

SERMON VIII.

GRACE AND LOVE BEYOND GIFTS.

PREACHED BEFORE THE LORD MAYOR OF THE CITY OF LONDON,
JULY 22, 1649.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THOMAS ANDREWS, LORD MAYOR OF THE CITY
OF LONDON, WITH THE ALDERMEN HIS BRETHREN.

ACCORDING to your command, I have presented these notes to your view, which were once delivered unto your ear and heart. I have joined another Sermon therewith, pleading for our submission to Christ in the way of his ordinances: the argument of the one is a friend to the other, *stantque caduntque simul*. The sweet enjoyment of ordinances together, is a great help to our love. We can hardly cool in our love to one, but we shall abate in our love to the other: swelling gifts despise ordinances and neglect love. This sermon, therefore, of grace, love and gifts, is to call upon our gifts, that they take not the wall of our graces; the other sermon of ordinances, is to call upon our graces to submit unto Christ's appointments: for gifts thrive best when they live under grace, and grace thrives best when it lives under ordinances. Now the girdle of all the ordinances is the Lord's day, which doth surround and combine all the rest. May it please the magistrate to be a friend to this good day, Christ will surely be a friend to him in an evil day. You cannot make people sanctify this day, for the hearts of men are not in your hands; but you may restrain them much from public profaning this day, for the tongues, hands, and feet of men are much in your hands. Job is said to sanctify his sons, Job i., because he commanded them to sanctify themselves, used all means for their sanctification, and prayed for them. So, though the magistrate cannot sanctify the people as to the infusion of grace, yet by his prayers and gracious endeavours of love, mixed with some power, as just occasion requires, he also may be said to sanctify them. The magistrate is the people's father, and the people are the magistrate's children. Now, therefore, as it was said of Job and his children, so let it be said of you and your children in the generations to come; And it was so, that when the days of their feasting, or rather sporting, were come, (for so the Lord's days have been too truly called of late,) the magistrate sent and sanctified them. Thus shall our decayed love to God, his truth, his ordinances and his children, revive and be advanced again; and thus shall the blessing of the house of Obededom (who received the ark) rest upon you and your families, which shall be the prayer of your servant in the work of the gospel,

WILLIAM BRIDGE.

Yarmouth, Sept. 10, 1649.

"But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet I shew unto you a more excellent way."—1 COR. xii. 31.

OF all the churches of Christ which we read of in the New

Testament, the church of Corinth seems to have abounded most with spiritual gifts; and as they did abound most in them, so they did most abuse them. All had not those spiritual gifts, some had: those that had them, despised those that had them not; and those that had them not, envied those that had them. The apostle Paul, therefore, that he might heal this distemper, doth acquaint them with the excellency of those gifts, and the end for which they were appointed. Concerning the excellency of gifts, he tells them in the beginning of this chapter, that they are all from the Spirit. "There are diversities of gifts (ver. 4) but the same Spirit: there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord." Ver. 8, "To one is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit; to another faith, by the same Spirit." And concerning the end for which they were appointed, he tells them, at verse 7, that they are given to profit withal: "But the ministration of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." Now both the excellency of gifts, and the end for which they were appointed, he doth illustrate by a similitude drawn from the natural body: that as in the natural body there are many members, and those, having several gifts, are helpful to one another; and the eye cannot say unto the foot, I have no need of thee: so in the body of Christ, all members, with their several gifts, are to be helpful to one another, and one member of Christ cannot say to the other, "I have no need of thee." For, at ver. 26, "Whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." Now, at ver. 27, saith he, "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." But how do these members come, or attain unto these gifts? Ver. 28, "God hath set some in the church, first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healing." But have all men these gifts? No. Are all apostles? At ver. 29, "Are all prophets, are all teachers, are all workers of miracles, have all the gifts of healing?" &c. But may we not all desire gifts then? Yes. "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet I shew unto you a more excellent way." What way is that? If you look into this chap. xii., it is the way of humility, grace and holiness. If you look down into chap.

xiii., it is the way of love ; for, saith he, in ver. 1, “ Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” So then take the words as they look upwards and downwards, relating unto all the former parts of chap. xii., and unto chap. xiii., and you have this observation or doctrine :

Though the way of gifts, spiritual gifts, be an excellent way, and much to be desired ; yet the way of grace and love is a more excellent way, and most to be desired.

For the opening of which truth, three things :

First, That there is a way of gifts distinct from the way of grace, and a way of grace distinct from the way of gifts.

Secondly, That there is much excellency in these spiritual gifts ; that the way of gifts is a very excellent way, and much to be desired.

Thirdly, That the way of grace and of love is yet a more excellent way, and more to be desired.

First, I say, there is a way of gifts distinct from the way of grace and holiness, *χαρις* and *χαρισμα* are distinct : all the saints and people of God have grace, but all have not these gifts. Grace is that excellency whereby we are made like to God in Christ ; gifts are that excellency whereby we are made able to do service for God in the church of God. By grace, say the schools, we do *bene agere*, we do work well ; and by gifts we do *expedite agere*, we do act more easily, easily, expeditely. A man may have a gift in prayer, and yet no grace in prayer ; a man may have a gift in preaching and exercising, yet no grace under it ; a man may have the gift of faith, (though “ I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I have nothing ;” he speaks of the gift of faith) ; a man may have, I say, the gift of faith, and yet not the saving grace of faith. So that plainly there is a way of gifts distinct from the way of grace, and a way of grace and holiness distinct from the way of gifts.

Secondly, But what excellency is there then in gifts, and in the way of gifts ?

