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John Gill's

A BODY OF PRACTICAL DIVINITY

Book 1—Chapter 10

OF SPIRITUAL JOY

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, which follows love; "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy" (Gal. 5:22), it attends faith and hope; and as these graces are in exercise, and increase, so does spiritual joy; hence we read of "the joy of faith," and "the rejoicing of hope" (Phil. 1:25; Heb. 3:6), it enters very much into the Christian's character and experience, and is peculiar to saints and believers in Christ. Concerning which may be observed,

1. The objects of it.

1a. First, not a creature, nor creature enjoyment, nor outward privilege, nor duty; but Jehovah himself, the Lord and God of all; therefore called by David, "God, his exceeding joy;" that is, the object of his great joy and gladness (Ps. 43:4). To glory in riches, wisdom, and strength, and to boast of them, is not right; and to rejoice in such boastings, "All such rejoicing is evil" (Jam. 4:16), to rejoice in anything of this kind, is to "rejoice in a thing of nought," in a nonentity, and in what is of no account (Amos 6:13), and so to rejoice in youthful pleasures and vanities, and indulge to them in the highest degree; such joy is not spiritual, or the fruit of the Spirit; but is carnal and sensual, and but for a season; and to glory, and boast of, and trust in fleshly descent, in birth privileges, and in the duties of religion, and in a man's own righteousness, and please himself with such things, is only the joy of an unregenerate man, and of an hypocrite, which is but for a moment, but the Lord himself is the proper object of joy; to rejoice in him is what is exhorted to, both in the Old and New Testaments (Ps. 33:1; Philemon 4:4). So the prophet Habakkuk did, and resolved to do, in the worst of times, when all creature mercies failed; "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation!" (Hab. 3:17,18), not in him merely as the Creator, from whom are had being, life, and breath, and all things, which yet is matter of joy (Ps. 149:2; Job 35:10), nor in him merely as the

God of providence, and a kind benefactor, the preserver of men, and gives them all things richly to enjoy, so that they have reason to rejoice "in every good thing," which the Lord in his providence gives unto them; but more especially saints rejoice in him as their covenant God; "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord," says the church; "My soul shall be joyful in my God!" (Isa. 61:10), as her covenant God, which is the sum and substance of the covenant, and includes and secures every blessing of it, and always continues; who, as such, is the God of all grace, and blesses with all spiritual blessings, and gives both grace and glory, supplies all the wants of his people out of his riches in glory, by Christ; and causes all grace to abound towards them, and will never suffer them to want any good thing; he is their portion now, and will be for ever; and as such they rejoice in him; and particularly,

1a1. In the attributes of God; which are all on the side of his people, and are exercised for their good, and they receive benefit and advantage from; and not only his power, wisdom, truth, and faithfulness, his goodness, grace, and mercy, are matter of joy; but even his justice and holiness, in which he is so glorious; "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness" (Ps. 97:12).

1a2. The everlasting love of God is matter of joy to the saints; as the Lord rests in his love, and rejoices over them with joy, so they rejoice in his love to them; it is that river the streams whereof, the blessings which flow from it, make glad their hearts; (see Jer. 31:3), a view of interest in it puts more joy and gladness into the hearts of the Lord's people than the largest increase of worldly things; it makes what they do enjoy blessings indeed; for there is no curse in their blessings; a little, with the favour of God, is better than the riches of many wicked; mean fare, a dinner of herbs, where the love of God is enjoyed, is preferable to the most delicious dainties without it; and greater reason there is for a man to boast of, and rejoice in this, that he knows the Lord, as exercising lovingkindness in the earth, and delighting therein, than to rejoice and glory in the greatest outward attainments of body, mind, and estate; a sense of the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Spirit, supports under all the trials and exercises of this life; and even causes to glory in tribulations, and to rejoice in hope of the glory of God; since neither tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, nor sword, can separate from it; yea, the loving kindness of God is better than life itself, than which nothing is dearer to a man; yea, when men are influenced by this love, they love not their lives unto the death; it is death to them when they are without a sense of this love; but, "in the favour of God," and the enjoyment of it, is "life," it revives and comforts (Ps. 30:5), and what makes the love of God greater cause of joy is, that it is everlasting and unchangeable; though God may be displeased with his people, and chastise them because of their sins; yet he never takes away his lovingkindness from them; and though he hides his face from them for a moment, yet with everlasting kindness he has mercy on them; nor shall it ever depart from them; it is more immovable than hills and mountains, and is established both by the promise and oath of God; and there is nothing in heaven, earth, and hell that shall ever separate from it; every thought concerning it, meditation upon it, and discovery of it, fills with joy

