

Gospel Grounds & Evidences

Part II

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1. Jesus Christ is the principal effect of divine wisdom, power, goodness, love, and grace. 2. That the design of the gospel is to manifest, declare, and testify that so it is, and so to make known the glory of God therein. 3. That saving faith is that act, duty, and work of the soul, whereby we receive the record of God concerning these things, [and] do ascribe the glory of them all unto him, as discovering it in the way of life proposed unto us. 4. That hereon it proceeds unto a renunciation of all other ways, means, hopes, reliefs, in opposition unto this way, or in conjunction with it, as unto acceptance with God in life and salvation. I say, in the first place, examine these things strictly by the word; and if they appear to be (as they are) sacred, evangelical, fundamental truths, be not moved from them, be not shaken in them, by any temptation whatever.

And, in the next place, bring your faith to the trial on these principles: What do you judge concerning God's way of saving sinners by Jesus Christ, as proposed in the gospel? Are you satisfied in it, that it is such as becomes God, and answers all the glorious attributes of his nature? Would you have any other way proposed in the room of it? Can you, will you, commit the eternal welfare of your souls unto the grace and faithfulness of God in this way, so as that you have no desire to be saved any other way? Does the glory of God in any measure shine forth unto you in the face of Jesus Christ? Do you find a secret joy in your hearts upon the satisfaction you take in the proposal of this way unto you by the gospel? Do you, in all your fears and temptations, in all approaches of death, renounce all other reserves and reliefs, and retake your whole confidence unto this way alone, and the representation of God made therein? Herein lies that faith, and its exercise, which will be an anchor unto your souls in all their trials.

And this is the first and principal ground, or reason, whereon faith, divine and saving, does accept, embrace, and approve of the way of God's saving sinners by Jesus Christ,--namely, because it is such as does become him, and every way answer unto all the holy properties of his nature, which are manifested and glorified therein. And where faith does approve of it on this ground and reason, it does evidence itself to be truly evangelical, unto the supportment and comfort of them in whom it is.

Secondly, It does so approve of this way as that which it finds suited unto the whole design and all the desires of an enlightened soul. So when our Lord Jesus

Christ compares the kingdom of God (which is this way of salvation) unto a treasure and a precious pearl, he affirms that those who found them had great joy and the highest satisfaction, as having attained that which suited their desires, and gave rest unto their minds.

A soul enlightened with the knowledge of the truth, and made sensible of its own condition by spiritual conviction, has two predominant desires and aims, whereby it is wholly regulated,--the one is, that God may be gloried; and the other, that itself may be eternally saved. Nor can it forego either of these desires, nor are they separable in any enlightened soul. It can never cease in either of these desires, and that to the highest degree. The whole world cannot dispossess an enlightened mind of either of them. Profligate sinners have no concernment in the former; no, nor yet those who are under legal convictions, if they have wherewithal received no spiritual light. They would be saved; but for the glory of God therein, he may look to that himself,--they are not concerned in it: for that which they mean by salvation is nothing but a freedom from external misery. This they would have, whether God be [glorified] or no; of what is salvation truly they have no desire.

But the first beam of spiritual light and grace instates an indefatigable desire of the glory of God in the minds and souls of them in whom it is. Without this the soul knows not how to desire its own salvation. I may say, it would not be saved in a way wherein God should not be glorified; for without that, whatever its state should be, it would not be that which we call salvation. The exaltation of the glory of God belongs essentially thereunto; it consists in the beholding and enjoyment of that glory. This desire, therefore, is immovably fixed in the mind and soul of every enlightened person; he can admit of no proposal of eternal things that is inconsistent with it.

But, moreover, in every such person there is a ruling desire of his own salvation. It is natural unto him, as a creature made for eternity; it is inseparable from him, as he is a convinced sinner. And the clearer the light of any one is in the nature of this salvation, the more is this desire heightened and confirmed in him.

