

faith, will count the Christian an enthusiast or madman. To look with contempt on all he has ever seen, and to follow with all possible ardor, what no mortal eye has ever beheld, appears to the carnal mind the height of folly. But in opposition to this carnal view, we maintain, and shall endeavor to shew that it is most wise and reasonable to walk by faith and not by sight. For—

1. The principle of faith is more exalted in its object. The objects of sense are comparatively mean and worthless, for they are temporal and perish with the using. Take all the carnal eye ever saw, the ear ever heard, or the heart ever admired, and put it in the balance with one glimpse of the Saviour's glory, or one taste of his love, and they will be found lighter than vanity. Things seen at best, can never satisfy the desires of the soul, as all human experience testifies. But think of the objects of faith, an almighty God, and his covenant well ordered in all things, and sure,—the Creator must be above the creature,—the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and all his redeeming love. Think of all the great and precious promises, and all the unspeakable spiritual blessings which his grace affords. Think of heaven in its glory, blessedness, and duration, and you can beat no loss to determine which is most worthy of your regards. In making the object of sense our supreme desire and pursuit we degrade ourselves to the level of those who know of nothing beyond a present existence. In walking by faith, we rise to an alliance with glorified saints and angels. The man who walks by faith is as much exalted above the man who walks by sight, as heaven which is the end of one, is above earth which is the end of the other.

2. The principle of faith is more certain in its testimony. The testimony of sense is often very delusive. Earthly things which are the objects of sense, may dazzle with their glare and glitter, and multitudes are thereby allured to their ruin, for they are all a lie, a shadow, a delusion. There is no real satisfaction in them even to the carnal mind.

With whatever confidence we press forward to the attainment of the objects of sense, they mostly disappoint our endeavours, and not unfrequently when we think we have secured them we no sooner put forth our hand to seize the prize, than it eludes our grasp, or if we do obtain our desire, it proves but vanity and vexation of spirit. So uncertain and worthless is the testimony of sense. Faith presents to us objects that will not deceive, but will more than fulfil our most sanguine expectations. No one ever sought them by faith who failed in the pursuit of them. They do not elude the grasp of faith. Nor when attained, do they ever fall below his expectation. On the contrary, they greatly exceed it, "For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath laid up for them that love him." It is said by our Lord, under the character of wisdom, "I cause them that love me to inherit riches," riches spiritual, substantial, satisfactory, and permanent. The testimony of faith respecting its objects, may be relied on with implicit confidence, it cannot

overrate them, nor set them in a false and delusive light.

3. Faith is more excellent in its operation and influence. Sense only contemplates things temporal, and the habitual contemplation of such things tends to sensualize and debase the soul. Its noble faculties thus limited in their activity, and unfitted for spiritual pursuits, they walk after the flesh, and mind only the things of the flesh. Faith contemplates things unseen and eternal. It contemplates God as revealed in Christ, and it realizes a saving interest in him as the God of all grace. And the contemplation of him assimilates the believer to this blessed image "beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord." It contemplates the Lord Jesus Christ, and, by the contemplation, grace, mercy, and truth are multiplied. It contemplates heaven and its glory, and in that contemplation, the Christian breathes, so to speak, the atmosphere of heaven, and grows meet for the enjoyment of it. "For every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." The lively exercise of faith in these promises, leads the Christian to purify himself from all filthiness of the flesh, and of the spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God. In the exercise of this faith, he becomes a partaker of the Divine nature, and is progressively changed into the Divine image. Sense debases and carnalises the soul. Faith exalts it to the image and enjoyment of God.

Lastly—Faith is more conducive to the happiness of those who walk by it. Those who walk by sight, although they may obtain the objects of their desire, although they should have all worldly good at their command, find it a miserable portion. They soon find that they have been filling themselves with the East wind. All the world can afford them no solid comfort, even in the season of health. And when they are stretched on a bed of affliction, and come to look death in the face, how dreadful the thought, that all they have must be taken away from them, and they have no portion beyond the grave. Nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation that shall devour them. You, my friends, if you walk by sight, do not know what happiness is, but if you walk by faith, apprehending and anticipating unseen blessings you already rejoice with a joy that is unspeakable; for your faith is the substance of things hoped for, as well as the evidence of things not seen. Who can describe your blessedness? for God is your God and Father—Christ is your all-sufficient Saviour, who not having seen you love—the Holy Spirit is your comforter and guide; and heaven with all its blessedness, is your eternal home. You live on angels food—you have much in hand, and more in prospect. Though yet in the wilderness, you have the grapes of Eschol, as a pledge and earnest of the plenty of the promised land. It is your privilege to stand on Pisgah, and survey the length and breadth of the inheritance. When you go hence and are no more, here you will neither change your company nor employment. You are already living in and with God by faith, and in heaven you will dwell with him in vision. You shall behold his glory. Here you

are enjoying communion with his children in the church, militant—Then you will enjoy communion with the same family in the church triumphant. Here you tune your harp to the praise of God, and of the Lamb—There you will only sing the same praise more perfectly and joyously.

CONCLUSION.

From these remarks we may see—

1. That the state of the believer, even in this world, is a most happy one. His faith presents to his view the most exalted objects; the testimony that supports it may be relied on with implicit confidence. It is also excellent in its influence, it works by love, and purifies the heart. It is conducive to the happiness of those who walk by it; it interests them in all the blessings of grace, and gives them a well-grounded hope of heavenly glory. True, indeed, the happiness of believers is not perfected in this world. They are yet far from the happiness that will be enjoyed by them hereafter when in a spiritual sense they shall walk by sight. Here they see only through a glass dimly; but there face to face. Here they groan, desiring to be clothed upon with their house that is from heaven; they carry about with them a frail and mortal body, which is a great drag to the spiritual exercise of the soul. But this is not all; they carry about with them also a body of corruption; there is much of the old man with his corrupt lusts, that still remains, which is directly opposed to the exercise of faith, and every gracious principle; and which often darkens his prospects, and mars his enjoyment. There is also an ensnaring world, and a subtle tempter, which are combined against his spiritual comfort, so that his life here is a perpetual warfare. But, notwithstanding all this, believers, in their walk by faith, are the only happy persons in the world; their painful conflicts sometimes abound, but their comforts much more abound.

2. We may see the extreme folly and delusion of multitudes, who under this gospel dispensation, are called to walk by faith; but who obstinately persist in walking by sense. This world, its pleasures, profits, or honors, occupy their attention, and engross their pursuits. Though the Word of God tells them that if they walk after the flesh they shall die; though this be pressed on their consideration by ministers of the gospel; though their own consciences in their more thoughtful moments suggests to them the same truth, they still persevere in looking to things seen and temporal, and allow the world, and the things of it, to have the first place in their hearts. They thus deceive themselves to their utter undoing. O that they would consider how completely mean and worthless are the objects of sense! How delusive—a vain show—what a debasing influence they exert on the soul; and how little they are fitted to produce happiness! O that such truths were impressed on your souls, and that you may be brought in good earnest to seek the substantial food which the gospel reveals and offers; and that you may be partakers of that saving faith which looks not at things seen and temporal, but at things unseen and eternal!

I shall close by addressing myself—

1. To those who are walking by sight, you may