

therefore?" This was a legal *therefore*. Christ answered and said, "You shall have your reward; but many that are first shall be last, and the last first." The only way to take away this legal *therefore*, is to look more and more upon the free grace of God, either in your services or sufferings for him; for this all must do, that either serve God or suffer for him, under the conduct of free grace. Do you desire to serve God either as to employments or sufferings under the conduct of free grace and love? then look more and more upon his free grace, and depend upon it in reference to your call, in reference to your assistance, in reference to your dependence, and in reference to your reward, seeing all is of free grace, bless the name of the Lord. Thus it is both in suffering work and in service, the first shall be last, and the last first.

Therefore as you would desire to serve or suffer under the conduct of free grace, rejoice and bless God for his free grace; remember this, that whether we serve or suffer it is of free grace.

Thus you see how the free grace of God shines forth both in our services and sufferings. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own: is thine eye evil because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last, because many are called, but few chosen."

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## SERMON II.

*"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace; comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work."*—3 THESS. II. 16, 17.

HAVING already treated of the freeness of the grace of God in reference to our employments and sufferings, I do intend to shew you, also, the freeness of the grace of God in reference to our comforts and consolations; and this text, you see, saith, God hath given us "everlasting consolation," and tells us further, that God hath given us this everlasting consolation "through grace."

Therefore, without any further explication, you see that

free love is written upon all our spiritual comforts. For what is more free than gift? "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, hath given us everlasting consolation and hope through grace." Therefore it is by the grace, by the free grace of God that we are truly comforted.

There is much of the freeness of God's grace and love laid out in our spiritual comforts and consolations.

For the opening of this argument.

First, I shall shew you that it is a great mercy to be truly comforted.

Secondly, That it is possible for God's own people to live a great while without any considerable comfort.

Thirdly, That it is not in the power of any creature, or any thing on this side God or Christ, to comfort a poor, distressed, drooping soul.

Fourthly, That when God doth give or bestow comfort upon any, he gives and bestows it in a way of free grace.

Fifthly, To shew wherein the grace and love of God is manifested in the matter of our spiritual comforts.

Sixthly, Why God will deal with us in the way of free grace and love in the matter of our comforts.

Seventhly, When a man may be truly said to be comforted in a way of free grace and love.

Eighthly, What a poor drooping soul must do, that he may be truly comforted in a way of free love; and in case he be so comforted, what returns he should make. Of these in order.

First, I say it is a great mercy to be truly comforted; for it is a promised mercy, and promised mercies are no small mercies: now this is a mercy promised, Matt. v. 4, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

As this is a mercy promised, so it is the proper birth, fruit, and effect of the Holy Ghost. Gal. v. 22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." Joy and peace are the proper fruits of the Holy Ghost, and therefore no small mercies.

As this comfort is the proper birth, fruit, and effect of the Holy Ghost, so it is the main part of the kingdom of God. Rom. xiv. 17, "For the kingdom of God is not meat nor drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

It is a main part in the kingdom of God, and if so, no small matter.

This comfort is reward also, as well as a main part of the kingdom of God. Comfort and joy in the Holy Ghost is both duty and reward; so it is promised in the forementioned scripture, Matt. v., "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted;" and if so, then surely it is no small thing.

As it is duty and reward, so it is that grace whereby you are enabled to read your other graces. When a man is under great temptations, sorrows and afflictions, it is a hard thing to read his graces; but now this helps us to read our graces. Some will say they cannot read their graces, they lie at the bottom. As to explain it, take this plain comparison: there are many fishes in a fish-pond, but now in rainy and foul weather the fish lie all at the bottom, and are not to be seen; but in fair weather the fish swim and are visible: so if it be foul weather upon a soul, if it be dark and gloomy weather, the soul cannot read his graces; but now when God shines upon him, then he is enabled to read them, yea, though his graces lie at the bottom, as I may say, yet the poor soul is able to read them. And if it be so, it is no small thing; it is no small matter to read our graces, our other graces.