Much, very much ; they are called *πνευματικά*, in chap. xiv. 1, “ Desire spiritual gifts.” In chap. xii. they are said to be of the Spirit, by the Spirit, from the Spirit. And if you look into Acts x., you shall find that they are called, “ The

very Spirit," or the Holy Ghost; at ver. 44, "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell upon all them which heard the word, and they of the circumcision which believed, were astonished, because that upon the Gentiles was also poured out the gifts of the Holy Ghost," In one verse it is said, "They received the Holy Ghost;" and in the next, they "received the gift of the Holy Ghost." "For they heard them speak with tongues and magnifying God: then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost?" Yet notwithstanding, before, it is said, the gift of the Holy Ghost was poured out upon them. So that here the gift of the Holy Ghost is called the Holy Ghost. And so I take that place in Heb. vi. to be understood, concerning wicked men that do fall away: it is said, "They are made partakers of the Holy Ghost;" that is, the gifts of the Holy Ghost: for in those times the Holy Ghost appeared by sensible gifts, and it is usual to put the sign for the thing signified. But now, that these gifts should be raised up to such a title as this, to be called the Holy Ghost, it argues that there is a great deal of excellency in these gifts, in spiritual gifts.

They are the purchase of Christ, the fruits of his ascension; some of those talents which that great Lord left unto his servants, when he went into a far country; they are better than all gold and silver in the world, for if you had all the gold and silver of both Indies, you had but natural gifts, but these gifts are spiritual.

It is an excellent thing for a man to be able to do good to others: this is the end of gifts; they are, as the schools speak, *in ordine ad alium*, they are given for others' good; they are to profit with, saith the apostle. The sun is an excellent creature; why? because he doth good to others: so, many are, by these spiritual gifts, enabled to do good to others; they are those vessels, which grace and holiness being embarked in, is transported into others' souls. Though there be excellent commodities in other countries, yet if you have not shipping to transport them, you are not the better for them; therefore you say, there is a great use of shipping, thereby such and such rare commodities are transported: so, by these gifts, that grace and goodness that grows in one

man's heart, is transported into another's, carried into another's soul. "He hath given gifts," saith the apostle, "for the edifying of the body of Christ," Eph. iv. If you cannot reach a book off the shelf, you take a stool, and standing upon that stool, you are able to reach down the book: the stool are these gifts; grace alone many times cannot reach down such a notion in divinity, as it is able to do by the help of gifts. *Dona dantur in adiutorium gratia*: gifts are given for the help of grace, they are the handmaids of grace, and they bring forth sweetly upon the knees of grace.

Again, That must needs be excellent, that is able to add a further excellency unto that which is the most excellent. You say ordinarily, that if a worse thing be added unto a better, the better is defiled; as if water be added unto wine, the wine is corrupted; if lead be added unto silver, the silver is defiled; if silver be added unto gold, the gold is debased; and so the better is defiled by the worser. But now grace is the greatest excellency in the world, yet add gifts unto grace, and grace itself is made the more excellent and beautiful: for as the temple did sanctify the gold, but the gold did beautify the temple; so though grace do sanctify gifts, yet gifts do beautify grace. Now grace being the greatest beauty under heaven, and gifts putting a further beauty upon that which is the most beautiful, what doth this argue, but that there is abundance of excellency and beauty in spiritual gifts.

Thirdly, But then, if there be such an excellency in gifts, in spiritual gifts, wherein is grace and love more excellent? Wherein lies the excellency of grace and love, beyond the excellency of gifts?

Concerning love first. Love is not an empty thing, the voice and sound of love is not an uncertain sound, or an empty voice; but saith the apostle here, 1 Cor. xiii., "Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." A man's heart may be purged from grosser sins, and he may be garnished with parts and gifts, and yet his soul left empty for Satan to return into again, as you read in that xiith of Matthew; but grace and love is a filling thing, yea, saith the apostle, chap. xiii. 8, "Love (or charity) never fails," but it continues, it is that garment that never waxeth old; but gifts do, and are soon threadbare. Though these gifts are

fine sweet flowers, yet therewithal the mower filleth not his hand ; a gracious heart cannot be satisfied with gifts alone, gifts alone are not able to satisfy, love and grace doth. But wherein doth love work beyond gifts ? Saith the apostle here, I will tell you, chap. xiii. 4, " Love is not easily provoked ;" better read thus, Love is slow to anger ; parts and gifts are not so. But a man may be slow to anger, and yet not kind and bountiful. True, but " love is kind," or bountiful, as the word bears it, gifts are not so. The apostle speaks of the effects of love in opposition to parts and gifts all along. Love, saith he, is slow to anger, and is kind, or bountiful. Aye, but though a man be kind or bountiful, yet notwithstanding he may envy at the good of others. True, if he have parts and gifts only ; but love, true love, that envies not. Aye, but though a man do not envy at the good of others, yet he may not consider the wants of others. True, but love will, for in the next words, " Charity (or love) vaunteth not," so you read it, but according to the greek, rather, " Love is not light," or inconsiderate, but considers, and weigheth all things. Aye, but though you do all this, yet notwithstanding a man may be proud when he hath done. True, if he have gifts alone, but " love is not puffed up," is not swelled or blown and filled with wind as the bellows are ; at the 5th verse, saith he, " Love doth not behave itself unseemly." This may be understood two ways, saith Peter Martyr ; love will do no unseemly thing, or, love counts nothing unseemly for the person loved. Our Saviour Christ washed his disciples' feet : one would think it an unseemly thing for the Lord and Master to do this for the servants, but he loved them, and love counts nothing unseemly for the person loved. Judas comes and betrays his Master with a kiss, this was an unseemly thing ; Judas had parts and gifts, but he had not love, and therefore he did an unseemly thing. Love doth not behave itself unseemly, that is, it doth no unseemly thing, and yet counts nothing unseemly for the person loved. " It seeks not her own," in the next words, but the good of the person loved. " Love is not easily provoked ;" the words rather to be read thus, " Is not easily embittered," or is not sharp, doth not speak bitter language ; gifts and parts will. " Love thinks no evil ;" that follows : and at verse 6, " It rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the