Here, then, lies the inquiry,--namely, how these two prevalent desires may be reconciled and satisfied in the same mind? For, as we are sinners, there seems to be an inconsistency between them. The glory of God, in his justice and holiness, requires that sinners should die and perish eternally. So speaks the law; this is the language of conscience, and the voice of all our fears: wherefore, for a sinner to desire, in the first place, that God may be glorified is to desire that himself may be damned.

Which of these desires shall the sinner cleave unto? Unto whether of them shall he give the preeminence? Shall he cast off all hopes and desires of his own salvation, and be content to perish forever? This he cannot do; God does not require it of him,--he has given him the contrary in charge whilst he is in this

world. Shall he, then, desire that God may part with and lose his glory, so as that, one way or other, he may be saved? Bring himself unto an unconcernment what becomes of it? This can be no more in an enlightened mind than it can cease to desire its own salvation. But how to reconcile these things in himself a sinner finds not.

Here, therefore, the glory of this way represents itself unto the faith of every believer. It not only brings these desires into a perfect consistency and harmony, but makes them to increase and promote one another. The desire of God's glory increases the desire of our own salvation; and the desire of our own salvation enlarges and inflames the desire of glorifying God therein and thereby. These things are brought into a perfect consistency and mutual subserviency in the blood of Christ, Rom.3:24-26; for this way is that which God has found out, in infinite wisdom, to glorify himself in the salvation of sinners. There is not any thing wherein the glory of God does or may consist, but in this way is reconciled unto, and consistent with, the salvation of the chiefest of sinners. There is no property of his nature but is gloriously exalted in and by it. An answer is given in it unto all the objections of the law against the consistency of the glory of God and the salvation of sinners. It pleads his truth in his threatening, in the sanction of the law, with the curse annexed;--it pleads his righteousness, holiness, and severity, all engaged to destroy sinners;--it pleads the instance of God's dealing with the angels that sinned, and calls in the witness of conscience to testify the truth of all its allegations: but there is a full and satisfactory answer given unto this whole plea of the law in this way of salvation. God declares in it, and by it, how he has provided for the satisfaction of all these things, and the exaltation of his glory in them; as we shall see immediately.

Here true faith will fix itself in all its distresses. "Whatever," says the soul, "be my state and condition, whatever be my fears and perplexities, whatever oppositions I meet withal, yet I see in Jesus Christ, in the glass of the gospel, that there is no inconsistency between the glory of God and my salvation. That otherwise insuperable difficulty laid by the law in the way of my life and comfort, is utterly removed." Whilst faith keeps this hold in the soul, with a constant approbation of this way of salvation by Christ, as that which gives [such] a consistency unto both its governing desires, that it shall not need forego either of them,--so as to be contented to be damned that God may be glorified, as some have spoken, or to desire salvation without a due regard unto the glory of God,--it will be an anchor to stay the soul in all its storms and distresses. Some benefit which will certainly ensue hereon we may briefly mention.

1. The soul will be hereby preserved from ruining despair, in all the distresses that may befall it. Despair is nothing but a prevalent apprehension of [the] mind that the glory of God and a man's salvation are inconsistent;--that God cannot be just, true, holy, or righteous, if he in whom that apprehension is may be saved. Such a person does conclude that his salvation is impossible, because, one way or other, it is inconsistent with the glory of God; for nothing else can render it

impossible. Hence arises in the mind an utter dislike of God, with revengeful thoughts against him for being what he is. This cuts off all endeavours of reconciliation, yea, begets an abhorrence of all the means of it, as those which are weak, foolish, and insufficient. Such are Christ and his cross unto men under such apprehensions; they judge them unable to reconcile the glory of God and their salvation. Then is a soul in an open entrance into hell. From this cursed frame and ruin the soul is safely preserved by faith's maintaining in the mind and heart a due persuasion of the consistency and harmony that is between the glory of God and its own salvation. Whilst this persuasion is prevalent in it, although it cannot attain any comfortable assurance of an especial interest in it, yet it cannot but love, honour, value, and cleave unto this way, adoring the wisdom and grace of God in it; which is an act and evidence of saving faith. See Ps.130:3,4. Yea,--