As it is that grace whereby you are enabled to read your other graces, so it is that whereby you joy in all good things. Grief and sorrow straiten the soul, straiten the heart; but joy and comfort dilate the soul, widen and open the heart: "I will run in the way of thy commandment, when thou shalt enlarge my heart," Psalm cxix. 32.

As by this grace you are enabled to joy in all good things; so it is also that grace whereby you are enabled to bear up against every evil thing, to bear up under all afflictions. Are you reproached? By this comfort you are enabled to bear up against reproaches; for saith the apostle Peter, "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you." Are you reproached? Comfort will turn that to your benefit and blessing. Are you persecuted? "Blessed are you when men shall revile and persecute you, rejoice," &c. Are you not only persecuted, but beaten too? Comfort will bear

up your hearts under all stripes and afflictions, for we find Paul and Silas sung in the stocks. Well but this is not all.

This is the grace that will strengthen and establish you in the good ways of God. Mark how they go together in 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." Comfort and establishment go together; and if it be so, it is no small matter.

This is that grace that will give a beauty and lustre to your profession. The comforted christian is the truly beautiful christian. If a man have never so much beauty in his face, yet if his face be wrinkled with grief and blubbered with tears, the beauty of his face is not seen; but when joy and comfort comes, that wipes off all, and his beauty then is seen. So here, comfort doth not only take away reproach from your profession, but it gives a lustre, a beauty to your profession. The comforted christian, I say, is the truly beautiful christian; and if so, surely it is a great mercy to be truly comforted.

That is the first thing in general, that it is a great mercy to be truly comforted.

Secondly, As it is a great mercy to be truly comforted, so it is possible for God's own servants and dearest children to live a long time without any considerable comfort, any fundamental comfort; their hearts may faint. "My heart and my soul fainteth," saith the Psalmist; and you know how it was with Daniel, x. 17. You may see how he was bowed down, he complains there was no strength remained in him, until there came one and touched him, and set him upon his legs again. A good man may faint and want comfort, and all the former comforts that he hath had may be eclipsed. "Restore to me the joy of thy salvation," Psalm li. 12, saith David; his glory and comfort was eclipsed. Yea, possibly a gracious soul may live a long time without comfort. "How long wilt thou forget, yea, forget me, O Lord; what, for ever?" Psalm xiii. 1. I say a man may live a long time without any considerable comfort. There is a time when God will try his people, and see whether they will take comfort from his hand or from another hand; it may be it

may be so with you sometimes, God may try whether you will wait upon him, and believe in him, and rest upon him for comfort.

Thirdly, As a man may live long without comfort, so it is not in the power of any thing, on this side God and Christ, to give comfort to a poor drooping soul. This is the Lord's prerogative: "I am the Lord that comforteth." This is his name: "Father of mercies, and God of all comfort and consolation." And 2 Cor. vii. 6, "Nevertheless God that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us," &c. It is God's prerogative only to do it; comforting work is creation work; it is not in the power of the creature, but of the Creator. Isaiah lvii. 19: "I create the fruit of the lips, peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord, and I will heal him." It is God's work to comfort, and not in the power of any other; man may be instrumental to comfort, but it is none but God alone that can do the work.

But some may object and say, Can none but God alone comfort?

No, none but God alone can rate off Satan. If a great dog or mastiff be worrying a child or a sheep, a stranger comes and strikes him and calls him off, but the dog takes no notice of him; but when the master comes he rates him off presently: none but the master can do it. So here it is none but God that can rate off Satan from worrying the poor drooping soul, when it is under temptation, none but God the master. It is not in the power of any creature, but in the power of God alone; it is in the power of none but the third person in the Trinity, the Spirit of God. What needed the third person in the Trinity to have come into the world, as he is now, if any other could comfort? As none can redeem but Christ, the second person of the Trinity, because the second person came from heaven on purpose to redeem; so none can comfort but God, and his Spirit, because the third person came from heaven to do it. There is none but God alone that can comfort a poor soul.

That is the third particular.

