

SERMON I.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus. Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.—VER. 1, 2.

ALTHOUGH the matter of the two first verses is found almost in every epistle, and is accordingly expounded by every interpreter, yet, that there may not be an uncomely vacuity at the very first entrance, I shall add some animadversions upon the words of them.

Paul, an Apostle.—The reason why in his epistles he usually prefixes both his name and office is, *first*, to ascertain them he wrote to that the epistles were his own, or genuine epistles—as you may perceive his intent to be by that closure of his second epistle to the Thessalonians, 2 Thess. iii. 17, ‘The salutation of me, Paul, with my own hand, which is the sign or token in every epistle: so I write,’ &c. So, then, this inscription is both a salutation and a blessing of these Ephesians; of which afterwards.

Secondly, He adds his sacred office—‘an apostle.’ Apostleship was an office extraordinary in the Church of God, appointed for a time for the first rearing and governing of the Church of the New Testament, and to deliver that faith which was but once to be given to the saints, (as Jude speaks,) and the apostles are therefore entitled the foundation the Church is built on, Eph. ii. 20; which office, accordingly, had many extraordinary privileges annexed to it, suited (as all the callings by God and his institutions are) to attain that end which was so extraordinary—as, namely, unlimitedness of commission to teach all nations, Matt. xxviii. 19. They likewise had an infallibility and unerringness, whether in their preaching or in writing, (2 Cor. i. ver. 13 and 18 compared,) which was absolutely necessary for them to have, seeing they were to lay the foundation to all ages, 1 Cor. iii. 10, although in their personal walkings they might err, as Peter did, Gal. ii. 11. And, further, they had authority and jurisdiction committed to them, as elders in any church where Providence should cast them, 2 Cor. xi. 28, together with authority and power therein, 1 Cor. iv. 21, and 2 Cor. x. 8. And—

Thirdly, This our apostle had this special grace and honour from God vouchsafed him above most of the apostles, to be particularly moved and inspired by the Holy Ghost, the conscience of his own duty concurring, to edify not only the present churches then extant, but to write epistles to leave them to the ages to come, which every apostle did not; and there were none that did write any part of Scripture but as and when they were moved by the Holy Ghost, as Peter tells us, 2 Pet. i. 21. As ‘no prophesy came in the old time’—*i. e.*, under the Old Testament—‘by the will of man; but holy men spake,’ and so by like reason wrote, ‘as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;’ and thus it is under the New as well as under the Old. But God was pleased to use this man to labour more than they all. We owe the third part of the New Testament to him, insomuch as he wrote epistles to

some by special and personal inspiration, whom he never saw in the flesh, as the Colossians.

And this practice of affixing his name and office to his epistles, as well as the epistles themselves, is greatly to be heeded by us that do come in after ages. Excepting that to the Hebrews, for a special reason not setting down his office of apostle, which in two or three epistles, where it is less needed, is omitted also. It is to be heeded, I say, by us in after ages, for it has this instruction in it, (which was his scope of doing it,) that as the matter of them did bind and oblige those whom he wrote to, so all saints in after ages to come, for they do inherit these and other apostles' writings, to own them, and to embrace them, and to observe what is written in them, as of a divine authority; the word of God, as well as of man, and as intended to all saints and faithful in Christ Jesus, as well as those at Ephesus. As those instances declare, that the epistle that was writ to the Church of Colosse, Paul commands to be read to the Church of Laodicea. The inscription likewise to the Church at Corinth commands the same: 'To the church of Corinth, with all that call on the name of the Lord, both theirs and ours,' 1 Cor. i. 2.