unspeakable; a thought of it is with the greatest pleasure and delight; meditation on it is sweet; and while musing upon it, the fire of divine love is inflamed, and burns within, and breaks forth in expressions of joy and gladness; and nothing can yield greater satisfaction than to be remembered with the favour God bears to his own people; and the love of God is to be remembered more, and is more exhilarating to the soul, than wine is to the animal spirits (Song of Sol. 1:2,4; Zech. 10:7).

1a3. The saints' election of God is matter of joy unto them; that "their names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20), in the Lamb's book of life, in the book of divine predestination to the adoption of children, and to eternal life; and therefore it cannot be such a gloomy and melancholy thing, as some who are strangers to it, and ignorant of it, represent it; but is, as the XVIIth article of the church of England expresses it, "Full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons." So Calvin observes, that "those who search into it rightly and in due order, as it is contained in the word, fetch choice consolation from it." And even Arminius himself says, "It serves to comfort afflicted consciences."

It is the foundation blessing of grace, and the standard according to which all others are dispensed; God blesses his people with all spiritual blessings in Christ, according as he hath chosen them in him before the foundation of the world; this stands at the head of them, it is the first link in the chain of salvation, to which the rest are fastened, and by it secured; "Whom he did predestinate them he also glorified;" it always "obtains;" or those who are chosen certainly enjoy every blessing of grace, life, righteousness, and salvation (Eph. 1:3,4; Rom. 8:30; 11:7), from hence springs all the grace of the Spirit dispensed by him in regeneration and sanctification; sanctification of the Spirit is fixed and established in the decree of election, as a mean, and is as certain as the end, salvation; holiness of heart and life is what men are chosen to, and what certainly follows upon their election of God; and so belief of the truth, or faith in Christ; and as many as are ordained unto eternal life, believe; hence true faith is called, "the faith of God's elect:" eternal glory and happiness is secured by it; they that are chosen, are chosen to the obtaining of the glory of Christ; and which, in consequence, they most assuredly enjoy; they cannot finally and totally be deceived and come short, of that glory; no charge can be brought against them; and should any, it would not issue in their condemnation; they that are written in the Lamb's book of life enter into the new Jerusalem; and those who are predestinated are glorified. This is the foundation which stands sure; the seal of which is, "The Lord knows them that are his;" men are elect according to the foreknowledge of God, and that foreknowledge never fails; and therefore the purpose of God, according to election, stands sure; not upon the will and works of men, but upon the sovereign will, certain knowledge, and everlasting love of God; all which lay a solid foundation for joy and gladness.

1a4. The covenant of grace God has made with his chosen in Christ, is another thing which yields abundance of joy to the believer, both in life and in death; in a view of which, with what joy and exultation does the sweet singer of Israel express himself among the last words he uttered (2 Sam. 23:5), what makes this covenant so

