

Of the Complacency and Delight God Had in Himself, and the Divine Persons in Each other...

by John Gill

God's delight and complacency arise from his own nature and perfections, as well as his internal acts and purposes, and he has a mutual delight and complacency with the divine Persons.

Scripture: Psalm 16:2, Revelation 4:11

Topics: "God's Delight", "The Trinity"

Description

John Gill emphasizes the profound complacency and delight that God experienced within Himself and among the divine Persons before the creation of any beings. He explains that God's happiness is complete and self-sufficient, independent of creation, and that His eternal purposes and the mutual delight among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit reflect a perfect relationship. Gill highlights that God's creation was not born out of necessity but from His sovereign will, and that the divine Persons took joy in the foreviews of their plans for salvation. The sermon illustrates the eternal satisfaction of God and the joy He finds in His elect, affirming that His love and delight are not contingent upon creation but are intrinsic to His nature.

Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 2--Chapter 16

OF THE COMPLACENCY AND DELIGHT GOD HAD IN HIMSELF, AND THE DIVINE PERSONS IN EACH OTHER,

BEFORE ANY CREATURE WAS BROUGHT INTO BEING.

Having finished what I had to say concerning the internal acts of God, and the eternal transactions between the three divine Persons, before any creature, angel or man, was made; I should now have entered upon the external acts and works of God in time, but that I thought it might be proper, first, to observe the complacency, delight, and satisfaction God had in himself, in his own nature and perfections, before any creature existed; and would have had, if none had ever been brought into being: as also the pleasure he took in the foreviews of his eternal purposes and decrees being executed in time; and of the

success of those transactions, which were between the divine Persons in God, in the council of peace, and covenant of grace; and especially the mutual delight and complacency each divine Person had in one another, when alone, in a boundless eternity, and all of them had in the chosen vessels of salvation. 1.

First, The complacency, delight, and satisfaction, which the divine Being had in himself, in his own nature and perfections, before the existence of any creature; and would have had the same if no creature had ever existed: in his nature, in the contemplation of the unspeakable glories of Deity, and in the special properties and mutual relations of the three persons to each other, and in the perfections of his nature. God is a most perfect being, entire and wanting nothing; he is El-shaddai, God all-sufficient, who has a sufficiency in and of himself, and needs nothing from creatures; he is the blessed one, God blessed for evermore; completely happy in himself, as has been proved, when his perfections were considered; whatever perfection or excellency is in creatures, angels or men, it is all from him, and is in him to the highest degree, and therefore as in them can add nothing to his pleasure and happiness: the perfections of God are indeed displayed in the creatures in a glorious manner; the heavens declare his glory, and the earth is full of it; but then these displays are made not for his own sake, but for the sake of others, that they may understand his eternal power and Godhead, or be left without excuse; and though his perfections are very brightly displayed herein, yet they are clearer in himself, and so can give him no new pleasure and satisfaction, nor add anything to his felicity and blessedness; for though it is said, "For thy pleasure they are and were created", (Rev. 4:11) "pleasure" there does not signify delight but will; and so it should be rendered by thy will, or according to it, "they are and were created"; and though when they were made, and he had reviewed them, they appeared to him all very good, and he expressed his well pleasedness in them; yet this raised no new joy in him, nor added anything to his happiness, complete in himself; which would have been the same if a creature, or any of the works of creation had never been made, nor if any of the sons of men had ever been redeemed; for the benefit arising from the redemption of men by Christ, and the satisfaction made for them by him, redounds not to God, but to the redeemed, and for whom the satisfaction is made; "My goodness extendeth not to thee", says Christ, "but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight", (Ps. 16:2, 3) nor does he need the worship and obedience of angels or men; nor does he receive any additional pleasure and happiness from them; what are the highest and loudest praises of angels, to him who is exalted above all blessing and praise? or the prayers and petitions of indigent creatures? the benefit from them is to them, and not to him; what is all the righteousness, and what are the best works done by men to him?

"Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Can a man by all this be profitable to God?" No, he cannot; when the best of men have done all they can, they must own they are but "unprofitable servants", with respect to him. "Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again; for of him, and through him, and to him are all things?" (Job 22:2, 3, 35:7; Luke 17:10; Rom. 11:35, 36).