Know, therefore, that when you read any epistle, the whole weight of their apostolical spirit and authority in them is to fall upon all our consciences and spirits, as it did on theirs, unto these purposes, both to assure our hearts of the unerring truth of every tittle of them, and their word in their writings to be as true as God is true, 2 Cor. i. 13, 18, as also to receive all their injunctions and commands therein, as coming with the same apostolical authority that it did to those to whom they were by name written, and as immediately warranting us in all those practices which their living commands did put them upon. In a word, to speak in the words of the Apostle to the Thessalonians, to receive them all as the word of God, 1 Thess. ii. 13, even as if we had heard them out of Paul's own mouth, as there he urged that they had heard; which work as effectually in you that believe as it did in them. So that as in these their writings we enjoy these apostles' ministry, and shall to the end of the world, Matt. xxviii. ult., and are therefore said to believe through their word, John xvii. 20; in like manner, their ordinary directions to believers to any duty belonging to them,—to become churches, or join themselves to churches, or else to churches how to demean themselves,—left us in their epistles, or the acts of the apostles recorded, have the same authority to bind us as they did them, and he gives the same warrants and commands to us which their persons, by living voice, did to those saints in their times; which their very commission, Matt. xxviii. 19, holds forth to us, 'Go and teach them to observe all that I have commanded,' says Christ, 'and, lo, I am with you to the end of the world.'

And in this respect these few words, *Paul, an apostle*, which we find prefixed, are of great use to us; and let this name, and title, and commands of his, which are from Christ, be for ever precious throughout all generations.

There are three things in these two first verses:—

1. The author of this epistle—*Paul*.
2. The persons to whom it was written—*Saints at Ephesus, &c.*
3. The salutation and blessing therein uttered, ordinary in all his epistles—*Grace and peace, &c.*

I. THE AUTHOR—*Paul*.—I will not speak much of his personal super-eminent worth. In his own opinion he was the least of saints on earth; in mine, the highest saint in heaven, and next the man Christ Jesus. To whose labours (more abundant than of all the other apostles, 1 Cor. xv. 10) the one-half of the now Christian, then Roman world, doth owe, and the catholic

Church in all ages, the third part of that invaluable treasure of the New Testament; taking together all either written by him, as the Epistles, or written of him, as the greatest part of the Acts.

Only this name of his here, *Paul*, and the change thereof from that of *Saul*, is a difficulty among interpreters, which I shall not here meddle with, further than thus: that this change might be from his former Jewish name, Saul, into a Roman name, Paul; it being evident that several nations did use to alter men's names according to their own tongue, and very often the first letter of a man's name is changed in the same language; whom Jeremiah calls Merodach, him the writer of the Book of the Kings calls Berodach. So the eldest son of Simeon, whom Moses calls Jemuel, Gen. xli. 10 and Exod. vi. 15, the same man doth Moses call Nemuel in Num. xxvi. 12. The name Paul was a name usual among the Romans; given to a Roman deputy, Acts xiii. 7; and thus the name Saul might have been fitted unto the Roman mode, *S* being turned into *P*; and that which strengthens this conjecture is, that we read of this change of his name first when we read of his converse with that Roman deputy, Acts xiii.; but chiefly when he was anew separated to the work of preaching to the Gentiles by the command of the Holy Ghost, Acts xiii. 4.

It may be added that this new name hath been the rather given him by the Romans, and the more readily accepted by him, as fitly glancing at the littleness of his stature,* (which the more illustrated the glory of God's grace in the gifts of his mind,) of which antiquity gives testimony from tradition, and ancient images of him four hundred years after, in Chrysostom's time, Niceph. lib. ii., cap. 37. And Chrysostom, in his homily *De princip. Apostol.*, calls him *ὁ τριπηχὺς ἄνθρωπος*, a man of three cubits, whereas the ordinary proportion of men is four; which may most probably be thought to be that baseness and weakness of presence, which himself acknowledgeth in himself, 2 Cor. x. 1, 10. It is certain that the name Paulus was first given to the family of the Æmylians in Rome for the littleness of their stature. And this change himself might well permit and take on him: a new Gentile name instead of his Jewish, as an indication of his new office, the Apostle of the Gentiles, Rom. xi. 13: it being withal so fitly suited to express the character of his spirit and his most eminent grace, littleness in his own eyes; which, accordingly, you find him still inculcating, as if it were his motto, both interpreting his name and expressing his spirit, 'less than the least of saints,' Eph. iii. 8; 'least of apostles,' 1 Cor. xv. 9; perhaps in some allusion to his name, Paul; but this is only a conjecture, on which I insist not.