desirable, pleasant, and joyful is, that it is "everlasting;" from everlasting to everlasting; from everlasting, for so early was Christ set up as the Mediator of it; blessings of grace were given, and grants of grace made, to the elect in Christ, before the foundation of the world; and eternal life was promised before the world began; nor will it ever be broken, made null and void; nor be antiquated, and succeeded by another covenant; but will always remain in full force; and so administer constant and perpetual joy to the covenant ones. It is also "ordered in all things," to secure the glory of the divine persons; and for the display of the divine perfections; and for the good and happiness of those who are interested in it; it is full of blessings of grace, mercy, and goodness, called, "The sure mercies of David," which are sure to all the seed; and of exceeding great and precious promises, which are all yea and amen in Christ, and suitable to the cases and circumstances of the Lord's people; which fitly spoken and applied, are as pleasant and delightful as apples of gold in pictures of silver, and give inexpressible joy and delight; "I rejoice at thy word," says David, a word of promise, "as one that findeth great spoil" (Ps. 119:162), which suggests a great degree of joy. To which may be added, that this covenant is free, absolute, and unconditional: its promises do not depend on conditions to be performed by men; but run thus, I "will," and they "shall;" "I will be their God, and they shall be my people; I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me," &c. This covenant is also said to be "sure," its matter, its blessings, and its promises; it is "confirmed of God in Christ;" it is established by the oath of God, and ratified by the blood of Christ, the blood of the everlasting covenant; it is as immovable as hills and mountains, and more so; they may be removed, but the covenant of peace shall never be removed; it is what God has commanded for ever; so that there is no fear of its ever failing; and affords an deficient source of joy: "all," or the whole of "salvation" is contained in it, and secured by it, salvation spiritual and eternal; in it Christ is appointed and settled as the author of it; the blessings of salvation are provided, and the persons for whom they are designed, given to Christ in it, the Israel that shall be saved by him with an everlasting salvation. So that David had great reason to say, "This is all my desire;" as containing in it all that was desirable by him, delightful to him, and that could afford him joy and pleasure.

1b. Secondly, Christ, and things relating to him, are the objects of the spiritual joy of saints; this enters into the very character of true Christians and believers in Christ, who are described as such who "rejoice in Christ Jesus, even with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (Philemon 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:8). The things relating to him, which are matter and ground of joy, are such as relate both to his person and to his work.

1b1. First, that relate to his person, as the Word and Son of God, equally a divine person with his Father, the "brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Heb. 1:3). As,

1b1a. The greatness of his person; the great God, God over all blessed for ever, who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, having all the perfections of deity, the

consideration of which yields joy to believers in him; hence they know and may conclude that all he did and suffered in human nature united to his person, answered the ends for which they were done and suffered; his righteousness is the righteousness of God, and so unto and upon all them that believe; his blood the blood of the Son of God, and as such has a virtue to cleanse from all sin; his sacrifice the sacrifice of himself, and so of a sweet smelling savour to God, and of efficacy to atone for sin; and his salvation a great salvation, plenteous and complete, he being the great God and our Saviour; hence also they are satisfied that they must be safe in his hands, out of which none can pluck them; that he is able to keep them from falling, and to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

1b1b. The fitness of his person; having taken the human nature into union with his divine person, he is very proper to be the mediator between God and man, to be a days man to lay his hands on both, to take care of things pertaining to the law and justice of God, and the honour of them; and to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; a work which neither angels nor men were fit for and capable of; but God in his infinite wisdom found Christ to be a proper person to give himself a ransom for his people, and deliver them from destruction, which is great joy unto them.

1b1c. The fulness of his person; both the fulness of the Godhead, which dwells substantially in him, and the fulness of grace which it has pleased the Father should dwell in him, for the supply of the wants of his people; in which grace they are strong, and out of which they receive grace for grace, and "with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation" in him (Isa. 12:5).

1b1d. The beauty of his person; who is fairer than the children of men, white and ruddy, a complete beauty, the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely; to see him, the King, in his beauty, is a ravishing sight, and which fills with joy unspeakable and full of glory; "this," says the church after she had described him at large with an air of joy and pleasure, "this," this amiable lovely person, "is my beloved and my friend" (Song of Sol. 5:10-16). I take no notice of the offices of Christ, of prophet, and priest, and king; nor of the relations he stands in to his people of father, husband, brother, friend, though they are a fund of joy to true believers.