Since then nothing in time, in and from creatures, add anything to the essential glory, bliss, and happiness of the divine Being; it clearly appears, that his going forth in the works of creation, did not arise from necessity of nature, but was according to his sovereign will; and that he had infinite delight, pleasure, and complacency in himself, before any creature was made, and would have had the same, if they had never been. 2. Secondly, As Jehovah took delight and pleasure in himself, in his own nature, and the perfections of it, so in the internal and eternal acts of his mind; his purposes and decrees, formed in his eternal mind, according to the good pleasure of his will; these concern all things done in time, from the beginning to the

end of the world; the formation of the heaven, earth, and sea, and all that are in them; everything that has been, is, or shall be, since the world began to the consummation of all things; for there is a purpose for everything under heaven, and a time for every purpose (Eccl. 3:1).

And these all lay before God, at once and together, in his all-comprehending mind; he saw the end from the beginning, and every intervening thing; "Known unto God are all his works from eternity", (Acts 15:18) and he delighted in them, as he saw them in himself, in his mind and will, and in the foreviews of the accomplishment of them in time; who calls things that are not, as though they were; they stood all before him in his view, as if really in execution; nor does the execution of them add any new joy and pleasure to him: particularly all those purposes and resolutions of his mind, concerning the redemption, conversion, and salvation of his chosen ones, and the state and condition of his church, in all the periods of time, were viewed within himself, with the utmost delight and pleasure; the plan of their peace and reconciliation, drawn in the council of peace, and everything respecting their salvation, settled in the covenant of grace.

These transactions gave him infinite pleasure and satisfaction; and on these his thoughts have ran ever since, with the utmost delight, in the foreviews of all things, taking place in time and to eternity, according to these ancient settlements. But what I would chiefly attend unto is, 3. Thirdly, The delight and complacency which each divine Person had in one another, before any creature was in being; with respect to two of the divine Persons, this is strongly expressed in Proverbs 8:30.

"Then I was by him, as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him": when all this was, may be learned from the preceding verses; when there were no depths, no fountains abounding with water; before the mountains were settled, while as yet he had not made the earth, &c. (Prov. 8:24-29) and the third Person is not to be excluded. 3a. First, The delight and complacency of the Father in the Son, is declared in the following expressions; which are borrowed from the delight and pleasure parents take in their children; being "by" them, "brought up" with them, "nursed" up by them, "playing" before them; which must be understood with a decency becoming the divine Persons, and not be strained beyond their general design, which is to express the mutual delight of the Father and the Son in each other: "Then I was by him", from eternity, or before the world was; I, a person, as the pronoun is expressive of; not a nature, not the human nature of Christ, which is no person; and still less a part of it, the soul of Christ, which then had no existence; but I, a divine Person, the eternal "Logos", the Word and Wisdom of God, who is all along speaking from Proverbs 8:12.

"I Wisdom", &c. to this very passage, the same with the Word John speaks of, and much in the same language (John 1:1). "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"; to which Word he ascribes the creation of all things, and therefore must be before thine, as well as be a divine Person; and he is in both places represented as a distinct Person, as he must be, from him, by whom, and with whom, he was a Person eternally existing; being not only before Abraham, but before Adam, or any creature was in being; a Person co-existing, as a Son with the Father, being co-essential and co-eternal with his Father; and was by him, and at his side, on a level with him; Jehovah's fellow, equal to him, possessed of the same perfections; and being by him, and in his presence, was infinitely delighted in by him; and was "as one brought up with him", as a Son with a Father, and so denotes his relation to him, being begotten of him, his own Son, the Son of the Father, in truth and love; and the Father's tender regard of him, and delight in him; being, as some render the word, "nursed up" by him, and carried in his bosom, as a nursing Father bears the sucking child; so to express the exceeding great tenderness of the Father to the Son, and his delight in him, the only begotten Son, he is said to be "in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18.)

Though the phrase may also have respect to Christ, in his mediatorial capacity, who was foreordained and constituted as Mediator by his Father, and trained up in his office, and to whom he pointed out the work he was to do as such; to bring Jacob again, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the preserved of Israel; and be his salvation unto the ends of the earth (Isa. 49:5, 6). "And I was daily his delight"; day by day, or every day; not that there are, properly speaking, days in eternity; but the phrase is expressive of the constant and invariable delight the Father had in his Son; as well as the greatness of it is signified by the word in the plural number, "delights"; he was his exceeding great delight, superlatively delightful to him; and so he was, as he was his Son, a Son of delights, the dear Son of his love; whom he loved before the foundation of the world, with a love of complacency and delight; he was always his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased; partly because of his likeness to him, being the image of the invisible God, the express image of his Person; as every like loves its like; and partly because of the same nature with him, having the same perfections, even the whole fulness of the Godhead in him: he was also his delight, considered in his office as Mediator; "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth" (Isa. 42:1).