Fourthly, When God doth bestow comfort, he bestows it and gives it in a way of free grace, in a way of free love and grace. See but how they go together in the text, "Who

nath given us everlasting consolation through grace." I will give you one scripture more to prove it, and consider it well, Job xxxiii. ; you have there the draught of a man's conversion. First he goes on in his sin ; and all on a sudden God gives in a word to him, at verses 14, 15 : " For God speaketh once, yea twice, but man perceiveth it not : in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed ; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction." And then the soul is filled with horror of conscience, as in verse 19, " He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain." And when God hath done thus, then he justifies him, and gives him faith, and shews him true righteousness, as in verse 23, " If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness." This is justification, and when this is done, then the Lord comforts him, as in verse 25, " His flesh shall be fresher than a child's, he shall return to the days of his youth." You see God comforts him in a way of free love ; and in verse 26, " He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him, and he shall see his face with joy, for he will render unto man his righteousness." God comforts in a way of free love, he comforts how he pleaseth, and as far as he pleaseth ; but whensoever he comforts, it is still I say in a way of free love. You may see it in Isa. lxxv. 14 : it is said, " Behold my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit." And thus also saith the Lord in the former verse, " Behold my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry ; behold my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty ; behold my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed." God comforts whom he pleaseth and as far as he pleaseth, and it is all free, out of free love. John xiv. 20 : " At that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." And at verse 16, " And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." This work of comforting is properly the work of the Holy Ghost ; and the Holy Ghost breathes as the wind, where it listeth ; and therefore I say, comforts whom and how he pleaseth, and all

in a way of free love and free grace. This is the fourth particular.

Fifthly, Wherein is the love, the free love of God manifested to us in the matter of our comforts? I answer in many things.

I will pitch but upon three only.

1. The greater he is that giveth, and the greater the thing is that is given, and the lesser or meaner the person is that the thing is given unto, the more free is the love of him that gives and bestows the thing. Now this comfort and consolation is a great thing, it is a very great matter, it is a birth of the Holy Ghost. Is that a small thing? It is part of the kingdom of God. Is that a small matter? It is both duty and reward. Is that small? It is that which exceeds all the joy of the world. "Lift up the light of thy countenance upon me: thou hast put more gladness into my heart, more than in the time that their oil and their wine increased," Ps. iv. 7. Ask a poor drooping soul and he will tell you that it is a great thing, for it comes from a great God. Isa. lvii. 15: "For thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I will dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Unto that soul that trembles, unto that soul will God bring comfort and will be nigh unto him. Now if a prince should rise from his throne to come and help up a poor fallen cripple, would it not be looked upon as an act of very great favour. Yet thus God does when he comes to comfort, the great "high and lofty One" comes down from his throne, as it were to lift up a poor drooping soul. Oh, what free grace is this! But,

2. The more God doth cross hands, (understand me) the more I say that God doth cross hands in the matter of our comforts, the more doth the free grace of God appear in our comforts; when Jacob blessed Joseph's two children, "he crossed his hands, and he laid his right hand upon the younger, and his left hand upon the elder; Not so, father," says Joseph; now what doth this shew but only the freeness of his love; and so if God shall cross hands in the matter of our comfort, what doth this argue but the freeness of his

love and grace; and God doth sometimes do thus when he comes to comfort, he doth cross hands. Sometimes two men have been in the same transgression, and the one hath been comforted and the other not; what shall we say of Peter and of Francis Spira. Spira having professed the truth, and being called to witness to it, did deny it; so did Peter, he denied Christ, yet Peter was comforted, but Spira never comforted, but lay despairing and roaring out to his death, "I am a reprobate, I am a reprobate, no hope for me, no hope for me;" Peter was comforted, Spira was never comforted. What do you think of David and Cain, Cain murders his brother Abel, a godly man; David murdered Uriah, a godly man too: Uriah had been with him in all his troubles, and was a very good man, but though David was an adulterer also, yet a messenger is sent to him that says, "Thy sins are forgiven thee:" but Cain was not comforted, but driven out from the presence of the Lord. So that I say there may be two in a transgression, and the one may be comforted and the other not. Look into the Scriptures and into your own experiences, and you will find great sinners comforted, and lesser sinners not comforted, and great sinners converted and comforted sooner than others. Zaccheus was a great sinner and yet was comforted; the jailor was a great sinner and yet comforted; and yet many that have walked very closely with God have not been comforted. Ps. lxxxviii. 15. Heman complains sadly in verse 14: "Lord, why castest thou off my soul, why hidest thou thy face from me: I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted;" and yet he walked close with God, as you may find in the former part of the Psalm. Yet we find sometimes, I say, the greatest sinners converted and soonest comforted. Now what is this but crossing of hands in the matter of our comforts, and this is only to shew forth the freeness of the grace of God; and the free grace and love of God is most abundantly, most eminently manifested to the soul by this crossing of hands.