truth." "It rejoiceth not in iniquity;" the word is *αδικια*,* injustice: "It rejoiceth not in injustice, but it doth rejoice with the truth;" *συγχαίρει δε αληθεια*;† so the words are to be read, and that is thus: If a man be oppressed, love cannot rejoice in his oppression; but if a man be freed and delivered from his oppression, and the truth heard and known, love rejoiceth with such a man when the truth is discovered; it rejoiceth not in injustice, but rejoiceth with the truth when that comes to light. Well, but suppose all this, yet notwithstanding a man may labour under some sinful infirmities, &c., what will love do then? "Love beareth all things," verse 7. But the words should be otherwise translated; for as you read them, "Love beareth all things;" what difference will there be between that clause and the latter of that verse, "Endureth all things, it bears all things," &c.?‡ Here is no difference. The words, therefore, should be read thus: "It covereth all things." So the greek word, *στεγω*, signifies properly, to cover: it is the same word that is used ordinarily in the New Testament to that purpose. Mark ii. 4, "They uncovered the roof of the house," &c. The roof, or the covering, is the same word that is used here, and so, "love covereth all things;" though men have many infirmities, yet true love will cover them all: and "it believeth all things;" though a man have done that which is evil in itself, yet love believes he had a good intention in the doing of it, for it believeth all things; and though a man go very far in sin, yet if another have love, he hopeth that God will bring him back again, for "love hopeth all things, it covers all things, it believeth all things, it hopeth all things;" and if another do me wrong, if I have love I shall bear that too, for "love endureth all things." But, now, will gifts and parts do these things? Surely no; gifts and parts will not bear all things, cover all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things. Aye, but love doth, and love will, and therefore here is a greater excellency in the way of love than in the way of gifts; and if love do outshoot gifts in their own bow, then certainly there is a greater excellency in love than in all gifts. Now if you look into 1 Cor. viii., you shall find

* *Ου χαίρει επι τη αδικια.*

† *Συγχαίρει δε τη αληθεια.*

‡ *Δωμα et στεγη ita distinguuntur quod δωμα sit summa edium pars στεγη ver notat tabulatum του δωματος.*

that it is said concerning love, that it edifies;" knowledge puffeth up, but charity (or love) edifies." Knowledge, that is, the gift of knowledge, doth puff us up. The end of gifts is edification; it is the proper work of gifts to edify; yet, saith the apostle, love edifies; comparing love and gifts together, he shews that love edifies rather than gifts. Now, I say, if that love do thus outshoot gifts in their own bow, then certainly there is a great deal more excellency in love than in all gifts, though they be never so great. Thus concerning love.

And concerning grace and holiness in the general. Grace and holiness is the proper and natural effect of the Spirit, as I may so speak. Gifts are, *opus ad extra*. You shall find that voluntary and rational agents have a twofold effect: a man begets a child like himself, that is a natural effect; then he makes a stool, or a hat, or a ship, this is not a natural effect, this is an artificial effect: so God the Father, he made the world, there is *opus ad extra*: but he begat his Son, and the Son is of the Father, so the Holy Ghost hath a twofold effect. The proper and the natural effect of the Holy Ghost is grace, but the *opus ad extra* is gifts. Grace and holiness is the proper effect of the Holy Ghost, and therefore the apostle Paul speaking of love, joy, peace, and of other particular graces, saith, they are "the fruits of the Spirit," Gal. v. 22. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith," &c.

Again, Sin and corruption will not so easily plant upon grace as upon gifts; pride and corruption will more easily plant upon gifts than upon grace; gifts do sooner gather filth and sooner rust than grace doth. Saith the apostle in that place I named even now. "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifies;" he speaks of knowledge as of a gift; now saith he, "Knowledge, that puffeth up." But how can knowledge, or how can any spiritual gift puff one up? Can that which is the fruit or the effect of the Spirit of God puff one up? No, but occasionally it can, and it will occasionally. So, you will say, grace itself doth, for a man may be proud of his grace as well as he may be proud of his gifts. It is very true. I remember that speech of Mr. Fox, Sometimes, said he, I get hurt by my graces, and sometimes I get good by my sins; for by my sins I am made more humble, and by my grace I am

made more proud. It is true, occasionally a man may be proud of and puffed up by his very graces, but there is yet that in true grace itself that will suppress pride, grace being contrary to sin ; as for gifts, though they be divers from sin, yet they are not contrary unto sin, and so cannot suppress sin, as grace can do, that is contrary thereunto ; for one contrary doth destroy the other. I express it thus : a man may be proud of his clothes, and he may be proud of his graces, but there is not that in his clothes which will suppress his pride ; there is nothing in clothes that is contrary unto pride, but in grace there is. So a man may be proud of his gifts, and he may be proud of his graces, but there is not that in gifts that is so contrary unto pride as there is in grace ; there is that in grace that is directly contrary unto sin and pride : I say, therefore, that pride and corruption cannot so easily plant and grow upon grace itself as it can upon gifts, and therefore there is a greater excellency in grace, and the way of grace and holiness, than in the way of gifts. Though a man have never so little grace, and have no gifts, yet he gives no offence, is not scandalous ; but if a man have all gifts, and have no grace, how many offences doth he fall into, and how scandalous is he ? let experience speak.

