

Of the Joy of God.

by John Gill

God's joy is a delight and complacency in himself and his works, and it affects his people by bestowing benefits upon them.

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:10, Psalm 45:13-14, Psalm 104:31, Psalm 149:4, Proverbs 8:31, Isaiah 62:4-5, Jeremiah 32:41, Zephaniah 3:17, Luke 15:7, Hebrews 12:2

Topics: "God's Joy", "Divine Delight"

Description

John Gill explores the concept of God's joy, emphasizing that while joy is attributed to God in scripture, it should not be viewed as a human passion but rather as a divine delight in His own nature, works, and people. He explains that God finds joy in Himself, in His creation, and particularly in the redemption of His people, highlighting the profound relationship between God and His covenant people. Gill illustrates that God's joy is not only a reflection of His perfection but also a source of strength and security for believers, culminating in the ultimate joy of salvation and eternal communion with Him.

Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 1--Chapter 19

OF THE JOY OF GOD.

Joy, which is often attributed to God in the scriptures, bears some resemblance to the affection of joy in men; but is, by some philosophers[1], denied of him; and, indeed, is not to be considered as a passion in him, as in them; and particularly, when in its height, or at an excess; as it is a transport of the mind, and carries it out of, and beyond itself, as it were; as in the cases of Jacob, when the news of his son Joseph's being alive were brought him; and of the disciples, when they heard of the resurrection of Christ, believed not for joy: and, indeed, all affections that are ascribed to God, are ascribed to him, not as in themselves, but as to their effects; such and such effects being done by men, when so and so affected.

Hence when similar ones are done by God, the like affections are ascribed to him; and this of joy is expressed by him in very different effects; as in inflicting punishment, as well as in conferring benefits; in the one he rejoices in the glory of his justice and holiness; and in the other, in the displays of his grace and goodness (see Deut. 28:63). Though joy, as ascribed to God, seems to be no other than delight and

complacency in persons and things; so some philosophers and schoolmen make them to be the same; or, however, take joy to be a species of delight; only they observe a difference, with respect to brute animals, in whom there is delight, but not joy[2]; it is also made a question with them[3] whether delight is a passion? but my business with it is only as it concerns God, and is predicated of him; and who may be said, 1.

To rejoice and take delight and complacency in himself, in his own nature, and the perfections of it; in which there is an all-sufficiency, and so a fulness of content and satisfaction; and he rests infinitely well pleased in himself. Hence Aquinas[4], who defines joy and delight a certain quietation, or rest of the will, in what is willed by it; observes, that God must greatly rest quiet and satisfied in himself, which is his principal "volitum", or what is willed by him, as having all-sufficiency in him, and therefore by his own will greatly rejoices and delights in himself: and though he makes joy and delight in some respect to differ; delight flowing from a good really conjoined; and joy being not only of that, but of something exterior; hence, he says, it is plain God properly delights in himself; but rejoices in himself and others.

Song the Jews[5] interpret (1 Chron. 16:27) "gladness in his place", of joy in himself. 2. He rejoices and takes delight and complacency in his works (Ps. 104:31). In the works of creation, which, when he had finished, he not only rested from them, but rested in them, with delight and pleasure; he looked them over, and pronounced them all very good; and he still appears to have pleasure in them, by his continuance of them in being, by upholding all things by the word of his power: he rejoices and delights in the works of his providence, in which he is always concerned (John 5:17).

These, so far as they are known by men, yield an unspeakable delight and pleasure in the contemplation of them; and especially when they will be manifest; and though they are now, many of them, unsearchable and past finding out, yet there is a depth of riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God in them; but what delight must God take in them, being all according to his sovereign will and pleasure; by whom they are seen and known in their beauty, harmony, and connection; and the springs and causes of them, and the several ends answered by them?

God rejoices and takes delight particularly in the great work of redemption, contrived by his infinite wisdom, and wrought out by his Son; partly because of his own glory displayed therein; as of his love, grace, and mercy, so of his truth and faithfulness, holiness and justice; and partly because of the salvation of his people, secured thereby; a thing his heart was set upon from everlasting; what he resolved should be, and what he appointed them to: he rejoices and delights in his work of grace on the hearts of his people: this is their beauty, even the beauty of holiness, which he, the king, greatly desires; by which they are all glorious within, and well pleasing in his sight; he delights in the graces which he himself, by his Spirit, has wrought in them, and in the exercise of those graces, as drawn forth by him, their faith, hope, love, fear, &c.

"The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy" (Ps. 147:11; Song 4:9, 10). And so all his people, as they are his workmanship, his poem, curiously wrought by him; the works of his hands, in whom, and whereby he is glorified; he rejoices in them, and blesses on account of them (Isa. 19:25, 60:21). Wherefore, 3. He may be truly said to rejoice, delight, and take pleasure in his people, as he often is; they are his Hephzibah, in whom he delights; his Beulah, to whom he is married; and therefore, as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so does the Lord rejoice over them, (Ps. 149:4; Isa. 62:4, 5) not in all men; for there are some in whom he has no joy, vessels in whom he has no delight and pleasure, (Isa. 9:17, 27:11; Mal. 1:10) but his special covenant people, (Jer. 32:38-41) and these not as

creatures, and still less as sinful creatures, either as considered in Adam, or in themselves, guilty and defiled; but as in Christ, in whom God is well pleased, and in all that are in him, as chosen in him, and given to him; so God the Father rejoiced in them from everlasting; for as his love to them, so his joy in them, is so early, it being a love of complacency and delight; and of which joy there are new expressions in conversion (see Luke 15:7, 9, 22-24).

And likewise the Son of God, was from all eternity rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth; and his delights were with the sons of men, (Prov. 8:31) and which joy he felt under all his sorrows and sufferings, when working out their salvation, (Heb. 12:2) and which he expresses at their conversion; that being the time of finding his lost people; and, indeed, the day of his open espousals to them, and so of the gladness of his heart, (Luke 15:3-5; Song 3:11) and they will also be his joy, and crown of rejoicing, in the last day; when they shall be introduced into his presence, not only with joy and gladness in themselves, but with it in him, who will present them before his Father and himself, with exceeding joy, (Ps. 45:13, 14; Jude 1:24) and this joy over them, both in him and his divine Father, is to do them good, and issues in it; to bestow benefits upon them, grace here, and glory hereafter; to beautify them with salvation; to make them prosperous, especially in spiritual things, in which prosperity he takes pleasure; and in making all things work together for their good, (Jer. 32:41; Ps. 149:4; 35:27) which joy is full; there is a redundancy, an overflow of it; it is hearty and sincere, is the strength and security of the saints, and will remain for ever (Neh. 8:10; Zeph. 3:17). ENDNOTES:

[1] Sallustius de Diis, c. 14. Plato in Philebo. p. 384.

[2] Aquin. Sum. Theolog. prima 2 par. Quaest. 31. art. 3. & Avicenna in ibid.

[3] Ibid. art. 1. & Aristot. apud ibid.

[4] Contr. Gentiles, l. 1. c. 90.

[5] R. Joseph Albo in Sepher Ikkarim, l. 2. c. 15.

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