2. It will preserve the soul from heartless despondencies. Many in their temptations, darkneses, fears, surprisals by sin, although they fall [not] into ruining desperation, yet they fall under such desponding fears and various discouragements, as keep them off from a vigorous endeavour after a recovery: and hereon, for want of the due exercise of grace, they grow weaker and darker every day, and are in danger to pine away in their sins. But where faith keeps the soul constant unto the approbation of God's way of saving sinners, as that wherein the glory of God and its own salvation are not only fully reconciled but made inseparable, it will stir up all graces unto a due exercise, and the diligent performance of all duties, whereby it may obtain a refreshing sense of a personal interest in it.

3. It will keep the heart full of kindness towards God; whence love and gracious hope will spring. It is impossible but that a soul overwhelmed with a sense of sin, and thereon filled with self-condemnation, but if it has a view of the consistency of the glory of God with its deliverance and salvation, through a free contrivance of infinite wisdom and grace, it must have such kindness for him, such gracious thoughts of him, as will beget and kindle in it both love and hope, as Mic.7:18-20; Ps.85:8; 1 Tim.1:15.

4. A steady continuance in the approbation of God's way of salvation, on the reason mentioned, will lead the mind into that exercise of faith which both declares its nature and is the spring of all the saving benefits which we receive by it. Now, this is such a spiritual light into, and discovery of, the revelation and declaration made in the gospel of the wisdom, love, grace, and mercy of God in Christ Jesus, and the way of the communication of the effect of them unto sinners by him, as that the soul finds them suited unto and able for the pardon of its own sins, its righteousness and salvation; so as that it places its whole trust and confidence for these ends therein.

This being the very life of faith, that act and exercise of it whereby we are justified and saved, and whereby it evidences its truth and sincerity against all temptations, I shall insist a little on the explanation of the description of it now

given. And there are three things in it, or required unto it:--

(1.) A spiritual light into, and discovery of, the revelation and declaration made in the gospel of the wisdom, love, grace, and mercy of God in Christ Jesus. It is not a mere assent unto the truth of the revelation or authority of the revealer;--this, indeed, is supposed and included in it; but it adds thereunto a spiritual discerning, perception, and understanding of the things themselves revealed and declared; without which, a bare assent unto the truth of the revelation is of no advantage. This is called "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor.4:6; the increase whereof in all believers the apostle does earnestly pray for, Eph.1:15-20. So we discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner; and hence arises "the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ," Col.2:2; or a spiritual sense of the power, glory, and beauty of the things contained in this mystery: so to know Christ as to know "the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings," Phil.3:10.

Faith affects the mind with an ineffable sense, taste, experience, and acknowledgment of the greatness, the glory, the power, the beauty of the things revealed and proposed in this way of salvation. The soul in it is enabled to see and understand that all the things belonging unto it are such as become God, his wisdom, goodness, and love; as was before declared. And a spiritual light enabling hereunto is of the essence of saving faith; unless this be in us, we do not, we cannot, give glory to God in any assent unto the truth. And faith is that grace which God has prepared, fitted, and suited, to give unto him the glory that is his due in the work of our redemption and salvation.

(2.) Upon this spiritual light into this revelation of God and his glory, in this way of saving sinners, the mind by faith finds and sees that all things in it are suited unto its own justification and salvation in particular, and that the power of God is in them to make them effectual unto that end. This is that act and work of faith whereon the whole blessed event does depend. It will not avail a man to see all sorts of viands and provisions, if they be no way suited unto his appetite, nor meet for his nourishment; nor will it be unto a man's spiritual advantage to take a view of the excellencies of the gospel, unless he find them suited unto his condition. And this is the hardest task and work that faith has to go through with.