1b2. Secondly, There are other things which relate to the work of Christ, which are matter of joy to gracious souls; as salvation by him in general, everlasting righteousness wrought out by him in particular, and atonement of sin by his sacrifice.

1b2a. Salvation in general; this is the work Christ was appointed to, which was given him, and which was with him when he came into the world, and which he came to do, and is become the author of; the church is called upon to rejoice in a view of his being about to come to effect it; and it is prophetically said of those who should be upon the spot when he came about this work, that they should say, "We

will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation" (Zech. 9:9; Isa. 25:9), and both Old and New Testament saints have rejoiced in it, in a view of its certain accomplishment, of its fulness and suitableness to them, and of the glory of God displayed in it; "We will rejoice in thy salvation," says David (Ps. 20:7), and in such a frame of soul was Mary, the mother of our Lord, when she said, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour;" and great reason there is for the exercise of spiritual joy on this account, since,

1b2a1. It is a salvation of the souls of men, not of their bodies from temporal evils, but of their souls from everlasting destruction (1 Pet. 1:8,9), it is a salvation of the soul, the more noble part of man, which is of more worth than a world, the redemption of which is precious, requires a great price to ransom, and must have ceased for ever, without any hopes of attaining it, had not Christ undertook it.

1b2a2. It is for sinners, for the chief of sinners, which makes it a joyful sound; and he has the name of Jesus for this reason, because he "saves his people from their sins," than which nothing can be matter of greater joy to sensible sinners (1 Tim. 1:15; Matthew 9:13; 1:21).

1b2a3. It is a salvation of them from sin, even from all sin, original and actual; and from the guilt of it, and from punishment for it, and from all wrath to come it is deserving of; for Christ has delivered them from that, having sustained it in their room; and being justified by his blood they shall be saved from wrath through him; and indeed they are saved by him from every enemy, and from whatsoever they may fear any harm to come to them, sin, Satan, law, hell, and death.

1b2a4. This salvation is entirely free; it is by grace and not of works; according to abundant mercy, and not by works of righteousness done by men. The blessings of salvation, signified by gold, fine linen, &c. are indeed to be bought, but without money and without price; that is, they are to be had freely; they are all of free grace; every part and branch of salvation is free; it is only looking to Christ and being saved; "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isa. 45:22), and what joyful news is this!

1b2a5. It is a great salvation, plenteous and complete; it is great, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" wrought out by a great Saviour, for great sinners; obtained at a great expense, the blood of Christ; and expressive of the greatest love; it is large and plenteous, it includes all the blessings of grace and glory; it is complete, it is from all sin and sorrow, and from every enemy; those that are saved, are saved to the "uttermost," and for ever; for,

1b2a6. It is eternal; the Israel of God, all the chosen, redeemed, and called ones, are saved in the Lord with an "everlasting salvation;" Christ is the author of "eternal salvation" to his people; and he has, by his blood, obtained for them, "eternal redemption;" wherefore, "the ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs, and with everlasting joy upon their heads" (Heb. 5:9; 9:12; Isa. 45:17; 35:10).

1b2a7. It is exceeding suitable to the case and circumstances of sinners, and makes for the glory of God; such a Saviour as Christ is, becomes men lost and done in themselves; and such a salvation he has wrought out, exactly answers their necessities, and therefore cannot but be joyful to them; and the rather do they rejoice at it because of the glory of God, of all the divine perfections which is great in it; if the angels rejoiced at the good will of God to men in it, and sung glory to God on account of it, how much more reason have men to do so, who have hope of interest in it?

1b2b. A branch of Christ's work in particular, which he had to work, and has wrought out, is everlasting righteousness; this, as a surety of his people, he was under obligation to fulfil, even all righteousness; he was sent, and came into the world, and was made under the law, that the righteousness of it might be fulfilled by him; and he is become the fulfilling end of it to them that believe; and such who are made to see their need of his righteousness, and are enabled to look unto it, and lay hold on it, as their righteousness before God, rejoice in it as the church did (Isa. 61:10), and there are many things respecting this righteousness which are matter and ground of joy to a believing soul.