Paul, an Apostle.—It was made a wonder in the Old Testament, 'Is Saul among the prophets?' And it is as great a wonder of the New, that Saul the persecutor should be among the apostles; and so it was when Paul converted began first to preach that Christ was the Son of God, and was first heard at Damascus by the people. What the effect whereof was, the words of the hearers do shew, Acts ix. 21, 22, 'But all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.' Whose office in the Church was the first, 1 Cor. xii. 28, 'God hath set in the Church [first] apostles;' and therefore the highest under the gospel next Christ, even as the high-priesthood was the highest of the rank of priests under the law. Hence both these are coupled together, and in

* *Paulum modicum quid.* Aug. in Ps. lxxii.

way of honour given unto Christ himself, (God's first and great apostle sent out by him, John xx. 21,) 'The high priest and apostle of our profession, Jesus,' &c., Heb. iii. 1.

Obs.—No sins before, and I may add to it, nor yet after conversion, can hinder God's free grace from using men in the highest employments in the Church, but magnify it the more. David, after his adultery, was a penman of Scripture, Psalm li.; Solomon, after his fall, of Ecclesiastes; Peter, after his conversion, denied Christ with oaths and curses, is a chief apostle, and converts three thousand fifty days after, with the same mouth he had denied Christ; and Paul, after he had been a blasphemer, was made an apostle.

Of Jesus Christ.—This addition shews the author of this office, whose designation it was, Jesus Christ. 1. Christ, as the author and founder of his apostleship, so he was of all the other apostles, John xx. 21, 'As the Father sends me, I send you.' Apostle signifies *one sent*; Christ was God the Father's Apostle, Heb. iii. 1, and appointed by him, ver. 2; and, Eph. iv. 11, it is attributed to Christ that he, ascending, 'gave some to be apostles,' &c. It is the prerogative of a king, yea, every master of a family, to appoint what offices and officers shall be of his household. And, 2. It imports also the dignity of this office above human offices. The style of it runs, 'An apostle of Christ.' As the offices that belong to the king's person in court have a peculiar denomination, expressing a relation to his person, which other offices in the kingdom have not; as, the king's chamberlain, the king's steward, &c.; and as others in the kingdom are all subjects of the king as their prince, but courtiers in offices are peculiarly servants of the king as a master; so they write themselves servants to the king: and Paul, 'Christ Jesus my Lord,' Phil. iii. 8, as they in court, 'The king my master:' so though all Christians are subjects and members of Christ, yet apostles and ministers are in a more peculiar respect servants of Christ, as James and Jude style themselves in the first verse of their epistles.

But although he styles himself Christ's apostle, yet he leaves not out his commission also from, and the influence of God also into it, 'By the will of God,' that is both of the Godhead, and of all three Persons. For to apostleship and all offices in the Church they all concur, as well as to our salvation,—

To apostleship; so Gal. i. 1, 'Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, and God the Father;' there you see are two Persons. And then the Spirit, the third Person, said, 'Separate me Paul and Barnabas,' Acts xiii. 2. And so they concur to *all other officers* more inferior, 1 Cor. xii. 4–6, 'There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.' (The gifts which officers are endued with, are ascribed to the Holy Ghost.) There are differences of administrations, and the same Lord—viz., Christ, who, as a Lord, appoints the several offices wherein gifts are exercised; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God—viz., the Father, who worketh all in all. The blessing upon gifts, and the success of all administrations or offices ministerial, are from the Father. Thus 'By the will of God;' all three Persons are at the ordination of every true minister, and lay their hands of blessing on each of them, and set their hands to every minister's commission.