3. The more unbelieving any man is that is comforted, the more doth the freeness of the grace of God appear. Dearly beloved brethren, it is with our consolation as it is with our justification and our sanctification; when God

comes to justify a man he finds him ungodly ; yet he justifies the ungodly, and not only the ungodly, but the unbelieving also : and therefore the Lord said, " Go and compel them to come in." They were unbelieving persons, yet God calls them. And so it is also in the matter of our sanctification ; when God comes to sanctify men, he finds them unwilling to be sanctified : but as God justifies them though unwilling because he doth it freely, so he sanctifies them too, though unwilling, because he sanctifies freely. And so it is also in the matter of our comforts. When God comes to comfort he finds the soul unwilling many times. " My soul refused to be comforted," saith the Psalmist, Psalm lxxvii. 2. And so again, " Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope," Psalm cxix. 49. I was unwilling, but thou causedst me to hope whether I would or no. When God comes to comfort, he doth it though men are unwilling to be comforted. It is very strange that it should be so, and yet such is the unbelief of men's hearts, that as before conversion they are unwilling to be turned, so after conversion they are unwilling to be comforted. Now this is that I say, that the more unwilling any man is to be comforted, yet if God doth comfort him, the more free doth the grace of God appear in it. God doth comfort though souls are unwilling. Oh, the freeness, the freeness of the grace of God in the matter of our comforts. Thus you see how and wherein the free grace of God appears and is manifested in our spiritual comforts and consolations. That is the fifth particular.

Sixthly, Why will God deal with us in a way of free grace in the matter of our comforts and consolations ; would it not be better in a way of settlement, in a constant way, would not that be best ? No, take notice of this, that there is no way to make a mercy sure like this. I know no mercy that is so sure as that which is wrought and given in a way of free grace and free love. They go together in the text : " Everlasting consolation through grace." The only way, I say, to make a thing sure, is to receive it in this way in which God gives it, that is in a way of free grace. Pray tell me, did not God choose David freely and his house. Yea, it was freely in opposition to the house of Saul, 2 Sam. vi. 21. Says David to Michal Saul's daughter, " It was before the Lord, which chose me

before thy father and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel," &c. God chose him freely also in opposition to his own brethren. And was not his house sure? The covenant was sure, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, for this is all my salvation and all my desire." God hath made me his chosen, and his mercies to me are sure. God will deal with us in a way of free grace that our mercies may be sure. "By grace ye are saved;" and if so, what a comfort is it that God will so order and dispose of it, that we may be sure of it and depend upon it; for God will have us depend upon him for our spiritual comforts: and what will make us more depend upon him, than to know that he gives all in a way of free grace? We must depend upon God both for our spiritual and our outward comforts; seeing what he doth he doth freely, we must freely depend upon him for comfort. But,

Seventhly, When may a man be said to be truly comforted in a way of free grace? I cannot deny but I am comforted, saith a poor soul, but I know not whether it be in a way of free grace and free love: now how may I know that I am comforted in a way of free grace?

I shall speak to this negatively and affirmatively.

1. Negatively. There is a comfort that is the daughter of time. A man or woman is sorrowful, but time wears it out, time comforts them. This comfort that springs from and ariseth out of time, is not true comfort, neither is that man truly comforted by free grace. But when the soul is truly comforted in a way of free grace, then he is comforted by the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost bearing witness that he is the child of God.