1b2b1. It is "the righteousness of God" which is "revealed from faith to faith" in the gospel; a righteousness wrought out by one that is God as well as man; which is approved by God, and well pleasing to him; and which he imputes without works; and being the righteousness of God, and not a creature's, it is unto all and upon all them that believe; and has a sufficient virtue in it to justify all the Lord's people; "all the seed of Israel" (Isa. 45:25).

1b2b2. It is satisfactory to the law and justice of God; it is commensurate to all the demands of the law; that "commandment is" indeed "exceeding broad;" it is very extensive, and reaches to every duty, respecting God and man; but the righteousness of Christ is as large and as broad as that, and exactly answers to it; and so secures from all condemnation by it; and being so complete, justice is well pleased and fully satisfied with it, spying no fault nor blemish in it; wherefore the Lord's people are presented by Christ in it to his Father, "unblameable and unproveable in his sight" (Col. 1:22).

1b2b3. It acquits and absolves from all sin; by it those who believe in Christ are "justified from all things," from all sins; from which there is no justification by the law of Moses, there being some sins for which no sacrifice was provided by that law; but when a soul is clothed with this "change of raiment," the robe of Christ's righteousness, all his "filthy garments" are taken from him, and all his iniquities caused to pass from him, and he stands "without fault before the throne," before God, the Judge of all.

1b2b4. It renders acceptable in the sight of God; such as have on the righteousness of Christ are "accepted in the beloved;" God is well pleased with him, and with them in him, and that for his righteousness sake; they are perfectly comely through

his comeliness put upon them; they are all fair, and no spot in them; a perfection of beauty

1b2b5. This righteousness of Christ is entirely free; it was freely wrought out by Christ, and is freely imputed to men; it is a free gift bestowed upon them, and as such is received by them; yea, faith, which receives it, is the gift of God; and therefore the justified ones are said to be, "justified freely by the grace of God" (Rom. 3:24).

1b2b6. It affords much peace and comfort to those who see their interest in it; "This work of righteousness is peace:" the "kingdom of God," or reigning grace in the hearts of his people, lies in "righteousness and peace;" in the righteousness of Christ revealed unto them, and received by faith; the consequence of which is, peace of soul, and tranquillity of mind (Isa. 32:17; Rom. 14:17; 5:1).

1b2b7. This righteousness is an "everlasting" one; it always continues to justify, and to be a constant ground of peace and joy; it can never be lost: the righteousness of Adam was lost, and so was that of the angels that sinned; but this will always remain, and be in sight before God, as the justifying righteousness of his people; "My righteousness," says the Lord, "shall be for ever" (Dan. 9:24; Isa. 51:6,8).

1b2b8. It entitles to eternal life; without a righteousness none can "inherit the kingdom of God;" and it must be a better righteousness than a man's own, that can give a man entrance into the kingdom of heaven; but being justified by that, men are "made heirs according to the hope of eternal life;" hence justification by the righteousness of Christ is called, "The justification of life" (Titus 3:7; Rom. 5:18).

1b2c. Another part of Christ's work, and a very principal one, was to make atonement for sin; this was the work appointed for him in council and covenant, and declared in prophecy; namely, "To make reconciliation for iniquity" (Dan. 9:24), and for this purpose he became man, "To make reconciliation for the sins of the people;" and in the end of the world appeared in human nature, "To put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 2:17; 9:26), and by that one sacrifice he has made perfect expiation of the sins of his people, and which is matter of exceeding great joy unto them; "We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement," being reconciled to God by the death of his Son (Rom. 5:10,11), and great reason there is for it, since full and complete pardon of sin proceeds upon it; God, for Christ's sake, and upon the foot of his atoning sacrifice, forgives all trespasses; an application of which forgiveness, causes joy and gladness, and makes the bones which were broken to rejoice; a sense of pardoning grace fills the soul with thankfulness to God, and yields abundance of spiritual consolation; and in this way God would have his people comforted by his ministers (Isa. 40:1,2).

