his own righteousness, and have somewhat wherein to glory in himself, Rom. x. 3. A russet coat of our own is better than a silken

garment that is borrowed of another: Luke xviii. 9, 'Christ spake this parable against those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous.' There is such a disposition in men, that if by any means they can hold up a pretence of righteousness of their own, will not pray, and wait, and consecrate, and devote themselves to God, that they may attain his righteousness, if they have anything to plead, if they have a partial righteousness, if they be not to be numbered among the worst of men: Luke xviii. 11, 'The pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.' If they have an external righteousness, they will plead that, 'I fast twice in the week, I give tithe of all that I possess,' &c. A legal spirit is natural to us. Though men dare not pretend to a universal conformity to the law in a strict sense, yet, if they can make a shift to get any external conformity to the law, they are confident of divine acceptance. Yea, so sottish is their conscience, that they will catch hold of anything: Judges xvii. 13, 'Now I know God will bless me, because I have a Levite to my priest,' giving him meat and drink, and about fifty shillings per annum! So willing are we to justify ourselves, by something in ourselves, or done by ourselves. Therefore, that the ell may be no broader than the cloth, they devise a short exposition of the law, that they may entertain a large opinion of their own righteousness.

[4.] There is another reason—interest. External forms of religion draw an interest after them, therefore the apostle saith, Rom. ii. 29, 'Whose praise is not of men, but of God;' and Gal. i. 10, 'If I yet please men, I were not the servant of Christ.' And 'rudiments of the world,' Col. ii. 8. It maketh a man to be applauded and countenanced by the world. Let a man betake himself to such a religion, there are those which will back him and stand by him, and their disfavour and displeasure he shall incur if he forsake it. And where the false worshippers are the prevailing party, he runneth great hazard by contradicting such form and opinions. Therefore the heart of that man that is set on externals takes up with the religion of his country, whether true or false.

2. They place their confidence therein. Every man that hath a conscience must have something to trust unto. Now, what feedeth his confidence but the religion which he hath chosen? There are two things which detain men from God and Christ: some false imaginary happiness, and some counterfeit righteousness, wherein they please themselves. The false happiness is as their God, and the counterfeit righteousness is as their Christ and mediator, and so they are secure and senseless; and, until God open their eyes, they neither seek after another righteousness, nor trouble themselves about the way whereby they may attain it. That men set a false happiness is evident, for ever since man fell from God he ran to the creature, Jer. ii. 13, left the fountain for the cistern; and if we can make a shift to patch up a sorry happiness apart from God, we never care for him, or will not come at him, Jer. ii. 31. Our pleasure, our profit, our honour, that is our God. And if we can enjoy these things without any rubs and checks, we look no farther, and will not seek our happiness in an invisible God, nor wait to enjoy it in an invisible world. But the

second error is, that there is something instead of Christ to us, to keep the conscience quiet. Our happiness is to satisfy our desires, our righteousness to allay our fears. Now here we run to a superficial religion, or something external, which is diversified according to men's education—pagans to the *ἔργον νόμου*, Rom. ii. 15, Jews to the observances of the law, Christians to baptism, outward profession, or some strict form without the power, under which we shelter ourselves, and by which we bolster up our confidence, till God convince us of our mistakes. And so Christ and his renewing and reconciling grace is neglected and disregarded, certainly not cordially accepted as our Redeemer and Saviour.

I come now to show :—

III. Why a good Christian should have no confidence in the flesh.

1. Because till we are dead to the law we cannot live to God. Now, to be dead to the law is nothing else but to have our confidence in the flesh, or external righteousness, mortified. You hear often of being dead to sin, and dead to the world ; you must be also dead to the law, or otherwise you cannot live in Christ, and bring forth fruit unto God : Gal. ii. 19, ' For I through the law am dead to the law, that I may live unto God ; ' and Rom. vii. 4, ' By the body of Christ ye are become dead to the law ; that ye may be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead. ' We grow dead to the law, when thereby we understand our sinful miserable estate without Christ, and how unable we are to help ourselves. By the convincing power of the law we know our sins ; by the condemning power of the law we know the misery and curse we are subject unto ; by the irritating power of the law we find that the righteousness which the law requireth is not in us, nor can it be found in us. Now in one of those places we are said *by the law* to be dead to the law, and in the other, *by the body of Christ*. By the law itself we are said to be dead to the law, as it maketh us to despair of righteousness by that covenant. By the body of Christ (that is, by the crucified body, or death of Christ), so we are dead to the law, as we are invited to a better hope or covenant, which Christ hath established by bearing our sins on his body on the tree, or enduring the curse of the law for us. Be it by the one, or the other, or both, none will value the grace of Christ till they be dead to the law. Men will shift as long as they can patch up a sorry righteousness of their own, mingle covenants, turn one into another, make one of both, chop, change, mangle, and cut short the law of God ; do anything rather than come upon their knees and beg terms of grace in a serious and broken-hearted manner. None can partake of Christ but those that have their legal confidence mortified, who are first driven, then drawn to him. None but they who are convinced of sin fly to Christ for righteousness ; none but they who are left obnoxious to wrath and the curse prize his delivering us from wrath to come ; none but those who are made sensible of their impotency will seek after his renewing grace, but will still keep to their base shifts, mingling and blending covenants, resting in a little superficial righteousness, or half-covenant of works, or mingling a little grace with it ; are not brought in a humble, penitent, and broken-hearted manner, to sue out their pardon in the name of Christ, and so regularly to pass from covenant to covenant.