Faith is not an especial assurance of a man's own justification and salvation by Christ; that it will produce, but not until another step or two in its progress be over: but faith is a satisfactory persuasion that the way of God proposed in the gospel is fitted, suited, and able to save the soul in particular that does believe,--not only that it is a blessed way to save sinners in general, but that it is such a way to save him in particular. So is this matter stated by the apostle, 1 Tim.1:15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation," or approbation, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." His faith does not abide here, nor confine itself unto this, that Christ Jesus came into the

world to save sinners, that this is the holy and blessed way of God for the salvation of sinners in general; but he puts in for his own particular interest in that way: "It is God's way, fitted, and suited, and able to save me, who am the chiefest of sinners."

And this, as was said, is the greatest and the most difficult work of faith; for we suppose, concerning the person who is to believe,-- [1.] That he is really and effectually convinced of the sin of [our] nature, of our apostasy from God therein, the loss of his image, and the direful effects that ensue thereon. [2.] That he has due apprehensions of the holiness and severity of God, of the sanction and curse of the law, with a right understanding of the nature of sin and its demerit. [3.] That he have a full conviction of his own actual sins, with all their aggravations, from their greatness, their number, and all sorts of circumstances. [4.] That he has a sense of the guilt of secret or unknown sins, which have been multiplied by that continual proneness unto sin which he finds working in him. [5.] That he seriously consider what it is to appear before the judgment-seat of God, to receive a sentence for eternity, with all other things of the like nature, inseparable from him as a sinner.

When it is really thus with any man, he shall find it the hardest thing in the world, and clogged with the most difficulties, for him to believe that the way of salvation proposed unto him is suited, fitted, and every way able to save him in particular,-- to apprehend it such as none of his objections can rise up against, or stand before. But this is that, in the second place, that the faith of God's elect will do: it will enable the soul to discern and satisfy itself that there is in this way of God every thing that is needful unto its own salvation. And this it will do on a spiritual understanding and due consideration of,--[1.] The infiniteness of that wisdom, love, grace, and mercy, which is the original or sovereign cause of the whole way, with the ample declaration and confirmation made of them in the gospel. [2.] Of the unspeakably glorious way and means for the procuring and communicating unto us of all the effects of that wisdom, grace, and mercy,-- namely, the incarnation and mediation of the Son of God, in his oblation and intercession. [3.] Of the great multitude and variety of precious promises, engaging the truth, faithfulness, and power of God, for the communication of righteousness and salvation from those springs, by that means. I say, on the just consideration of these things, with all other encouragements wherewith they are accompanied, the soul concludes by faith that there is salvation for itself in particular, to be attained in that way.

(3.) The last act of faith, in the order of nature, is the soul's acquiescence in, and trust unto, this way of salvation for itself and its own eternal condition, with a renunciation of all other ways and means for that end. And because Jesus Christ, in his person, mediation, and righteousness, is the life and centre of this way, as he in whom alone God will glorify his wisdom, love, grace, and mercy,--as he who has purchased, procured, and wrought all this salvation for us,--whose righteousness is imputed unto us for our justification, and who in the discharge of

his office does actually bestow it upon us,--he is the proper and immediate object of faith, in this act of trust and affiance. This is that which is called in the Scripture believing in Christ,-- namely, the trusting unto him alone for life and salvation, as the whole of divine wisdom and grace is administered by him unto these ends. For this we come unto him, we receive him, we believe in him, we trust him, we abide in him; with all those other ways whereby our faith in him is expressed.

And this is the second ground or reason whereon faith does close with, embrace, and approve of God's way of saving sinners; whereby it will evidence itself, unto the comfort of them in whom it is, in the midst of all their trials and temptations.

Thirdly, Faith approves of this way, as that which makes the glory of God, in the giving and the sanction of the law, to be as eminently conspicuous as if it had been perfectly fulfilled by every one of us in our own persons. The law was a just representation of the righteousness and holiness of God; and the end for which it was given was, that it might be the means and instrument of the eternal exaltation of his glory in these holy properties of his nature. Let no man imagine that God has laid aside this law, as a thing of no more use; or that he will bear a diminution of that glory, or any part of it, which he designed in the giving of it. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but no jot or little of the law shall do so. No believer can desire, or be pleased with, his own salvation, unless the glory of God designed by the law be secured. He cannot desire that God should forego any part of his glory that he might be saved. Yea, this is that on the account whereof he principally rejoices in his own salvation,--namely, that it is that wherein God will be absolutely, universally, and eternally glorified.