More particularly, *By the will of God.*—This *first* imports that special decree of God in separating him to this office, which, Gal. i. 15 and Rom. i. 1, he with an emphasis expresseth, set apart to it; ἀφορίζω is to select choice things: therefore choice sentences are called aphorisms. And in this respect our apostle is called a chosen vessel to bear his name; that is, a choice vessel for the purpose, Acts ix. 15. And thus the election of the Twelve at first is as expressly ascribed to Christ's will as here this is. So

Mark iii. 13, 'He called to him whom he would, and he ordained twelve;' and this out of mere grace, and the good pleasure of his will, so in the same Gal. i. 15, 'It pleased God,' &c. And that is one reason why he mentions it here, even to mind his own heart of the original of this his great dignity wholly to have been the will and grace of God, and nothing in himself, calling it therefore elsewhere, 'grace and apostleship,' Rom. i. 5, that is, the grace of apostleship; yea, he reckoning this as great a mercy well-nigh as his salvation, for so that great and solemn thanksgiving of his, 1 Tim. i., from the 11th to the 18th, where he relates his conversion, doth imply, it being chiefly for putting him into the ministry, ver. 12.

Of God.—This imports, *secondly*, the immediateness of his call, in distinction from other officers. And likewise for their direction whither to go and what to do, they were subordinate to none other. And this latter was peculiar to this office. Evangelists, though extraordinary ministers, yet were sent out by the apostles, as Titus, 2 Cor. xii. 18, and so Timothy; but apostles, they immediately by God; thus Gal. i. 1, (which place interprets this,) Paul, an apostle,' says he, 'not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.'

To interpret the words: *First*, 'Paul, an apostle, not of men,' that is, my office is not a human office, which men have instituted and invented; it is, saith he, of divine institution. And this is common to all ministerial offices in churches. And this he spake in distinction from offices in commonwealths. In a commonwealth, the offices thereof are (as the Apostle calls them by way of distinction from those in the Church) ἀνθρωπινὰ κτίσεις, human creations, (we translate it, 'human ordinances,') whereas all Church-offices are divine, and not of men, in Paul's sense. But yet because this first requisite, 'not of men,' was common to all offices of the Church as well as apostleship, therefore, *secondly*, he adds, by way of further distinction from them also, 'neither by man.' The ordinary offices in the Church, although they are not of men,—i. e., there ought to be an institution for every one of the offices themselves,—yet the man, the person, is usually put into the office by men, though guided in it by the Holy Ghost, Acts xx. 'By men,'—that is, the particular designation of the person, that is by men, though according to such rules in the Word as are to guide their choice, (and that is the difference of those two phrases, 'of men,' and 'by men,') But, saith he, this my office of apostleship is neither of men, nor by men, but as the text here saith, 'by the will of God;' that is, by God's immediate designation of my person to it; so it also there to the Galatians follows, but 'by Jesus Christ and God the Father.'

And, which was yet further a more peculiar prerogative above other apostles, this our Apostle was called into it by Jesus Christ, as risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven. Other apostles were called by Christ living here in the flesh, but I was born out of time, saith he, and so had like to have missed of being capable of this office, whereof one requisite was to have seen Christ; but to make up that requisite also, Christ deferred the calling of me unto it until himself came again. Christ rose again and converted me himself from heaven, when 'last of all he was seen of me,' 1 Cor. xv. 8. And this difference of himself from other apostles he seems to insinuate, ver. 12 of that Gal. i., that he 'neither received the gospel from men,' as evangelists did, 2 Tim. i. 13, 14, and as ordinary teachers do, 2 Tim. ii. 2, nor was taught it, namely by Christ in the flesh in the way of outward teaching, as the other apostles were by Christ himself; but merely and wholly by inward and immediate revelation; and this made him, as was observed,