Though a man have never such great parts and gifts, yet if he have not grace withal, he may go to hell, and perish to all eternity, for by his gifts he is not united unto Jesus Christ, for by his gifts he is not made the child of God, for by his gifts he is not estated in the covenant of grace. You know what our Saviour saith : “ Many shall say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and have done many wonderful works ? ” these are the effects of gifts ; “ and he shall say unto them, Depart, I know you not.” But saith the apostle concerning grace and love, “ I hope better things of you, and such as accompany salvation, for God is not unmindful to forget your labour of love ” that accompanies salvation. You see how it is with children that are playing together in the day, if they be playing abroad, and children of divers parents, when night comes, one child goes to his father, and the other unto his father ; they are very like, it may be, and their clothes are alike, and when they are playing together abroad, you cannot say whose child this is, or whose child that is, but when night comes, the fa-

ther then comes unto his child and saith, Come home, my child, come in at doors, and if the other offers to go in there, No, child, you must go home to your father; so while we are living, grace and gifts are mingled together, some men have gifts and some men have graces, and they look very like. Ah, but when night comes, and when death comes, then God the Father, he saith to those that have grace, Come, my children, enter in; but if those that have gifts only come, he sends them away: No, you must go to your father, it is not your gifts make you my children; by grace you are my children, but not by gifts, and therefore home to your father, I am none your father, home unto your own father; thus will the Lord speak when night comes: yea, and if a man do go to hell and perish, the more gifts he hath, the deeper will he sink into hell; as it is with a man that is in the water, sinking in the water, the more he is laden with gold, the more he sinks, and as he is sinking if he hath any time to cry out, he saith, Oh, take away these bags of gold, these bags of gold will sink me, they will undo me: so I say, these golden parts and golden gifts they will undo men; when men come to hell, and shall perish, the more golden gifts and parts they have had, the deeper they shall sink in hell; parts and gifts will never save a man from the wrath to come, aye, but grace, and love, and holiness under Christ will; surely therefore there is an excellency in the way of grace and of love, beyond the way of gifts: though the way of gifts be an excellent way, and much to be desired, yet the way of grace and of love is a more excellent way, and most of all to be desired.

By way of application then methinks this doctrine looks wishly upon those that have gifts, upon those that have none, or very weak, and it looks wishly upon us all.

It looks wishly upon those that have parts and gifts, and it calls upon you all for to bless the Lord. Hath the Lord led you in a way of gifts? He hath led you in an excellent way, for the way of gifts is an excellent way. Is it not a great mercy for a man to be able to do good to others, and to save another man's soul, to have a hand to pull others out of everlasting burnings? Herein man seems to go beyond the angels, for the angels are ministering spirits, but men are called saviours, "Others save with fear, pulling them out of

the fire." And hath the Lord led you in a way of gifts, and given you gifts to do good to others? Such a hand he hath given to you, surely therefore you have cause for ever to bless the Lord.

But though the Lord, through his grace, hath led me in this way of gifts, I fear I have nothing but gifts, I fear that they are gifts alone, and not grace withal; had I gifts and graces too, I should bless the Lord indeed, but I fear it is nothing but gifts.

For answer, it is possible that a man that hath grace may think he hath nothing but gifts; it is possible for a man that hath only gifts to think that his gifts are graces. But would you know the difference between gifts and graces as they are in *subjecto*, as they are in a particular person? for the difference between them as they are in themselves, I have shewn you in the beginning. Then thus, the faculty you know is distinguished by the act, and the act by the object, *potentia distinguitur per actum, et actus per objectum*, saith philosophy. If a man have gifts only, he is exercised most about a gifting object; if grace, then about a gracious object; and therefore if you look into Scripture, you shall find, that grace and faith fall in with a crucified Christ, "I desire to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified," saith faith and grace. But now gifts coming in by the ascension of Jesus Christ, "He hath ascended on high, he hath given gifts to men," they are conversant especially about ascensions and glories, but a crucified Christ is a mean and fleshly thing in their eyes.

Again, They differ in their nature; for gifts, as I may so speak, are a dead grace, and grace is a living gift; dead men are free among the dead, and living men love to converse with the living; grace is a living quality, and therefore it prizeth living saints, and things are most savoury that come from a living hand; but gifts in comparison are a dead thing, and therefore prizeth dead notions, and dead persons; and things relish best which come from a dead hand, as books and the like; why? because gifts being dead, themselves are free among the dead.

Again, They differ also in their disposition, for grace and holiness is contented with the simplicity of the gospel, gifts are not contented therewithal, and therefore you shall ob-

serve that the Corinthians, who excelled in gifts, adulterated the gospel with their swelling words; the Galatians adulterated the doctrine of the gospel, and mingled the doctrine of the gospel with justification by works; and the Corinthians mingled the words of the gospel with their own swelling language; they had gifts and they were not contented with the simplicity of the gospel, aye, but grace is. You see how it is with a child that comes into a corn-field, he is mightily taken with the blue or red weeds, or a company of daisies, but now when a man comes, the husbandman comes, he looks at the corn, and is not so much taken with the blue or red weeds, or the daisies that grow there, but is taken with the corn itself. So now take a man that hath gifts only, and bring him to a sermon, or to a prayer, and if there be any fine expressions, any daisies, he is much taken with them, he prizeth and magnifieth them, and he hangs on them; but now bring a man that hath grace, to prayer, or to a sermon, and he looks at the corn, he doth not look at the daisies so much, but at the spirituality and the power of those things that are there delivered. They differ in their disposition.

Again, They differ also in their effects; grace hath a good hand at suffering as well as at doing; gifts have a very good hand at doing, but they have an ill hand at suffering; they are given to profit withal, they are given to act, and to do with; but when you come to suffer, gifts, I say, though they have a good hand at doing, they have a very ill hand at suffering: but now grace hath as good a hand at suffering as it hath at doing.