Now, in this way of saving sinners by Jesus Christ, by mercy, pardon, and the righteousness of another (of all which the law knows nothing), faith does see and understand how all that glory which God designed in the giving of the law is eternally secured and preserved entire, without eclipse or diminution. The way whereby this is done is declared in the gospel. See Rom.3:24-26| 8:2-4; 10:3,4. Hereby faith is enabled to answer all the challenges and charges of the law, with all its pleas for the vindication of divine justice, truth and holiness; it has that to offer which gives it the utmost satisfaction in all its pleas for God: so is this answer managed, Rom.8:32-34.

And this is the first way whereby the faith of God's elect does evidence itself in the minds and consciences of them that do believe, in the midst of all their contests with sin, their trials and temptations, to their relief and comfort,--namely, the closing with, and approbation of, God's way of saving sinners by Jesus Christ, on the grounds and reasons which have been declared.

II. The second evidence of the faith of God's elect

The second way whereby true faith does evidence itself in the souls and

consciences of believers, unto their supportment and comfort under all their conflicts with sin, in all their trials and temptations, is by a constant approbation of the revelation of the will of God in the Scripture concerning our holiness, and the obedience unto himself which he requires of us. This faith will never forego, whatever trials it may undergo, whatever darkness the mind may fall into; this it will abide by in all extremities. And that it may appear to be a peculiar effect or work of saving faith, some things are to be premised and considered:--

1. There is in all men by nature a light enabling them to judge of the difference that is between what is morally good and what is evil, especially in things of more than ordinary importance. This light is not attained or acquired by us; we are not taught it, we do not learn it: it is born with us, and inseparable from us; it prevents [exists previously to] consideration and reflection, working naturally, and in a sort necessarily, in the first acting of our souls.

And the discerning power of this light, as to the moral nature of men's actions, is accompanied inseparably with a judgment that they make concerning themselves as unto what they do of the one kind or other, and that with respect unto the superior judgment of God about the same things. This the apostle expressly ascribes unto the Gentiles, who had not the law, Rom.2:14,15: "The Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." This is a most exact description of a natural conscience, in both the powers of it; it discerns that good and evil which is commanded and forbidden in the law, and it passes an acquitting or condemning judgment and sentence, according to what men have done.

Wherefore, this approbation of duties in things moral is common unto all men. The light whereby it is guided may be variously improved, as it was in some of the Gentiles; and it may be stifled in some, until it seem to be quite extinguished, until they become like the beasts that perish. And where the discerning power of this light remains, yet, through a continual practice of sin and obduracy therein, the judging power of it as unto all its efficacy may be lost: so the apostle declares concerning them who are judicially hardened and given up unto sin, Rom.1:32, "These, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." They still discern what is evil and sinful, and know what is the judgment of God conceding such things; but yet the love of sin and custom in sinning do so far prevail in them, as to contemn both their own light and God's judgment, so as to delight in what is contrary unto them. These the apostle describes, Eph.4:19, "Being past feeling" (all sense of convictions), "they have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness;" such as the world is filled withal at this day.

This is not that approbation of obedience which we inquire after; it is, in some measure, in the worst of men, nor has it any likeness unto that duty of faith which we treat of, as will immediately appear.

2. There is a farther knowledge of good and evil by the law, and this is also accompanied with a judgment acquitting or condemning; for the law has the same judging power and authority over men that their own consciences have,--namely, the authority of God himself. The law is to sinners as the tree of knowledge of good and evil,--it opens their eyes to see the nature of what they have done; for "by the law is the knowledge of sin," Rom.3:20: and so is the knowledge of duty also; for it is the adequate rule of all duty. There is, I say, a knowledge and conviction of duty and sin communicated unto men by the law, and those far more clear and distinct than what is or can be found in men from the mere light of nature; for it extends to more instances, that being generally lost where it is alone, as unto many important duties and sins; and it declares the nature of every sin and duty far more clearly than natural light of itself can do.