intends it ; for the saints at Ephesus were now a settled church when this was written. At first indeed at Ephesus there were but a few, about twelve, called disciples, that knew nothing of the way of the worship of the New Testament, nor so much as of the Holy Ghost, Acts xix. 1, whom our Apostle lays hands upon, and gathers into a body, a church, for so, chap. xx. 17, they are called. And after that it was that this epistle was written to them, who therefore, chap. ii. 22 of this epistle, are said to be ‘built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit,’ a little temple, (besides that general universal temple, whereof he says, ver. 20, 21, that they were a part in another consideration,) as the word ‘also’ in the 22d verse implies. In his writing to the churches he takes notice of no other but saints, for of such living stones only should this temple consist ; so the Corinthians, 1 Cor. i. 2, ‘To the church that is at Corinth, saints.’ Yea, 1 Cor. xiv. 33, ‘all the churches of the saints.’ That was the primitive language, for that was the constitution of churches then. He says not, To all the saints in churches, but churches of the saints, as we say colleges of scholars, house of peers. The primitive constitution acknowledged no other members, and he speaks not of the universal catholic Church, but particular churches. They generally, when they had a sufficient number of converts in a place, put them into a church-state, for he says *churches*, and yet speaks catholically or universally of them : ‘all the churches,’ for of such did all then by the apostles’ direction consist ; from which rule these times, how have they swerved, not only in practice, but in judgment ! But let us take heed lest, whilst we make the Church more catholic, and take in all that will profess Christ, we leave out *holy*, which is a necessary attribute to church. Bellarmine hath even in this point a speech which made me wonder to hear from him.* ‘The Church,’ says he, ‘in her intention gathers only true believers, and if she knew who were wicked and unbelievers, either she would never admit them, or being by chance admitted, would exclude them.’

Now surely there are many rules in the Word whereby it is meet for us to judge who are saints, (as Phil. i. 7,) and also, whereby the most of the Christian world may be discerned to ‘lie in wickedness ;’ though professing to know God, their works are so abominable, and themselves ‘to every good work reprobate ;’ by which rules those who are betruſted to receive men to ordinances in churches are to be guided, and so to separate between the precious and unclean, as the priests of old were enabled and commanded by ceremonial differences, which God then made to typify the like discrimination of persons, either by visible manifest sins are found that men are in, or visible possession of graces, so far as it is meet to judge of other men by. ‘Some men’s sins are open afore-hand and afar off,’ as to Timothy ; so that the common light of true Christianity is easily able to difference them from saints : ‘We know we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in wickedness,’ as John speaks. And we need not travel to Rome or Turkey to find the world. And though *de facto* other than such be received into churches, yet the churches are true churches considered as to their administration ; for to be a church and fixed seat of worship is an ordinance of Divine institution.

And faithful.—The word *πιστος*, translated ‘faithful,’ is both of a passive and active signification ; it signifies one that is really and truly faithful in what he professeth or undertaketh. So, according to the language of the Old Testament, godly men are called, as Prov. xx. 6, ‘Many

* ‘Ecclesia ex intentione fideles tantum colligit, et si noscet impios et incredulos, eos aut nunquam admitteret, aut casu admissos excluderet.’—*Bell. l. 9, de Ecc. Mil. c. 12.*

will boast of their own goodness, but who can find a faithful man?' Thus likewise in the New, 'The things that thou hast heard of me, commit to faithful men,' 2 Tim. ii. 2, with many other the like places.

Secondly, It signifies 'believing,' or one that is a believer, John xx. 27, 'Be not faithless, but believing;' in the original it is the same word that is here; yea, in the phrase of the New Testament it is an ordinary title given believers to express their very believing and having faith in them; see Acts x. 45, 1 Tim. iv. 12. There is nothing against it to take in both these here, so as the Apostle's meaning should be, 'To them at Ephesus that are believers,' and also constant and faithful, or true believers, which the Apostle elsewhere calls 'faith unfeigned,' and Heb. x. 22, 'a true heart.'

Obs.—What God has joined, as here Paul saith, let no man put asunder, —saints and believers,—neither really in our own hearts and lives, nor in our judgments either of ourselves or others. Do not think this enough, that they are true believers; that is, that they make a profession of the doctrine of faith; but see that further they hold forth a work of faith wrought by that doctrine; and not only so, but do approve themselves faithful (as here) in that profession, (as Lydia said, 'If ye have judged me faithful,') and that they add evidences of saintship, they must be saints too; saith he, were 'saints and faithful.' It is not a profession of faith joined with morality, and no grand scandal, but a profession of such a strictness as will rise to holiness, that you are to judge men saints by. Neither ought any other than such to be members of churches, which are the body of Christ; this word *saint*, and *faithful* added to that, dashes a formal, an outward, and a mere orthodox profession. These very words we love not; that men are believers or Christians, they can bear it; but to add and require being saints and true believers, or faithful in believing; these kind of denominations men think sound too high to be applied to the ordinary common sort of professors, whom yet they own. But much more, if you would judge of yourselves, do not look upon legal holiness in yourselves as a sign or mark of a good estate; be sure you have a work of faith too (from whence that holiness flows) distinctly working toward the Lord Jesus Christ, and your hearts drawn out to him, as much and more than ever, after holiness, 2 Thess. ii. 13: 'God,' saith he, 'hath chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth;' there is faith and sanctification joined both together, and both made necessary to salvation; it is in effect one with what he says here, 'saints and faithful in Christ.'