2. The superficial righteousness doth not only keep men from Christ, but set them against Christ, his way, his servants, and true interest in the world. These were dogs, evil-workers, to whom the apostle opposeth the true Christians. Usually they that are for the form, oppose the power: Gal. iv. 29, 'He that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit.' They that have but the form and shadow of godliness, no more than the power of nature carrieth them unto, will persecute those that have the reality and truth, —that is, the renewing and reconciling grace of Jesus Christ; partly, because the true spiritual worshippers, by their serious godliness, disgrace and condemn those that lazily rest in an empty form; and therefore they cannot endure them. At the bottom of their hearts they have an enmity and hatred against God, and vent it on his people: 1 John iii. 12, 'Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother; and wherefore slew he him? because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.' Partly, because there is in them a spirit of envy and emulation; both are rivals for the favour of God. The spiritual worshippers take the right way, and the formalists the wrong way to obtain it; the first are received, the latter rejected. And they being at such great pains and costs in their wrong way, cannot endure that any should be preferred before them; witness Cain and Abel. Where carnal confidence is, there is bitterness of spirit against sincerity.

3. Because they have so much to do with God. They that look to men, may rest in an outward appearance; but one whose business lieth mainly with God, must look to the frame of his heart, that it be right set towards holiness. Now this is the course of a thorough Christian. It is God's wrath that he feareth, God's favour that is his life and happiness, God's presence into which he often cometh, God's mercy from whom he expecteth his reward, and with God he hopeth to live for ever. Now, bare externals are of no account or worth with God: John iv. 24, 'God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;' 1 Sam. xvi. 7, 'But the Lord said unto Samuel, look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart;' Prov. xvi. 2, 'All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirit.' Men judge after the outward appearance, but God weigheth the spirits.

4. Because of the nature of gospel worship, which is simple, spiritual, and substantial; therefore called *spirit*, often in opposition to the ceremonies of the law, and the ministration of the spirit unto life, 2 Cor. iii. 8. The law is called *letter*, and the gospel *spirit*. Now, for a Christian to turn the ordinances of Christ into flesh, which were appointed to be the ministration of the Spirit, this is to alter the nature of things, and turn the gospel, by which is all our claim and hope, into a dead letter.

5. This confidence should not be cherished by a Christian, because it can bring no solid peace to the conscience, for the present external justiciaries are uncertain. The man that kept all these things from his youth, saith, 'What lack I yet?' Mat. xix. 20. He asketh as a man

unsatisfied; for our bondage doth not wear off with external duties, but is increased rather till we are justified in the name of Christ, and sanctified by his Spirit. But suppose it satisfieth blind conscience for the present, yet afterwards, men whose hearts are not found in God's statutes, fall into sad complaints, and are involved in a maze and labyrinth of doubts and troubles, whence they know not how to extricate themselves. They have so much sense of religion as to understand their duty, and yet are so little brought under the power of it, as not to be able to make out their claim. But if this be not the case of all, when the hour of death cometh, we shall find all is but froth, 1 Cor. v. 5, 6. If we have not minded the Redeemer's grace, his whole grace, the imputation of his righteousness, and the regeneration of his Spirit, and lived in obedience to his sanctifying motions, then we shall be filled with horror and amazement.

The first use is caution. Take heed of having confidence in the flesh, of placing religion, and valuing your interest in God, by external observances; but look to this, that your hearts be upright with God in the new covenant. To this end:—

1. Take heed of a false happiness. The wisdom of the flesh, which is natural to us, doth incline us to it, James iii. 15, doth only prompt us to pleasure, profit, and honour. We set our hearts on vain delights, and are wholly carried to them, value our happiness by them. Whilst we indulge this sensual inclination, the soul careth not for God, other things are set up instead of God. The belly is god: Phil. iii. 19, 'Whose God is their belly.' Mammon is their god, Mat. vi. 24. And honour and worldly greatness is another idol which men set up, while they value the praise of men more than the praise of God, John xii. 43. Carnal self-love maketh idols, and sets up other gods instead of the true God. Now therefore make it your first work to return to God as your rightful lord and chief happiness, as your sovereign lord. If you make it your business and purpose to worship God in the spirit, you will rejoice in Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh. Spiritual worship convinceth us of defects, and you will see a need of Christ's renewing and reconciling grace. Our treasure and happiness is our god. Now therefore do you value your happiness by the favour of God, and not by worldly things?