And this knowledge of good and evil by the law may be so improved in the minds of men as to press them unto a performance of all known duties, and an abstinence from all known sins, with a judgment on them all. But yet herein does not consist that approbation of holiness and obedience which faith will produce; for,--

(1.) As unto approbation or condemnation of good or evil: that which is by the law is particular, or has respect unto particular duties and sins, according as occasion does present them; and extends not unto the whole law absolutely, and all that is required in it. I do not say it is always partial; there is a legal sincerity that may have respect unto all known duties and sins, though it be very rare. Hardly shall we find a person merely under the power of the law, who does not evidence an indulgence unto some sin, and a neglect of some duties: but such a thing there may be; it was in Paul, in his pharisaism,--he was, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless," Phil.3:6. He allowed not himself in any known sin, nor in the neglect of any known duty; nor could others charge him with any defect therein,--he was blameless. But where this is, still this approbation or condemnation is particular,--that is, they do respect particular duties and sins as they do occur; there is not a respect in them unto the whole righteousness and holiness of the law, as we shall see. Wherefore, a man may approve of every duty in its season as it is offered unto him, or when at any time he thinks of it by an act of his fixed judgment; and so, on the contrary, as unto sin; and yet come short of that approbation of holiness and righteousness which we inquire after.

(2.) It is not accompanied with a love of the things themselves that are good, as they are so, and a hatred of the contrary; for the persons in whom it is do not, cannot, "delight in the law of God after the inward man," as Rom.7:22, so as to approve of it, and all that is contained in it, cleaving to them with love and delight.

They may have a love for this or that duty, and a hatred of the contrary, but it is on various considerations, suited unto their convictions and circumstances; but it is not on the account of its formal nature, as good or evil. Wherefore,--

(3.) No man, without the light of saving faith, can constantly and universally approve of the revelation of the will of God, as unto our holiness and obedience.

To make this evident, which is the foundation of our present discovery of the acting of saving faith, we must consider,--[1.] What it is that is to be approved. [2.] What this approbation is, or wherein it does consist:--

[1.] That which is to be approved is the holiness and obedience which God requires in us, our natures, and actions, and accepts from us, or accepts in us. It is not particular duties as they occur unto us, taken alone and by themselves, but the universal correspondence of our natures and actions unto the will of God. The Scripture gives us various descriptions of it, because of the variety of graces and gracious operations which concur therein. We may here mention some of its principal concerns, having handled the nature of it at large elsewhere; for it may be considered,--1st. As unto its foundation, spring, and causes: and this is the universal renovation of our natures into the image of God, Eph.4:24; or the change of our whole souls, in all their faculties and powers, into his likeness, whereby we become new creatures, or the workmanship of God created in Christ Jesus unto good works, 2 Cor.5:17, Eph.2:10; wherein we are originally and formally sanctified throughout, in our "whole spirit, and soul, and body," 1 Thess.5:23. It is the whole law of God written in our hearts, transforming them into the image of the divine holiness, represented therein. And this, next unto the blood of Christ and his righteousness, is the principal spring of peace, rest, and complacency, in and unto the souls of believers: it is their joy and satisfaction to find themselves restored unto a likeness and conformity unto God, as we shall see farther immediately. And where there is not some gracious sense and experience hereof, there is nothing but disorder and confusion in the soul; nothing can give it a sweet composure, a satisfaction in itself, a complacency with what it is, but a spiritual sense of this renovation of the image of God in it.