In Jesus Christ.—Because these words follow next after *faithful*, or believers, therefore some would have Christ, as he is the object of faith, or of our believing, to be here intended, and so 'in Christ' to be all one with what elsewhere is expressed by believing 'in Christ Jesus.' But the scope of these words here rather is, to note out in whom the persons of these saints or believers are said to be, as members in the head; or, which is yet nearer, that they, considered as saints and believers, that even as such, they are what they are in him; and the reason why these words, 'in Christ Jesus,' import rather being in Christ as believers, than their believing in Christ as the object of their faith, is, from the like inscription from that parallel epistle to the Colossians, (which is so like, that in many things it will conduce to explain this epistle, as one evangelist doth another.) Now there, and there only, chap. i. 2, we find these two, 'saints and faithful,' joined together even as here, and 'in Christ' comes in too, but so as 'brethren' comes between; the words there being placed thus, 'To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ.' Now, 'in Christ' coming in after 'brethren,' cannot

import the object of faith, but the subject rather, in whom those as brethren were, and as saints and faithful; so elsewhere, 1 Thess. i. 1, 'To the church in God, and in the Lord Jesus Christ'—that is, both their persons, and also as they were a church, they are in God and in Christ, so as these words here, 'in Christ Jesus,' refer both to their being saints, and to their being believers in him. And so, as I take it, it is not so much meant that the persons of these Ephesians were in Christ, (though that be true, and is after affirmed in every verse, yet that is not all,) but that, considered as saints and believers, and what they were as saints, they were it all *in Christ*.

Obs.—My brethren, all our grace must be grace in Christ; 'saints and faithful in Christ.' The apostle, speaking in a way of difference and distinction from the legal godliness of the formal Jews, (which many Christians take up and rest in,) useth this phrase, 'They that will live godly in Christ Jesus,' saith he, 2 Tim. iii. 12, implying that there is a holiness in Christ Jesus differing from all other, an holiness whereof the spring and rise is in him. All your holiness, it must be wrought in Christ; we are 'created in Christ Jesus to good works,' so the apostle saith, Eph. ii. 10. All your holiness must be acted in Christ, and by motives from Christ, and by strength fetched from Christ: so in that, 2 Tim. ii. 1, 'Be strong in the grace.' What? the grace that is dwelling in yourselves? No, 'which is in Christ Jesus;' so it follows; here lies your strength. And then, all your holiness and faith and every good thing in you must be accepted in Christ too, and you must go out of yourselves to God, to have your persons and graces accepted in Him, as the apostle, 1 Pet. ii. 5, calleth them 'spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.'

Obs.—It is the nature of true faith to make men faithful unto God, as well as believing and depending upon God; the word 'faithful,' as you have heard, being ordinarily used for both in the New Testament, as here in this place. Look what faith eyes in God and expects to receive from him, that in a suitableness it frames the heart in a way of conformity unto, such is the ingenuity, the honesty (as the Scripture calls it) of genuine faith. As, if it looketh for the righteousness of Christ for justification, it bows the heart to imitate that righteousness for sanctification, and to hate all that sin it seeks the pardon of, as truly as it seeks for the pardon of it; it knows not upon what other terms to desire it; so in the instance in hand, faith eyeing God's faithfulness, and depending thereon for salvation, causeth the heart (in ingenuity) to be as faithful to God. Again, in all that he requires and commands, it could not look up steadily to God for his performance without framing the heart to this resolution.

Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.—VER. 2.

III. Here is the third general head of these two first verses, the **SALUTATION** he gives them, or the blessing, as some would have it.

The main general scope.—I take these words to be both a salutation Christian, and also a blessing apostolical and ministerial, and both translated or continued (though with a heightening addition) from the like salutation of the Jews, and the blessings of the priests in the Old Testament.

1. *A salutation.*—So himself expressly terms it, *ἀσπασμος*, 'The salutation of me Paul, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,' 2 Thess. iii. 17, 18, and 1 Cor. xvi. 21, 23. Now, salutations both among Jews and Gentiles were well-wishes, by desiring some good thing, either when they met or parted, or in letters or epistles, at the beginning or end, or both; in which they still

wished the best things they knew of. The heathens wished health, joy, &c. ; the Jews and Eastern nations, whose language the apostles more follow, all prosperity, and that under the name of peace, thereby understanding a perfection or integrity of good. This language the Gentiles used. Thus that Egyptian to Joseph's brethren, Gen. xliii. 23, 'Peace be to you;' so likewise the Assyrians, for Nebuchadnezzar, writing to all nations, Dan. iv. 1, begins thus, 'Peace be multiplied unto you;' also the Persians, for Artaxerxes, the king of Persia, in his letter, thus salutes them he writes to, Ezra iv. 17, 'Peace, and at such a time.' Both which are instances also, for their kind, of salutes in letters and epistles to have been then in use, as we see here. So the Jews used to inquire of one another's welfare when they met, under the name of peace, and also wished all outward prosperity under that name, at their meetings, and also partings, which they thus expressed, 'Go in peace,' 2 Sam. xv. 9. Not to name many places for either, I will instance in one that hath both together at once in it: 1 Sam. xxv. 5, when David intended to send to Nabal a kind message, he bids the man that went, 'Greet him in my name,' says he; the original hath it, 'Ask him in my name of peace;' like unto what we use to ask when we meet, How do you do? are you well? And then, ver. 6, further bids him wish peace to him, (as the manner then was,) 'Thus shalt thou say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be to thee and thy house, and peace be to all that thou hast;' where by peace is meant all good and prosperity, and in that notion is peace often elsewhere taken. And this same kind of salutation was in use in Christ's time, and prescribed by him to be used by his disciples, Luke x. 5, 'Salute them and say, Peace be unto this house.' (See also Judges vi. 23; 2 Sam. xviii. 28; 2 Kings ix. 17, 18; Jer. xxix. 7; Isa. liv. 12-14; Isa. lxvi. 12.)

Now, this duty of common friendship, which nature taught the Gentiles, and brotherhood, which religion taught the Jews, Christianity and the gospel teacheth us now. And this is one reason why these salutations are so frequently and solemnly used by the apostles in their epistles; and herein Christ himself instructed them when he sent them out, Luke x. 5, and by his own example also, as I shall shew by and by, using the same phrases and form of speech, yet so as, under the same expression of words, they intended to wish higher and greater good things than the Jews or Gentiles ordinarily either meant or understood, even as the gospel itself hath a clearer revelation of better good things, as our Apostle to the Hebrews speaks. Thus, whereas the Grecians usually saluted with *χαίρε*, which the Latins express by *salutem*, 'health and salvation;' which is all one with our English of old, 'sending greeting,' or 'all hail,' or 'joy;' that very same word the angel himself useth to Mary in his saluting her, Luke i. 29, when he brought her the first news of the Messiah, 'Hail, Mary,' &c. And the very same do the apostles in the Church of Jerusalem in their letters, Acts xv. 23, which we translate, 'greeting;' the same also James i. 1; yea, Christ himself to the disciples after his resurrection, Matt. xxviii. 9, 'All hail,' says he. In all which phrases the Syriac, according to the phrase of the East, still renders those words, 'Peace be to you.' Now, by this heathenish salutation, thus turned Christian, they all did mean and intend a spiritual and heavenly joy, even joy in the Holy Ghost and eternal salvation; whereas the Gentiles meant only what was carnal and outward. So in like manner, whereas the Eastern nations, both Jew and Gentile, wished peace, the gospel retains the same; thus Christ himself, at another time after his resurrection, says to his disciples, John xx. 26, 'Peace be to you,' yet thereby meaning not a Jewish outward peace, but that heavenly peace which he doth, with an emphasis,