He delighted in him, as engaging in covenant to be the Mediator and Surety of it; as with admiration, so with the utmost pleasure and delight, he said, "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord?" (Jer. 30:21) to strike hands with me, and become a Surety for my people. And with equal pleasure did he behold him acceding and assenting to his proposals in covenant, saying, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God!" (Ps. 40:7, 8). He delighted in him as the God-man; being fit, as such, for the work he assigned unto him; and whereas he proposed to him in covenant, to assume human nature in time, for that purpose, and he agreed unto it, he viewed him henceforward as the God-man; and he bore the repute of it with him, and considered him under this character; he delighted in the foreviews of his future assumption of human nature; and a little before the time, by Zechariah, one of the last of the prophets, expressed his joy at the near approach of it; "Behold, I will bring forth my Servant, the Branch"; that is, speedily, in a very short time; and again, "Behold the Man, whose name is the Branch, he shall grow up out of his place", (Zech. 3:8, 6:12) which is signified to be future, yet near.

And he delighted in the foreviews of that obedience to his will his Son should yield in that nature, by which the law would be magnified and made honourable; and of his sufferings and death in it, whereby full satisfaction would be given for the sins of his people; and of his glorification at his right hand in that nature he had promised him; and of his own glory displayed in the salvation of men by him, and a full accomplishment of that; an affair his heart was so much set upon from everlasting.

In the foreviews of all this was Christ as Mediator, Redeemer, and Saviour, as well as God's own Son, the object of his infinite delight and pleasure from everlasting. 3b. Secondly, The Son of God also had the same delight and pleasure in his divine Father, before the world was; and when there was no creature in being, he was then "rejoicing always before him"; rejoicing in being possessed of the same nature and perfections his Father was, being like and equal to him in all things; and rejoicing that he stood in such a relation to him as a Son to a Father; with what exultation does he repeat the words of his Father to him, declaring this relation; "The Lord hath said unto me", and that was in eternity, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Ps. 2:7).

He delighted in the foreviews of his future incarnation, as being agreeable to his Father's will; "A body hast thou prepared me", (Heb. 10:5) which he spoke with pleasure, and as being willing and desirous to assume it; in which he should do his Father's will and work, and which would be his meat and drink, and accomplish the salvation of his people, which was the "joy set before him"; and he rejoiced in the

foreviews of his Father being glorified by it, and of his own glory upon it (John 13:31, 32, 17:1, 4, 5). 3c.

Thirdly, Though the third Person, the Holy Spirit, is not mentioned in the passage in Proverbs; yet as the Father delights in the Son, and the Son in the Father, so both of them delight in the Spirit, as proceeding from them, and he in them; for these Three are One, of the same nature and perfections, and have a mutual in being in each other, and so a complacency in one another; for as the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father, (John 10:38, 14:10) so the Spirit is in them, and they in him; and in consequence must have a mutual delight in each other: the Spirit, as he is of the same nature with the Father and the Son, always took infinite delight in his own nature and perfections; and as he was privy to all the thoughts, purposes, and counsels of God, which are the deep things he searches and reveals; he must have taken pleasure in them, and in the foreviews of the execution of them; and as he approved and assented to all the articles in the council and covenant of peace, he must have had infinite delight in the view of the accomplishment of them, as well as of those things which he himself in covenant undertook to perform. 3d.

Fourthly, This mutual delight and complacency which each Person had in one another, lay in and arose from the perfect knowledge they had of each other; "As the Father knoweth me", says Christ, "so know I the Father", (John 10:15) and the Spirit knows them both, and the things that are in them, (1 Cor. 2:10, 11) and hence arises mutual love to each other; the Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father, (John 3:35, 5:20, 14:31) and the Spirit proceeding from them both, loves them both; and it cannot be otherwise, since there is such a nearness to, and mutual in being in each other.