There is a comfort that ariseth from the satisfaction of a natural conscience. A man knows by nature that there is a God, and that this God is to be prayed unto, and therefore he prays accordingly; and when he hath done, his natural conscience is satisfied, and he is then comforted: but now if a man's comfort arise only from this, from the satisfaction of a natural conscience, that man is not truly comforted; for he that is truly comforted, is comforted by joy in believing: "In whom believing, ye rejoice," Rom. xv. 13.

There is a comfort that ariseth from a man's non-attendance to his own condition. Men may be comforted, why? because they never look into their condition, how it stands between God and their souls. There is a comfort arising not only from a man's conscience, but from the non-attendance to his own condition, and hereupon he is secure; but this is not the comfort that ariseth from free grace and free love.

There is a comfort that doth arise from the use of the creature. Men are troubled in their minds, and they run presently to the tavern, to their music or merry company to put it off, and so it may be are comforted; but if a man's comfort arise only from the creature, he is not truly comforted, not comforted with the comfort of free grace and love. He that is comforted in this way, it is but a diversion to him, and not true comfort. As straw when set on fire will make a flash and a flame, but black ashes remain behind; so when men are troubled, and they run to the tavern, or to music and merry company, all this is but a flash, black ashes remain behind. Provoked trouble will be angry trouble, and angry will be most troublesome; when men run to merriment to divert trouble, they provoke it.

There is a comfort that doth arise from the common work of the Holy Ghost: "Some who have tasted of the heavenly gift, and are made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and yet fall away," Heb. vi. 4. The false ground "received the word with joy." Now if a man's comfort ariseth from these common workings of the Holy Ghost, it is not true comfort; for he that is truly comforted, is comforted in a way of free love, his comfort is unspeakable. "Whom having not seen you love, in whom though now you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. Thus you see, negatively, when a man is not truly comforted in these five particulars.—A man is not truly comforted from time, nor from the satisfaction of a natural conscience, nor from a non-attendance to his condition, nor from the use of the creature, nor lastly from the common workings of the Holy Ghost. But,

2. Affirmatively. We have heard when a man may be said not to be comforted. Now when may a man be said to be comforted, truly comforted in a way of free grace? Be-

loved in the Lord, are you willing to have your comforts tried? False and counterfeit things do not love trial; now if you be willing to be tried, to have your comforts tried, it is a sign and a hope that your comforts may be true: but I shall not insist on this. There are two or three things I shall speak to here.

If you have been comforted by the word of promise set on upon your souls by God, then are you truly comforted in a way of love and free grace, for what is the promise but the word of grace. But some may say, I have had a promise, but I fear it may be from the devil, for the devil may bring a promise; did he not bring a promise unto Christ? Matt. iv. 6, saying, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up." This promise was brought to Christ by the devil, and it may be my promise may be handed to me by Satan, and set on upon my soul by him. But do but mark this, I will only say this one thing to thee, poor soul, to ease thee of this objection: If Satan bring a promise to you, it is to lead you into sin, to draw you into sin and to that which is evil; as this to Christ here, "He will give his angels charge concerning thee, cast thyself down." He brought a promise to do evil: "Cast thyself down." But now if God hand a promise to you, it is for your doing of good; therefore says Christ to Satan, "It is written:" I have a word and a promise too: "It is written thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." The devil brought this that he might do evil, and God gave Christ a word to keep him from evil. And so when you are brought into temptations, great temptations, if you have a word of promise brought home to your hearts to bear you up under temptation, it is not the devil that gives it in to you, that hands it to you. No, for the devil is no friend to faith, no friend to stay you up, for the tempter will not act against the temptation. Saith Luther, Though the devil be magnipotent, yet he is not omnipotent; though he be mighty, yet he is not almighty. And therefore I say, if you have a promise come to you to help you to do good, it is not of Satan but of God; for he is almighty, he is able to comfort. That is the first.