Again, They differ also in their abatement and in their quenching: if a man have grace and fall into sin, that sin will hinder and quench the former actings of his grace; he cannot act now as he did act before; therefore saith the apostle, "Quench not the Spirit:" but if a man have gifts only, and no grace, and he fall into sin, that sin hinders not his actings, he can pray as he did, and he can converse as he did, his actings are not so much hindered or quenched thereby; as it is with a candle, if it be only painted upon a board, and you put it into the water, that is not quenched thereby; why? because it is a dead candle, it is not a living candle: but now come and take a living candle, a burning candle, and put that into the water, and that is quenched: why? be-

cause it is a living candle, it is a burning candle : so now, take a man that hath gifts only, and let him fall into sin, and his gifts are not quenched with his sin ; why ? because he is but a dead candle, a painted candle, and so he can pray as well, and converse as well, though he fall into sin : but now, a man that hath grace in truth, and more than gifts, if he fall into sin, oh, he cannot act as he did act before, he hath not the same face towards God as he had before : thus, I say, they differ in their abatements. And therefore now, whosoever you are that make this objection, and fear that you have nothing but gifts, and not grace ; as it is the scruple of many christians, Oh, I fear, saith one, I have nothing but gifts, that I have not grace at all, but gifts alone : I appeal unto you before the Lord, whoever you are that labour under this fear, whether do you not desire above all to know Jesus Christ and him crucified ; whether are not things best that come from a living hand to you ; whether do not your disposition lie towards the simplicity of the gospel ; and are you not content and satisfied therewithal ; whether have you not as good a hand at suffering, when God calls you thereunto, as at doing ; whether are you not quenched, when you fall into sin ? Oh, yes, saith the poor soul ; this I must needs say, through grace thus it is with me ; the Lord knows I can speak this in truth, I desire to know nothing but a crucified Christ ; living things from a living hand do savour best with me, and my disposition lies towards the simplicity of the gospel ; I am not so much taken with the daisies, as with the corn that grows in a sermon and in a prayer ; and through grace I have as good a hand at suffering, when God leads me to it, as at doing ; and this I can say in truth, that when I do fall into any great sin, that I find some abating and quenching, I cannot pray then as I could pray before. Well, if these things be in you and abound, be of good comfort, here is more than bare gifts, here is grace also.

This doctrine looks wishly also upon those that have no gifts, upon those that are weak in gifts, have either no gifts at all, or very weak gifts ; and it calls upon you to be of good comfort. There is many a poor soul complains and says, As for such and such men, they have great gifts, but I have no gifts at all ; I have no memory at all, I have no utterance, I have no elocution, I have no gifts in prayer, I have no gifts

in conference. Well, the way of gifts indeed is an excellent way : and hath not the Lord led you in the way of gifts, that excellent way ? yet notwithstanding, if he have led you in a more excellent way, have you any cause to complain ? Though the way of gifts be an excellent way, the way of grace is a more excellent way, the way of love is a more excellent way. What then, soul, what then ? Though the Lord hath not led thee in the way of gifts, that excellent way, yet, I say, if he have led thee in the way of grace, and in the way of love, in the more excellent way, certainly you have no cause to complain.

Will you complain for want of that, which if you had in abundance, you would have less time to tend your own souls ? Gifts are given for to profit with, gifts are given for the good of others, to do good to others ; the more gifts you have therefore, the more you are to tend upon others, and do good to them ; and the more you are to tend upon others, the less time you have to tend upon your own souls. Now, I say, would you complain for want of that, which if you had in abundance, you should have less time to tend your own souls ?

Or, will you complain for want of that, which if you had without grace, would be your undoing ? The heathens tell us a fable concerning a man, who desired that all that ever he touched might be gold, and, say they, it was granted to him by the gods ; when therefore he came to eat his meat, he touched it, so his meat was turned to gold, and so the man was starved : the moral of it is this, that many a man would be utterly undone if he had that which he most desires : and let me tell you this, had you all gifts and golden parts, yet, if you had not grace withal, you would desire that all that ever you should touch might be gold, you would turn all into gifts, and matter of parts, and so your own soul would be undone and starved by it.

Or, will you complain for want of that, which, if you have, may aggravate your condemnation ; but, if you want, cannot hinder your salvation ? Pray consider it ; will you, I say, complain for want of that, which, if you have, may aggravate your condemnation ; but, if you want, can never hinder your salvation ? If you have gifts, they may aggravate your condemnation ; but if you have them not, your wanting of them shall never hinder your salvation. Shall I then complain for

want of them? Yet thus, I say, thus it is with you that complain for want of gifts; hath not the Lord therefore led you in the way of gifts; and hath he led you in the way of grace? be of good comfort: comfort, comfort, comfort, to all those that are weak in gifts, but have truth of grace. Only here give me leave to lay before you some few directions, whether you have gifts, or no.

Either you have gifts, or not; if that you have gifts, then you are called to doing good; if you have not gifts, then you are called to receiving good, for all a man's life should be spent, either in doing good, or receiving; if a man have gifts, then he is called to doing; if a man have no gifts, then he is called to receiving: have you gifts? therefore know, you are called to doing; have you no gifts? know, you are called the more to receiving.

And either you have gifts, or not; if you have gifts, take heed you do not despise those that have none; and if you have not, take heed that you do not envy those that have; take heed you do not desire grace for gifts' sake, as hypocrites do, but rather desire gifts for grace's sake, as the godly do; as your gifts come upon you, labour to grow proportionable in grace: for if a man have a great farm, and have no stock, or a small stock, it is the only way to break him; so if a man have great gifts, and but little grace, it is the only way to undo him.