2dly. It may be considered as unto its permanent principle in the mind and affections; and this, because of its near relation unto Christ, its conjunction with him, and derivation from him, is sometimes said to be Christ himself. Hence we live, yet not so much we as Christ lives in us, Gal.2:20; for "without him we can do nothing," John 15:5; for "he is our life," Col.3:4. As it resides in believers, it is a permanent principle of spiritual life, light, love, and power, acting in the whole soul and all the faculties of the mind, enabling them to cleave unto God with purpose of heart, and to live unto him in all the acts and duties of spiritual life: this is that whereby the Holy Ghost is "in them a well of water, springing up into everlasting life," John 4:14. It is the spirit that is born of the Spirit; it is the divine nature, whereof we are made partakers by the promises; it is a principle of victorious faith and love, with all graces any way requisite unto duties of holy

obedience; as to the matter or manner of their performance, enabling the soul unto all the acts of the life of God, with delight, joy, and complacency.

This it is in its nature. However, as unto degrees of its operation and manifestation, it may be very low and weak in some true believers, at least for a season; but there are none who are really so, but there is in them a spiritually vital principle of obedience, or of living unto God, that is participant of the nature of that which we have described; and if it be attended unto, it will evidence itself in its power and operations unto the gracious refreshment and satisfaction of the soul wherein it is. And there are few who are so destitute of those evidences but that they are able to say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see, though I know not how my eyes were opened; whereas I was dead, I find motions of a new life in me, in breathing after grace, in hungering and thirsting after righteousness, though I know not how I was quickened."

3dly. It may be considered as unto its disposition, inclinations, and motions. These are the first acting of a vital principle; as the first acting of sin are called "the motions of sin" working in our members, Rom.7:5. Such motions and inclinations unto obedience do work in the minds of believers, from this principle of holiness; it produces in them a constant, invariable disposition unto all duties of the life of God. It is a new nature, and a nature cannot be without suitable inclinations and motions; and this new spiritual disposition consists in a constant complacency of mind in that which is good and according to the will of God, in an adherence by love unto it, in a readiness and fixedness of mind with respect unto particular duties. In brief, it is that which David describes in the 119th Psalm throughout, and that which is figuratively foretold concerning the efficacy of the grace of the gospel in changing the natures and dispositions of those that are partakers of it, Isa.11:6-8.

This every believer may ordinarily find in himself; for although this disposition may be variously weakened, opposed, interrupted by indwelling sin, and the power of temptation; though it may be impaired by a neglect of the stirring up and exercise of the principle of spiritual life, in all requisite graces, on all occasions; yet it will still be working in them, and will fill the mind with a constant displicency with itself, when it is not observed, followed, improved. No believer shall ever have peace in his own mind, who has not some experience of a universal disposition unto all holiness and godliness in his mind and soul: herein consists that love of the law, of which it is said those in whom it is have "great peace, and nothing shall offend them," Ps.119:165; it is that wherein their souls find much complacency.

4thly. It may be considered with respect unto all the acts, duties, and works, internal and external, wherein our actual obedience does consist. Being, on the principles mentioned, made free from sin, and becoming the servants of God, believers herein have their "fruit unto holiness," whereof "the end is everlasting life," Rom.6:22. This I need not stay to describe. Sincerity in every duty, and

universality with respect unto all duties, are the properties of it.

"This is the will of God, even your sanctification," 1 Thess.4:3; that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," Heb.12:14; "that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of Cod" which we are to approve, Rom.12:2.

[2.] Our next inquiry is, what is that approbation of this way of holiness which we place as an evidence of saving faith? And I say, it is such as arises from experience, and is accompanied with choice, delight, and acquiescence; it is the acting of the soul in a delightful adherence unto the whole will of God; it is a resolved judgment of the beauty and excellency of that holiness and obedience which the gospel reveals and requires, and that on the grounds which shall be immediately declared, and the nature thereof therein more fully opened.

This approbation cannot be in any unregenerate person, who is not under the conduct of saving faith, who is destitute of the light of it. So the apostle assures us, Rom.8:7, "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Whatever work it may have wrought in it, or upon it, yet, whilst it is carnal or unrenewed, it has a radical enmity unto the law of God; which is the frame of heart which stands in direct opposition unto this approbation. It may think well of this or that duty, from its convictions and other considerations, and so attend unto their performance; but the law itself, in the universal holiness which it requires, it does utterly dislike:

(continued in part 3...)

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