Moreover, 4. Fourthly, The three divine Persons had from eternity, and before any creature was in actual being, the utmost delight and complacency^[1] in the elect of God, and in the foreviews of their salvation and happiness. The joy and delight of the Son in them are strongly expressed in Proverbs 8:31. "Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men"; that is, from everlasting; before ever the earth was made, or any creature in it; then was the Son of God "rejoicing in the habitable part of the earth"; in the foreviews of those spots of ground, houses, and cottages, where it was known the chosen vessels of mercy would dwell: for God has "determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation"; and Christ knew beforehand in what places he should have a people, and in which this and that man should be born again, (Acts 17:26, 18:10; Ps. 87:4-6) and as lovers express their love to the objects of their love, by saying they love the ground on which they tread; so Christ having loved his people with a love of complacency and delight, rejoiced in the foresight of those parts of the habitable world, where he saw their habitations would be: the church of God on earth may be called the habitable part of his earth, being the dwelling place which he has chosen for himself as such, and where he delights to dwell, and they were from everlasting his Hephzibah and Beulah.

Some respect may be had to the new earth, or the second Adam's earth; in which only righteous persons will dwell; and where the tabernacle of God will be with men, his chosen ones; and where he will dwell with them a thousand years; and in this also the Son of God was rejoicing in the foreviews of: nor am I averse to take in the human nature of Christ, into the sense of the words; who though with respect to his divine Person, and mediatorial office, is the Lord from heaven; yet, as to his human nature, he was "curiously wrought", by the power and skill of the Holy Ghost, "in the lowest parts of the earth", in the womb of the Virgin, and therefore called "the fruit of the earth", being born of an earthly woman, (Ps. 139:15; Isa. 4:2) and which human nature is a tabernacle God pitched, and not men; a tabernacle for the eternal Word to dwell in, and where the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily; and in the views of this the Son of God was rejoicing before the world was; and in time expressed his desire of it, and delight in it, before it became his

habitation; as may be concluded from his frequent appearances in an human form, before his incarnation, as forshadowing it; as to Adam, Abraham, Jacob, and other patriarchs; he rejoiced in the foreviews of it, as it would be of the same kind with that of the children given him, and he had undertook to redeem and save; and as it would be the produce of the holy Spirit, and so free from sin; and as it would be filled and adorned with his gifts and graces; and as after he had done the will of God in it, it would be crowned with glory and honour, and set down at the right hand of God: and all this joy and delight were with a peculiar respect unto the elect of God, as follows; "And my delights were with the sons of men", the posterity of Adam, fallen creatures, the chosen of God among them, who sinned in him, and on whom judgment came unto condemnation, and who are conceived and born in sin, and are by nature children of wrath as others; and yet the delights of Christ, his exceeding great delight, expressed by the plural number, were with them as they were loved by his Father, chosen in him, and given to him; and as he viewed them redeemed by him, washed in his blood, and clothed with his righteousness; and as he saw them in the glass of his Father's purposes and decrees, in all the glory he designed to bring them to, even to be a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Now not only the Son of God took delight and complacency in the elect of God, before the world was; but the Father and Spirit also; for God the Father of Christ loved them, and chose them in him, before the foundation of the world, (2 Thess. 2:13; Eph. 1:4). And this love was a love of complacency and delight; because he delighted in them, therefore he chose them to be his peculiar people, as he did Israel of old, in a national sense (Deut. 10:15). And from the same delight in them arose the council held by him with the other two Persons concerning them; and the covenant of grace he entered into with them.

And so the Holy Spirit, his delights were with the same Persons, as they were chosen in Christ, through sanctification by him; and in the foreviews of their being temples for him to dwell in; and in whom he should abide as the earnest and pledge of their future glory; and as the sealer of them to the day of redemption; and as they should be sanctified and made meet by him for eternal glory and happiness. Thus we see what delight and complacency, satisfaction and happiness, God had in himself before any creature existed; and would have continued the same, if none had ever been created: so that he needed not for his own sake, to go forth in acts of power, to bring creatures into being, since he would have been as happy without them as with them; wherefore the production of them into being is purely the effect of his sovereign will and pleasure; and we see what the thoughts of God were employed about, and chiefly concerned in, in eternity; and the whole furnishes an answer to those curious questions, if it is proper to make them; What was God doing in eternity? what did his thoughts chiefly run upon then? and wherein lay his satisfaction, delight, and happiness? ENDNOTES:

[1] Of the love of delight and complacency of God towards the elect, see a Treatise of mine, called the Doctrines of God's Everlasting Love to his Elect, &c. p. 52, &c.

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