But, above all things, take heed that you do not lay your gifts at the foundation of your religion; gifts are good in the building, but they are naught in the foundation; gifts are good above, but they are naught beneath: you see how it is in some trades, if men have gunpowder, barrels of gunpowder, or commodities that are apt to take fire, they lay them in the upper rooms on the top of their houses; and if you ask them the reason, Why do not you lay these things below? they will say, Nay, but they are apt to take fire; and if they should but take fire, the whole house might be blown up therewithal. Beloved, gifts and parts are as gunpowder, they are very apt to take fire; and what is the reason that many a professor is blown up, and the whole building of his religion ruined? but because when first he began to look towards heaven, he laid his gifts at the foundation of his profession, whereas Christ only is our foundation, and if any

man will build upon gifts and parts, his whole building will come to nothing: take heed therefore that gifts and parts do not come into the foundation of your religion.

This doctrine looks wishly also upon all of us: Is this true, that though the way of gifts be an excellent way, yet the way of grace is a more excellent way, and the way of love a more excellent way, and more to be desired? Why stand we then so much upon our gifts and parts; and why look we no more after love? love is the great command, the most excellent way; the apostle saith, chap. 13., "Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal." What though I preach as never man preached, yet if I want love, I am but as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal: what though I pray as never man prayed with praying gifts, yet if I want love, I am but as sounding brass, and as a tinkling cymbal; what though I confer and discourse of all things, as never man did, yet if I want love, I am but as sounding brass, and as a tinkling cymbal. Yet, good Lord, how many are there that bear themselves upon these bladders of gifts and parts (which will ere long be pricked) and neglect this way of love. Are there not some professors that do sometimes question their everlasting condition for the want of gifts, yet can go up and down a whole year together in the breach of love, and never question their condition for want of that? Yea, are there not some preachers that fetch the great part of their evidence for heaven from their gifts; and the exercising of their gifts, whilst they lie in the breach of love? The apostle, you see here, doth advance love above all gifts; and I pray let us consider a little what these gifts are, that are thus sunk down before love, which love is advanced above: the apostle tells us they are spiritual gifts, not natural gifts: suppose now I be to preach, and I go from one book to another: out of one book I take one thing, out of another book I take another thing, out of a third book I take another thing, and I do but only put these together that I have out of several books; is this any more than a natural gift? suppose a book-binder be to bind up divers sheets of paper, and he stitcheth them up together, is it any more than a natural gift? so suppose I be to preach, or I be to pray, and I take this expression from one, and that expression from another,

and this thing from one, and that from another and I do only put these things together, is this any more than a natural gift? Aye, but they are spiritual gifts that the apostle doth sink before love, and doth advance love above, yea, and if you observe this scripture, you shall find that they were the highest gifts, for saith he at verse 28. "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing." And "though (saith he, chap. xiii.,) I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal." Though I be an apostle, have the gift of an apostle; be a prophet, and have the gift of a prophet, though I have gifts of miracles, yet notwithstanding if I want love, all is nothing: these were great and high gifts, the highest gifts, and yet all nothing without love: and are all these gifts as nothing, spiritual gifts nothing without love? apostolical gifts and prophetic gifts and miraculous gifts, are all these gifts nothing without love? O Lord, what are my poor minnum gifts then without love? my gifts either in preaching, or in praying, or in conference? ah, what poor shrubs are my gifts then? how are they much more nothing without love? and yet how many have these times brought forth that hunt much after gifts, and the exercise of their gifts, and are strangers to the way of love? I had almost said, they are out of love with this grace of love: but if we look into 1 John ii., we find a scripture that may make all of us to take heed how we walk up and down without love. Verse 10., "He that loveth his brother, abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him." Though there be much stumbling abroad, yet if a man love his brother, though he have many failings, and some odd opinions, yet if he love his brother he abideth in the light and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. But (saith he, verse 11.) "He that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and he walks in darkness, and he knows not whither he goes." He thinks he is going to heaven, and he is going to hell; he thinks he is going on in a way of zeal, but alas, poor man, he walks up and down in darkness, he knows not whither he goeth; who-soever walks in this way of hatred, or want of love, he walks in darkness, and he knows not whither he goes; but I need not say no more. The apostle here tells us, that the way of

love is an excellent way, the more excellent way, and most to be desired : now therefore, oh, that our love might abound. Oh, that our love, that is much declined in these days, might be recovered. Oh, that our love might abound towards one another, and towards all the saints. Oh, that there were love, and peace, and reconciliation yet among prossessors.

But though such a man be a professor, it may be he is not godly, yea, I do not think he is godly, and why should I love him then ?

You know what our Saviour saith concerning the Father, " He maketh his sun to shine upon the good and bad ;" and I pray is it not usual with deceitful hearts, first to degrade a godly man into ungodliness, that so they may have room to hate him ? There is a great deal of difference between the affection of a profane man, and of an hypocrite ; a profane man makes nothing to profess that he hates, and that he doth not love such a man that is godly, and that he hates him because he is pure and holy ; but now an hypocrite knows in his conscience that he must not hate a man that is godly : what then ? Therefore that he may make room to hate him, he will first make him ungodly ; first he will degrade him, and make him ungodly, that so he may have room to hate him ; as now, if he have a mind to love one, and to be intimate with him, his conscience tells him, that he must not walk with, or be intimate with them that are wicked ; therefore first he will make a man godly, that so he may have room to love him ; and so if a man be godly, he will first make him ungodly, that so he may have room to hate him : take heed of this deceit of heart ; you say such a one is not godly, take heed of this deceit.

But suppose he be godly, yet notwithstanding he is of a different judgment from me, he is not of the same opinion with me, and should I love him then ?

I confess it is hard to do it, and we should all pray that we might be of the same mind ; yet where, I pray, do you find in all the Scripture, that the Lord doth make oneness of judgment to be the only rule and measure of love ? Where doth the Lord say in any place in Scripture, that oneness of judgment shall be the only measure of our love to one another ? Doth a father say unto his child, Child, love your brother, because he is of the same growth with you ? No,

but, my children, love one another, for ye are brethren : so the Lord doth not say, My children, love one another, because you are of the same growth, and the same pitch ; but love one another, for you are brethren.

