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"For the Lord taketh pleasure in His people." Ps. 149: 4.

The Divine Nature is elevated so far above human conception, that we can in no wise conceive, much less represent its various operations. We learn, to be sure, that the Great God is not "altogether such an one as ourselves;" and yet in other parts of the Scriptures He is set forth as a Being possessed of a varied class of powers and qualities such as correspond to the same qualities in human Beings. The emotional part of our Constitution, for example, is spoken of as belonging to God, when He is said to possess the passions of Love and hatred; grief & joy; anger and complacency. "God is Love" - "~~do not~~ this abominable thing that I hate;" God is grieved when men sin, he rejoices when they turn to Him; "God is angry with the wicked every day;" He "rests in His love," and is "pacified

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toward us" when we come to Him in humble penitence,
"Fury is not in Him;" and His "anger endureth
but for a moment."

We may not pause here to demonstrate what you
all doubtless fully understand — that these are figu-
rative representations of an immutable Being — and
designed merely to aid us in forming some faint
conception of a nature which is ^{otherwise} incomprehensible.
But the correct view of God is that these apparent
changes in His manifestations, arise from changes in
us; that God is always eternally the same, and that
He "abideth ever." Provision is made in His nature for
that peculiar effect to be wrought upon us, His
creatures, which is wrought whenever we change
our relative position towards Him in a moral

point of view; if we are righteous & holy, obedient and affectionate, and devoted to God we are always passing under the light of His countenance of favor, ~~and~~ love; if we rebel, and violate His law, and walk in the ways of iniquity, we have passed ^{away from} ~~under~~ the ^{bright} ~~dark~~ side of His nature; no such ^(manifestations on our part) ~~conduct~~ ever conducts us to the brighter regions of His loving kindness, but so dark and dismal is the atmosphere engendered and enveloping such creatures that we can neither see God ourselves, nor will He shine upon us from His Holy habitation.

I may best illustrate this position by a reference to an arrangement of God's material world. We say that the Sun gives us light

at one time by rising and pursuing his radiant way across the heavens, and that He causes darkness by ~~setting~~ and passing out of sight. These expressions are sufficiently accurate for all practical uses, but they are scientifically incorrect, since the Sun does not rise, nor does it set; but this really seems to us to be the case, because our earth revolving upon its own axis daily, and constantly changing its position relative to the Sun is for half the time ^{and in half of its surface} in light, and for the other half in darkness. The Central Orb however so far as its daily relation to us is concerned, remains in its place unchanged & unmoved.

^{as} The Sun then is light always - so God is Love; and as we are in darkness because we pass out of the light, so when we say God loves us

at one time and frowns upon us at another time
 we should bear in mind that in the first case
 we are by our ^{virtuous} conduct dwelling in the light
 of His nature, and in the second, it is because
 by our sinful thoughts and wicked ways
 we have passed away from God's Sight &
 love which is shining on forever & forever.

"God is light and in Him is no darkness
 at all." But man loving darkness is often
 made to feel the sad consequences by
 passing into the dark & frozen regions
 of sorrow & suffering where God's changeless
 light & warmth never come.

But here let us guard against an error
 which may be indulged; - that men have
 the native power ^{unaided} to bring themselves into such

favor with God as is thus represented. On the con-
 trary, there is but one thing they have full power
 to do, and that is, to keep themselves forever
 in the darkness of His displeasure; and as the
 Earth but for that mysterious ^{of attraction} power, which
 is inherent in the Sun, called gravitation
 would rush far away to a returnless dis-
 tance from the Sun, and perish with all
 its inhabitants and all its glories, in the ~~dark~~ ^{chill}
^{& frozen} ~~and~~ regions of darkness, ~~and~~ so man, but for
 the incomprehensible attractions of God's infinite
 love, would wander away forever from His
 place, and never return again to light and
 life. So also it is that he has the power
 & the tendency naturally to go away, but
 whenever he is at all the object of God's

Love it is from no power or inclination of his that he becomes so, but because of the powerful drawing of God's Holy Spirit, whereby the natural tendency of the human heart to depart from the living God is overcome, and the soul is thus made to gravitate towards the great appropriate Centre of its rectified affections.

I do not see then, how any inference can be justly drawn from all this, except this one great and fundamental truth, that for all the good that we receive we are indebted solely to the free grace and rich mercy of God alone; - that whatever of evil there is to be found in our lot in life comes from our own native tendency to depart from God, and, combined with that, the resistance we

are constantly offering to the powerful attractions of God's infinite Love. This being the case there must be some extraordinary reason for the declaration of the text:—"The Lord taketh pleasure in His people."—It is to the wonderful fact itself which is here asserted, and to an investigation of the grounds upon which it rests, that our attention will be this morning invited.

1. The fact. "The Lord taketh pleasure in His people."—"In nothing but His own Infinite nature, does God take such pleasure as in His people."—All through His word you find utterances of this truth:—it is expressed
 1. In His Providential care of them. "The very hairs of your head are always numbered;"—"Give us this day," &c. Accordingly (Is. 33:15-16,) & Ps. "no evil," &c. "He keepeth them so that none of their bones shall be broken" "Health & Life very precious

"His eyes are upon them for good;" "His ears are open to their cry;"

"Shield - Rock - Pavillion" - Strong ~~rock~~ - tower where unto &c.

"He is a munition of rocks;" "Hollow of hand" - "under shadow of wing;" "Whoso toucheth them - apple" &c. "Arm & Shield Grace & Glory - no good thing" &c.

2 In His plan for their salvation; - calls them, applies His blood; saves them from guilt of sin. none of which things can they do for themselves - Justification -

3. In His method of dealing with them for their sanctification; - brings them into His family, bestows on them all the privileges - throws around them all the restraints - Keeps them by His mighty power; - sends His chastisements for the purpose of weaning them from world; - all His people share in this; - "no cross no crown;"

4. In His ceaseless and everlasting union with

His people. It begins with Eternity itself - a purpose - a
part of His nature to ~~bring~~ bring them into this union -
their lives are his with X^t in Him; - it is a se-
cret mystical union; - it never wavers in its reality
the clouds sometimes shut out - "as the father
hath loved me," said X^t: "even so have I loved
you;" -