Would you know whether you be comforted in a way of free grace and love, you may know it by the ebbing

and flowing of your comforts, which will ebb and flow according to the cause. They say the marigold opens and shuts with the sun, when the sun shines it opens, when the sun withdraws it shuts, it opens and shuts according to the withdrawing and shining of the sun; and so if your comforts be true, the more the righteousness of Christ opens before you, the more the Sun of righteousness shines upon you, the more you will be comforted. If your comforts be true, the more the freeness of the love of God is opened to you, the more will the comfort of the soul be enlarged; if your comforts be true, the more God shines with his countenance, the more is the soul comforted. "Lord, (says David in Ps. lv. 6) lift up the light of thy countenance upon us, thou hast put more gladness in my heart than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." Now according to the opening and shutting of these things, so will your comforts be. How is it therefore with you; is there any ebbing and flowing? How is the righteousness of Christ; how is the light of God's countenance discovered to you; are they laid open to you? Then are you truly comforted in a way of free grace and love. That is the second.

If you be comforted in a way of free grace and love, then your comforts are true friends to holiness of life. That comfort that is wrought by the grace of God without you, is the greatest friend to the grace of God within you, and to holiness in your lives. False comfort is a friend to sin, a neighbour, a guard to sin; but no friend to true and gracious comfort; yea, those that have this false comfort can endure sins against conscience. But now where there is true comfort, and comfort from the grace of God, there conscience is as the apple of the eye, and the man cannot endure the least sin, he cannot bear the least mote of sin to lie upon his conscience. How is it therefore with you; is your comfort a friend to holiness of life; and can you say, The more comforted I am, the more holy I am? Then you are truly comforted.

But suppose I want comfort now, and that I am one of a drooping, trembling spirit and of an afflicted heart; what shall I do that I may be comforted and comforted in a way of free grace? I answer:

Go away and be sensible of your unbelief; for it is want

of believing that hinders our comfort, and when the Comforter comes, he will convince the world of sin and especially of unbelief. Would you then be comforted in a way of free love? Go then I say and be sensible of your unbelief, and be humbled for it.

Observe what those things are that hinder your spiritual comforts, and take heed of them. They are many. I will only name some of them. As,

Worldly fears and worldly delights; these are enemies to true comfort.

Sins against conscience: they that sin against knowledge, will hardly have peace of conscience; nay it is pity they should have peace, lest they be engaged and encouraged thereby to sin; those that sin against conscience will hardly have peace. Do you think to have the Spirit to be your friend whom you grieve so often? If then you would be truly comforted, you must have a great care of sinning against conscience and thereby grieving the Spirit, that "Spirit whereby you are sealed to the day of redemption," Ephes. iv. 30. Would you then be truly comforted? Observe I say these things that hinder your spiritual comfort; can you think that what you grieve most should comfort you most? Therefore as you expect true comfort, have a care of grieving the Spirit of God.

If at any time God make a tender of grace, or offer a word of comfort and peace to you; be sure you do not refuse it. We are apt to refuse to be comforted, but be sure you accept of it, especially in time of temptation.

Be sure you do not rest upon your own performances in reference to your comforts. Brethren and beloved, think on these things, and compare them with your own daily experiences. I say, if you would be truly comforted, do not rest on your own performances. As we are apt to rest upon our own righteousness in reference to our justification; so we are apt also to rest upon our own performances in reference to our comforts. Oh, take heed you do not go about to establish your own comforts upon the bottom of your own performances, for if you do, you will not submit to the consolations of God.

If you would be comforted in a way of free grace and love, then study much the freeness of the grace of God.

What is the reason people are no more comforted? It is because they see no more of the grace of God, the free grace of God. The more you look into the riches and freeness of God's grace, the more you will be comforted.

If you want comfort at any time, walk graciously in the want of it. When you want comfort go to God and say: Lord, although I cannot see thee, yet will I serve thee; and although I cannot enjoy thee, yet I will obey thee; and although I cannot see thy face, yet I will follow after thee, if by any means I may obtain thee. Walk graciously in the want of your comforts.

Set yourself to rejoice in him that gives you comfort, 'Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice,' saith the apostle, Phil. iv. 4. He doth not only say, Humble yourself for sin; which is a duty and a great duty; but he saith "Rejoice, and again I say, rejoice in the Lord." Rejoice in the Lord who gives you comfort freely. As much as you have been humbled for sin formerly, so much should you now rejoice that you have been comforted, and freely comforted by the grace of God; rejoice so much in the Lord of your comforts.