Aye, but suppose that a man doth me wrong, stirs and provokes me, and that he hath first made the breach, should I love him then ?

Yes, else there were no labour of love : God is not unmindful to forget your labour of love ; if there were no provocation, your love were not worthy of God ; that faith is a faith worthy of God that steps over difficulties, and that love is a love worthy of God that steps over provocations : you see how it is with a glass that hath sweet liquor in it, the more you stir that glass, the more savoury sweet smell it sends forth ; come indeed to a glass that hath filthy and unsavoury liquor in it and the more you stir it the worse it smells. Art thou provoked and art thou stirred ? if there be sweet liquor in you, grace and patience within you, the more you are stirred, and the more you are provoked, the sweeter you will smell ; but if there be a froward spirit and a froward disposition, if there be filthy liquor within, then indeed the more you are stirred, and the more you are provoked, the worse you will smell. And whereas you speak of his first making the breach upon love, I pray look upon 2 Kings vi., you shall find there with what bloody intentions the king of Syria came to Dothan to take Elisha, at verse 14., “ Therefore sent he thither horses and chariots, and a great host, and they came by night and compassed the city.” Elisha goes forth unto them at verse 19., and he said, “ This is not the way, neither is this the city ; follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek : but he led them to Samaria. When they were come into Samaria, (at verse 20,) the Lord opened their eyes : and the king of Israel said (at verse 21) unto Elisha when he saw them, My father shall I smite them ? shall I smite them ? He answered, Thou shalt not smite them ; wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword, and with thy bow ? set bread and water before them that they may eat and drink, and go to their master : so he prepared great provisions for them, and when they had eat and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master ; so the bands of Syria came no more

into the land of Israel." Mark the issue, the Syrians came out first, were the first that made the breach; well, Israel had advantage upon them, and the king of Israel's fingers did itch at them to be smiting of them, but Elisha would not have it so, but instead of smiting he would have kindness shewn unto them; and I pray what was the effect thereof? having set bread and water before them, and refreshed them with those provisions, they went away, "so the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel." I have read of two famous philosophers that were at great variance, the one an elderly man, the other younger, the elder comes unto the younger with a motion of peace, and the younger willingly embraced it; peace being made, Well, saith the elder, remember that though I were the elder, yet I come to you, and I first offered peace; true, saith the younger unto him again, I acknowledge it, and I shall upon this account for ever account you the more worthy man, because though I was the first that did make the strife, you were the first that did make the peace. And shall heathens do thus, and shall not we christians, go beyond them, or do the same?

Aye, but there is time for all things: there was a time, indeed, for love, and for men to be reconciled, but now things are grown to that height and to that pass, that it is now too late to talk of love and of reconciliation; we confess that the way of love is the more excellent way, and there was a time indeed to have been reconciled, but now it is all too late.

Well, then, if it be too late, give me leave to entreat one thing at your hands, and that is this; I say, If it be too late, and you say it is too late to be reconciled and love one another, let me entreat this, that you would all lay aside your garments, the garments of your profession of being Christ's disciples; for our Saviour saith, "By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another:" and therefore if it be too late for to love one another, and to be reconciled, come and let us lay down our garments, let us lay down our profession of being the disciples of Christ; yea, let us lay down our expectation of heaven too, for saith the apostle, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." And is not passion, malice, and want of love, flesh and blood? Certainly, certainly if I do not walk in this way of love, it is not all my parts and all my gifts that will bail me from the

arrest of that scripture, "Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven." I have read or heard of a certain champion that challenged a devil; two armies being come near to one another, one comes forth out of one army and challengeth to fight hand to hand with any one of the other army; at last there steps forth a man for to meet him, and they being there to fight, and many of both armies gotten round to behold and see what would become of it, who should fall and who should stand; at last saith one of the two, Who are you for? saith the other, Sir, I am for you, and I am come forth to save your life; why, said he, should we, like fools, kill one another to make sport for these beholders? so they threw down their weapons and embraced one another, and so parted with love, to the admiration of all that did behold them. Now, beloved, things are grown to a great height, and there is too much dissension amongst professors, and all men are upon the tiptoe at this time to see who shall fall and who shall stand. But now, after all our animosities, if we would step in to one another, and embrace one another, how would this glorify God and make religion glorious in the eyes of the world? Oh, why should we that are professors kill, wound or abuse one another to make sport for our common enemies that behold us? Believe it, believe it, it is not too late, it is not too late to love one another, it is not too late for me to do my work, as long as it is not too late to receive my wages; and if I say, It is too late to be reconciled; what if God say to me, then, It is too late for my soul to be saved.

What, then, shall we do that we may get into this excellent way of love?

I shall only lay before you two or three directions. Two or three things I conceive there are that yet would make a reconciliation, and repair love among us; that would recover and recruit our love that is much declined. The first is an evangelical, gospel spirit or disposition. A legal disposition is a fretful, froward, fiery disposition, but a gospel disposition is like the gospel, smooth, gentle, loving and sweet. We read of Abraham, that he went in to Hagar, and he had a child, Ishmael, by her; he went in to Sarah, and he had a child by her, Isaac; and these two mothers, Hagar and Sarah, the apostle tells us, Gal. iv., were types of the law and of the gospel. After Abraham had gone in to Hagar, and the child

of Hagar well grown, there was no peace in the family, though it were Abraham's family. And as Abraham then did go in to Hagar, so now the children of Abraham do too much go in to Hagar, the law. And as Luther said, *Cain semper occidit fratrem ad finem mundi*; Cain will be always killing of his brother Abel till the world's end: so say I, Abraham will be always going in to Hagar till Christ come again. I mean, the children of Abraham will be always going in to the law and to Hagar. And what is the reason, I pray, that there are so many divisions and dissensions now among us, and so little love? But because the children of Abraham go so much in to Hagar. I dare boldly say, it is not so much diversity of judgment that maketh these dissensions, as it is the legality of our dispositions; for though your judgments were very different and removed one from another, yet, if your spirits were evangelical, you would love one another: and though your judgments were all of a piece, yet if one were of a legal disposition, and the other of an evangelical disposition, there would be want of love still, still there would be divisions; now, therefore, whensoever you find divisions begin to stir, or want of love, then go to God, and beseech the Lord, saying, O Lord, deliver me from a legal disposition; O Lord, bestow upon me a gospel disposition.