2. In the next place, take heed of a superficial righteousness; for this is plain confidence in the flesh. This maketh you senseless and ignorant of your danger, and careless of the means of your recovery, and so your conviction and conversion is more difficult. And therefore Christ saith, that publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of God before pharisees and self-justiciaries, Mat. xxi. 31. No condition is more dangerous than to be poor and proud; corrupt, and yet conceited and confident. The most vicious are sooner wrought upon than those that please themselves in external observances, without real internal holiness or change of heart.

This is twofold:—

1. Outward ordinances.

2. Partial morality.

1. Outward ordinances: to rest in your attendance upon and use of these. Consider how displeased God was with those that submitted

to sacraments without reformation: 1 Cor. x. 1-5, 'With many of them God was not well pleased, but they were overthrown in the wilderness.' Spiritual meat and spiritual drink could not keep them from destruction when they murmured, when they fell from Christ to idolatry, when they lusted after quails, when they tempted Christ; and will he be more favourable to you? Oh, rest not then in the outward use of the ordinances of Christ! God may vouchsafe you this favour, and yet not be well pleased with you. Many that have eaten and drunk in his presence, yet are finally rejected for their sins, Luke xiii. 26. Many prize the seal, yet tear the bond; that is, break the covenant, yet seem to value the seal of the covenant, that they may have confidence in the flesh, in the bare external performance.

2. Partial morality: those that live fairly and plausibly, but want the true principle, the spirit of Christ; the true rule, the word of God; the true end, the glory of God; that are in with one duty and out with another; fail in their duties to God or men; are much in worship, but defective in common righteousness; love friends, but cannot forgive enemies; it may be they will forgive wrongs, but make no conscience of paying debts. Now there are two arguments against these: these neither understand the law nor the gospel; not the law, its strictness, purity, and spiritual exactness; nor the gospel, which offereth a remedy only to the penitent, those who are deeply affected with the pollution of their natures, the sins of their lives, and the consequent misery; but those that are puffed up with a vain conceit of the goodness of their estate, without any brokenness of heart.

[1.] They are injurious to the law, as they curtail it and reduce it to the external work, Gal. iv. 20. Ye that desire to be under the law, hear what the law saith; if you will stand to that covenant, do you know what it is? The duty is impossible, Rom. viii. 3. The penalty is intolerable, for 'the law worketh wrath;' and it is a law of sin and death to the fallen creature, Rom. viii. 2. The curse is very dreadful and terrible. Nothing more opposite to the law than this partial righteousness. The law, well understood, would humble them.

[2.] This resting in a partial external righteousness is also opposite to the gospel, which inviteth us in a broken-hearted manner to accept Christ. He came to call sinners, not those who are righteous in their own eyes, Mat. ix. 13. It is a remedy for lost sinners, not for them that need no repentance: Luke xv. 7, 'I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.' Nothing is more opposite to the gospel than this confidence in the flesh. The woman that was a sinner was preferred before Simon a pharisee, Luke vii. 44; and the self-condemning publican before the self-justifying pharisee, Luke xviii. 13; the penitent adulteress before her accusers, John viii. The most despised sinners, repenting and believing in Christ, find more grace and place with him than those that satisfy themselves with some external conformities.

A second use is by way of examination. Are you of this temper, that you have no confidence in the flesh?

If you are:—

1. You are still kept humble and thankful; humble, with a sense of sin and deserved wrath; confessing and forsaking your sins, and glorying in Christ only, you are kept vile in your own eyes, and in a humble admiration of grace: Luke vii. 47, 'Wherefore I say unto you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven her, for she loved much,' &c. She loved much, because much was forgiven. When God is pacified, yet you loathe yourselves: Ezek. xvi. 63, 'That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.' And you ascribe all to the mercy of God and the merit of Christ; blessing God for him and imploring pardon for your best duties, our righteousness being but as filthy rags.

2. A partial outside obedience will not satisfy you. A heart that findeth rest in empty formal services certainly places confidence in the flesh. They neither look after the change of their natures, nor their reconciliation with God by Christ. They challenge God: Isa. lviii. 3, 'Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?' and Luke xviii. 12, 'I fast twice in the week, and I give tithe of all that I possess.'

3. Thankfulness or gratitude sets you a-work for God, rather than a legal conscience. Duties are performed as a thank-offering rather than a sin-offering, out of love to God rather than fear.