1c. Thirdly, besides the person and work of Christ, there are other things either antecedent to it, or consequent on it; which are matter of joy to believers in him. As,

1c1. His incarnation, in order to do his work; this is spoken of by the evangelic prophet, as if it was over in his days, it being so certain to him and other believers; "To us a child is born;" and this he represents as occasion of great joy, that men would rejoice on account of it "according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil" (Isa. 9:3,6), times of as great rejoicing as can be well named; and when it actually came to pass, the angel who brought the tidings of it to the shepherds, said, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy!" (Luke 2:10,11), and the disciples who first had knowledge of the incarnate Saviour, how did they exult and rejoice, saying, "We have found the Messiah!" they describe their joy as such who had found a great spoil; as the prophet Isaiah foretold (John 1:41,45).

1c2. The sufferings and death of Christ, by which he accomplished the work of redemption and salvation; for though they were painful to Christ, and in some respects occasion mourning to saints, whose sins were the cause of them; yet they make up a great part of the gospel of salvation; a crucified Christ is indeed the sum and substance of it; which, though foolishness to some, and stumbling to others, is to them that are saved the wisdom and power of God; this is the first and grand article of it, that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and makes it the good news it is, and the saying worthy of acceptance; it affords matter of exultation, and even of glorying and boasting (Gal. 6:14).

1c3. The resurrection of Christ from the dead, after he had finished his work, is another source and spring of joy; as an angel brought the good news of the incarnation of Christ, so likewise of his resurrection from the dead; to the women who attended the sepulchre of Christ, the angel who rolled back the stone from it said, "He is not here; for he is risen;" the tidings of which they brought with joy to the disciples (Matthew 28:6,8), and what joy did the disciples express on this account; "The Lord is risen indeed," say they, "and has appeared to Simon!" and still more when they saw him themselves; "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord" (Luke 24:34; John 20:20), and such and so many are the benefits arising from the resurrection of Christ, as well as from his sufferings and death, that believers can take courage and say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" not only because Christ has died, but "rather" because "he is risen again," risen again for their justification (Rom. 8:33,34; 4:25).

1c4. The ascension of Christ to heaven, and his exaltation there, give joy to his saints; it did to his disciples, who were present at his ascension; for when he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven; instead of sorrowing for it, "they worshipped him," and "returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24:51,52), and all true believers by faith "see Jesus crowned with glory and honour," sitting at the right hand of God, highly exalted above every name, angels, authorities, principalities, and powers being subject to him; and he having received gifts for men, which he bestows upon them, even unworthy and rebellious ones; all which affords them the greatest joy and pleasure; "The Lord reigns, Let the earth rejoice" (Ps. 97:1).

1c5. The intercession of Christ; his appearing in the presence of God for his people, his advocacy with the Father, his ever living to make intercession for them, is matter of great joy, and from which they receive much benefit; this brings up the rear of those things which lay the foundation of the triumph of faith; "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" this is supported not only by the death of Christ, and by his resurrection from the dead, and by his session at the right hand of God; but by his intercession there; "Who also maketh intercession for us," and answers to, and removes all charges brought against, them. And whereas to them that look for him, he will appear a second time without sin unto salvation, the forethoughts, and foreviews, and firm belief saints have of it, cause them to exult in their present state; "To look up, and lift up their heads, since their redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

1d. Fourthly, some things under the gospel dispensation, and respecting that are the objects of the joy of gracious souls. As,