And again, a true and real sense of the name of God, and how greatly the name of Christ and God the Father doth suffer by the divisions of professors, and their want of love, will recruit and recover our love. We are very sensible of our own names, the sufferings of our own names; but were we as sensible of the suffering of God's name, certainly there would not be such want of love amongst us. Luther said in his time, The thief wrongs one, the adulterer wrongs two, the slander wrongs three: but I think four; himself, the person abused, the bystander, and the precious name of God. You have heard, it is likely, of the parable of the stomach. There was a great variance sometimes fell out at Rome, between the people and the senate, insomuch that the people banded together, to the hazard of the commonwealth. The senate, to quiet the people, sent a certain eloquent man amongst them; and when he came amongst them, he propounded them this parable. Saith he: Upon a time the members of the body were at variance with the stomach, be-

cause the stomach devoured all the meat, and lay still, was idle, and did not work, and all the other members of the body wrought hard and sorely for their living: whereupon they all combined against the stomach, and the eye would not see no more for it, and the hand would work no more for it, and the feet would walk no more for it, and the teeth would chew no more for it, and other members refused for to do their office, whereupon the whole body was weak, the eye began to wax dim, the hand began to wax weak, the feet began to be feeble, and all the members began to be weak, and the whole body for to wither. So here, now in these days of ours; one man he thinks he is wronged, and he withholds his influence and his love; and another man he thinks he is wronged, and he withholds his influence and his love; and another man he thinks he is wronged, and he withholds his influence and his love: and so in fine all the members are weakened, and the whole body of the commonwealth weakened; yea, and the body of christianity weakened, and the name of Christ, the precious name of Christ, that suffers much. You that are a professor, you strike at me; and I that am a professor, I strike at you: but I pray, where falls the blow? the blow falls upon the name of Christ, the blow falls upon the name of God. Have I done you wrong? I pray, what wrong hath the name of Christ done you? Hath not Christ suffered enough for us, but shall his precious name suffer more by us? Moses was a man, you know, tender of the name of God: "What shall become of thy great name?" In Malachi's time, it was the character of a man fearing God, that he "thought upon the name of God." Solomon in the Proverbs saith, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous fly thereunto and are safe." Now then, as ever you desire that the name of the Lord should be a refuge and a shelter to you in the evil day; oh, be tender of the name of God, and I dare say, the more tender you that are professors are of the precious name of God, and the more sense you have of the sufferings of God's name, the more you will lay down your weapons one against another, and the more you will set yourselves for to love one another.

And would you love one another now, as you have loved before? then do as you have done before. "I have somewhat against thee, (saith Christ to the church of Ephesus,)

thou hast left thy first love." But wouldest thou be recovered? "Remember from whence thou hast fallen, and repent, and do thy first works." I wish I might not say, that Christ hath a somewhat against us, even this, that in these days of ours we have lost our former love, love unto one another. But would we be recovered, reclaimed? Oh, let us remember from whence we are fallen, repent and bewail our divisions, declinings in love, and do our first works. What are those? Times were heretofore, when you, that are of different judgments now, would have met together, prayed together, yea, fasted, prayed, and have wept together. So let us do again: we meet now and dispute together, we meet now and we wrangle together, but we shall never dispute ourselves into love. If we would love one another now, as we have done before, then let us do as we did before, meet and pray together, as before. The living fish swims against the stream, the dead fish is carried down with the tide; so a living christian swims against the tide of the times, a dead professor is carried down with all. And which way doth the stream and tide of these times run, but against love? great oppositions that are made to love. Now then, as we desire to be counted living christians, let us make it our work and business to heal and reconcile things. It is in regard of graces, as in regard of ordinances; when any ordinance of God is decried, then it is our duty, and we are called to it, for to cry it up; so when any one grace is opposed, then is our time, and then we are called to advance it most. And when ever was this grace of love among professors so much opposed as it is now? Now therefore, if ever, is our duty to abound in love, and to walk in this excellent way.

But you desire gifts, yea, and your gifts are great; I know where I speak, in this great and famous city of London, where gifts and parts grow alone, even in your streets; yet let me tell you this, though you or I should have all gifts and parts, yet if we want love, we should be but as sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal. But you desire gifts, the gift of teaching, exercising, that ye may be able to do good to others; and you do well therein, for the way of gifts is an excellent way: oh, but the way of love is a more excellent way. You desire gifts, the gift of prayer, the gift of conference, that you may speak a word in season unto them you

shall meet with ; and you do well therein, for this way of gifts is an excellent way ; yet saith the apostle, “ Behold I shew you a more excellent way.” As for all our gifts and parts, they will leave us when we must go in to our Father. Do ye, therefore, any of you desire gifts ? desire them still, yea, “ covet earnestly the best gifts : but yet shew I you (saith the apostle) a more excellent way :” and ye have heard what that way is ; in general, the way of grace, holiness, and of the power of godliness ; in particular, the way of love. “ Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of our souls, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect (in this great work of love), working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever.” Amen.