To name them only: If you would be comforted in a way of free grace and love, then be thankful for your comfort. He that is thankful for a little, shall have much; be thankful therefore to God for your comfort.

Would you be comforted in a way of free grace and love; then go to God for that comfort. Friends and beloved; God is willing, most willing to comfort; and, what will you not go to him? God is willing to make good his name and his title; now this is one of his titles, I am the Lord that comforteth. He is willing to do what Christ was sent to do; "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me to comfort all that mourn," Isa. lxi. 2. Is not God willing to do it? He hath sent the Comforter also to comfort you, yea he hath given his ministers charge to comfort you: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," Isa. xl. 1; and are not you willing now to receive what God hath promised? "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you," John xiv. 15. You will be troubled and reason with yourselves, yet I will not leave you comfortless. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted,"

Isa. lxvi. 13. Therefore now, oh, poor drooping soul, go to God, for he is willing to comfort thee, if thou be but willing to go to him. Only in your going to God observe these two or three directions.

1. When you go to God for comfort, go to the office which he hath set up for comfort, the office of the Holy Ghost.

2. When you go to God, shut your eyes, and cast yourself at an adventure upon the free grace of God.

3. In going to God for comfort you must stay God's leisure; some come and ask God, and because they do not receive an answer presently, they are gone; but be sure you do willingly stay God's leisure. Thus I say, would you have comfort? You must observe these things, to go to God's office, to shut your eyes, and to cast yourselves at adventure upon the free grace of God, and then you must stay God's leisure; thus doing you shall be truly comforted; and when you have obtained this comfort and are thus truly comforted, then take these few rules with you, and so I conclude.

1. Take as much pains to keep your comfort as ever you did to get it.

2. Labour more and more to increase it, for if it do not increase it will certainly decrease.

3. Be comfortable to, and comforting of others; for how do you know but that God hath comforted you, to this very end, that you might comfort others; Paul was so, and be sure to shew comfort for comfort's sake.

Brethren and beloved in the Lord, do not receive this grace in vain; but go, all you that have this comfort, and magnify the riches of God's grace, the freeness of the grace of God that hath comforted you, and say, What, such a one as I comforted! Others of thy children, Lord, have walked closely with thee, but I have walked loosely; and shall I be comforted and not they? Oh, what free grace is this! I have been a great sinner, Lord, and what, am I comforted? Oh, what free grace is this! There are some that have walked in the light, and they are now in darkness; but I have walked in the dark, and yet am now in the light; oh, what free grace is this! Go away, therefore, and magnify the riches of God's grace in the matter of your comforts.

Thus you have heard how the freeness of the grace of God

is written upon all your comforts, your comforts and consolations are all deeply enamelled with the free grace of God; and that much of his free love is laid out in your comforts and consolations. And thus I conclude with the words of my text: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace; comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work."

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### SERMON III.

*"For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."*—EPH. II. 8.

IN the former exercise I have been shewing you the freeness of the love and grace of God in the matter of our comforts and divine consolations. I shall now, in the third place, shew you the freeness of the grace of God in reference to our salvation and eternal glory, and therefore follow these words which the apostle speaks at the latter end of verse 5, "By grace are ye saved;" and so you see the same in verse 8, "For by grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

But why should he say the same words again in so short a compass? Why, it was to shew, not only that his heart was full of the free grace and love of God, but to shew, also, that he thought he could never speak enough of it, and therefore he repeats it, "By grace ye are saved:" "For by grace are ye saved." That is to say, from first to last you are saved by the free grace and love of God.

From whence, then, I take up this doctrine:

That there is much of the free love and grace of God laid out in the matter of our salvation and eternal glory.

For the clearing of this point, I shall endeavour to shew you,

First, That it is a matter of infinite happiness and of great concernment to go to heaven and to be saved for ever.

Secondly, To shew you how this mercy is obtained, this