1d1. The ministration of the gospel; this is matter of joy to all sensible and awakened sinners; the three thousand pricked to the heart under Peter's sermon "gladly" received the word, preaching pardon and salvation by Christ; when Christ was preached in Samaria there was "great joy" in that city, in such who believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God; when the jailor, who said to the apostles, "Sirs, What must I do to be saved?" had the word of the Lord spoken to him, and to them in his house, he "rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house:" and there is great reason for it; it is the gospel of salvation, which publishes the good tidings of it; and when accompanied with the Spirit of God, it is the power of God unto salvation; it is the voice of Christ, the bridegroom, and everyone that hears and knows that voice "rejoiceth" greatly because of it; it is a joyful sound of love, grace, and mercy, of peace, pardon, righteousness, and salvation; it is food to hungry souls; the sincere milk of the word, by which newly born babes are nourished and grow; and by those of riper age it is esteemed more than their necessary food; they find the word, and eat it, and it is "the joy and rejoicing of their hearts."

1d2. The administration of ordinances, baptism and the Lord's supper; which give such views of Christ in his sufferings and death, burial, and resurrection from the dead, and of the benefits arising from them, as yield delight to believing souls; the eunuch, upon his baptism, "went on his way rejoicing;" the supper of the Lord is a "feast of fat things," a rich entertainment, where the flesh of Christ, as "meat indeed," and the blood of Christ, as "drink indeed," are presented to faith to feed upon; these ordinances are "breasts of consolation," at which saints may "suck and be satisfied," and "milk out," and be "delighted" with the abundance of the glory in them; these are the "lattices" through which Christ shows himself, and these the "galleries" in which he is beheld, to the great joy and satisfaction of those who are favored with a sight of him.

1d3. The prosperity of the interest of Christ; whether it be through the numerous conversions of men, and additions of them to the church, gives joy, as when Paul and Barnabas, as they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, in their way from Antioch to Jerusalem, declared the conversion of the Gentiles, "it caused great joy to the brethren" (Acts 15:3), or whether through peace, love, and unity, prevailing and subsisting among the saints, which give pleasure to all the well wishers to Zion's prosperity; as it did to David, who prayed earnestly for it (Ps. 122:6-9).

1d4. The reign of Christ, both spiritual and personal, will cause great joy in the saints. His spiritual reign, and the more glorious appearances of that, when the kingdoms of this world shall become his; upon which the four and twenty elders, the representatives of gospel churches, will, with the greatest solemnity and reverence, "give thanks" to him, because he has taken to himself his "great power and reigned" (Rev. 11:15-17), and when antichrist, and the antichristian states, shall be destroyed, the fullness of the Gentiles brought in, and the Jews converted, these voices shall be heard in heaven, the church, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come" (Rev. 19:1).

1d5. And especially when Christ himself shall appear, and his tabernacle shall be with men: and an anticipation of all this by faith, gives to believers a joy and pleasure now; that things will not always be in the state they now are, but in a much more happy one, even on the earth.

1e. Fifthly, The heavenly glory and happiness of a future state to all eternity, is the object of the saints present joy; when they shall actually possess it, they will then "enter into the joy of their Lord;" into the place of the celestial feast,^[3] to partake of it, where will be fulness of joy; (see Matthew 25:10), and even now they can "rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" believing, that whereas they "suffer with" Christ, they shall be "glorified together;" and that when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, they shall "appear with him in glory!" and in the faith and hope of this they rejoice and are glad.

2. The author and cause of this spiritual joy.

2a. The efficient cause is God, he who is the object is the author of it, God, Father, Son, and Spirit; and which is therefore called, "The joy of the Lord" (Neh. 8:10; 12:43). It is "the God of hope," the object, author, and giver of that grace, who "fills with joy and peace in believing" in Christ (Rom. 15:13), who is God the Father: Christ himself is the author of this joy; and he calls it, "my joy;" as it is both objectively and efficiently; it is he that gives "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (John 15:11; Isa. 61:3). And the Spirit of God is concerned in it; it is one of the fruits of the Spirit, and is ranked with the first of them (Gal. 5:22), and is called, "joy in the Holy Ghost;" because produced by him (Rom. 14:17).

2b. The instruments or means of it are, the ministers of the gospel, through the ministration of the word, and the administration of ordinances; they are the bringers of good tidings of good, the publishers of peace and salvation, and the means of spreading much joy among the saints (Isa. 52:7), they do not pretend to have "dominion over the faith" of believers, but to be "helpers of their joy" (2 Cor. 1:24).

3. The nature and properties of this joy.

3a. It should be constant: the exhortations to it are, "Rejoice evermore," and "rejoice in the Lord always!" (1 Thess. 5:16; Phil. 4:4), and there is great encouragement from the Lord always to rejoice in him; and the character of the saints and people of God in this present state of things is, "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Cor. 6:10), yea, the apostle James exhorts believers, to "count it all joy, when they fall into divers temptations," or afflictions, since these all work for good; are for the trial, brightening, and increasing the graces of the saints, and for the glory of God (Jam. 1:2,3). Yet,

3b. It is imperfect in the present state, and often interrupted; sometimes, through the prevalence of indwelling sin, and the breakings forth of the corruptions of the heart; so that saints have no rest in "their bones," no joy in their hearts "because of their sin;" and cry out with the apostle, "O wretched" men that they are! this was sometimes the case of David, Isaiah, and the apostle Paul (Ps. 38:3; Isa. 6:5; Rom. 7:23,24), sometimes through the temptations of Satan, who throws his fiery darts, which give pain, and sorely grieve; and when he has leave, sifts as wheat is sifted, which occasions great inquietude and distress; and beats and buffets, which causes great trouble and uneasiness; and he goes about like a roaring lion, to frighten and terrify when he cannot devour. And also through divine desertions, for when God hides his face from his people, they are troubled; nay, left in such darkness and distress, as even to be distracted with terrors, and ready to die; as was the case with David, Heman, and others. Yet,

3b3. This joy may come again, be restored, and greatly increase: joy sometimes comes in the morning, after a night of darkness; and the joys of salvation have been restored after the bones have been broken, through backslidings and falls into sin; yea, there may be an increase and overflow of joy; and it is promised, "The meek shall increase their joy in the Lord" (Isa. 29:19), this is done by enlarged discoveries of the love of God, directions into it, and a fresh shedding abroad of it in the heart; by Christ, the Sun of righteousness, arising with healing in his wings; by some renewed sights of Christ, and appropriating views of him; and by an increase of faith in him; for as that grace grows, there is a furtherance of joy, called, "The furtherance and the joy of faith;" it is in a way of believing souls are filled with joy and peace, and through a sight by faith of an unseen Jesus. Meditation on the love of God, and person of Christ, contributes much unto it; and prayer is often a means of it; God makes his people joyful in the house of prayer: the preaching of the gospel is frequently blessed to this purpose; it has a tendency to promote spiritual joy; and,

indeed, the end and design of it is, "that joy might be full" (Phil. 1:25; Isa. 56:7; 1 John 1:4).

3b4. It is a joy that is unknown to the men of the world; a "stranger," one that is a stranger to God and godliness, to Christ and the things of Christ, to the Spirit and to the gospel, "intermeddles not" with it, has no experience of it, nor share in it (Prov. 14:10), it passes the understanding of a natural man; it is an enigma, not to be unriddled by him, that the saints should be "sorrowful," and "yet always rejoicing!"

3b5. It is unspeakable; not to be fully expressed by those who experience it; it is better experienced than expressed; it is something like what the apostle Paul felt when caught up to the third heaven; and it is "full of glory," being concerned with eternal glory and happiness; it is a "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God" (1 Pet. 1:8; Rom. 5:2).

3b6. It is a joy that cannot be utterly lost or taken away in the present life; the principle of it always remains, though it is not always in exercise; the ground work and foundation of it always continues, the unalterable love of God, and the person and grace of Christ; "your joy no man taketh from you;" and in the future state it will be "full" and complete (John 16:22,24).