import the object of faith, but the subject rather, in whom those as brethren were, and as saints and faithful; so elsewhere, 1 Thess. i. 1, 'To the church in God, and in the Lord Jesus Christ'—that is, both their persons, and also as they were a church, they are in God and in Christ, so as these words here, 'in Christ Jesus,' refer both to their being saints, and to their being believers in him. And so, as I take it, it is not so much meant that the persons of these Ephesians were in Christ, (though that be true, and is after affirmed in every verse, yet that is not all,) but that, considered as saints and believers, and what they were as saints, they were it all *in Christ*.

Obs.—My brethren, all our grace must be grace in Christ; 'saints and faithful in Christ.' The apostle, speaking in a way of difference and distinction from the legal godliness of the formal Jews, (which many Christians take up and rest in,) useth this phrase, 'They that will live godly in Christ Jesus,' saith he, 2 Tim. iii. 12, implying that there is a holiness in Christ Jesus differing from all other, an holiness whereof the spring and rise is in him. All your holiness, it must be wrought in Christ; we are 'created in Christ Jesus to good works,' so the apostle saith, Eph. ii. 10. All your holiness must be acted in Christ, and by motives from Christ, and by strength fetched from Christ: so in that, 2 Tim. ii. 1, 'Be strong in the grace.' What? the grace that is dwelling in yourselves? No, 'which is in Christ Jesus;' so it follows; here lies your strength. And then, all your holiness and faith and every good thing in you must be accepted in Christ too, and you must go out of yourselves to God, to have your persons and graces accepted in Him, as the apostle, 1 Pet. ii. 5, calleth them 'spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.'

Obs.—It is the nature of true faith to make men faithful unto God, as well as believing and depending upon God; the word 'faithful,' as you have heard, being ordinarily used for both in the New Testament, as here in this place. Look what faith eyes in God and expects to receive from him, that in a suitableness it frames the heart in a way of conformity unto, such is the ingenuity, the honesty (as the Scripture calls it) of genuine faith. As, if it looketh for the righteousness of Christ for justification, it bows the heart to imitate that righteousness for sanctification, and to hate all that sin it seeks the pardon of, as truly as it seeks for the pardon of it; it knows not upon what other terms to desire it; so in the instance in hand, faith eyeing God's faithfulness, and depending thereon for salvation, causeth the heart (in ingenuity) to be as faithful to God. Again, in all that he requires and commands, it could not look up steadily to God for his performance without framing the heart to this resolution.

Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.—VER. 2.

III. Here is the third general head of these two first verses, the **SALUTATION** he gives them, or the blessing, as some would have it.

The main general scope.—I take these words to be both a salutation Christian, and also a blessing apostolical and ministerial, and both translated or continued (though with a heightening addition) from the like salutation of the Jews, and the blessings of the priests in the Old Testament.

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and by way of distinction, call His peace, 'My peace I leave with you,' John xiv. 27, which place, because it opens and confirms this very notion I have been upon, I will a little open and explain.

Christ was then taking his farewell of them, having in that sermon first plainly told them he was to go away ; and among other things whereby he expresseth his love and friendship to them, he, at his parting, condescends to frame his speech conformable to this very custom of men in the world, which we have been speaking of, in their farewells, thereby to take their hearts the more in a way of kindness, which was wont among men. His words are these, 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.' The meaning of which words is, that whereas it is the custom of the world when they part with friends and take their leaves, to wish them peace, which they call giving peace, (as we in English call it giving joy, and sending greeting,) or sending away in peace, as Abimelech said to Isaac, Gen. xxvi. 29, I do the like, (says he,) 'Peace I leave' (that word imports farewell) 'with you.' And accordingly, as the manner of men in hearty farewells is to double their wish, and say it twice, as 'Farewell, farewell,' and the like, so there he doubles this, 'Peace I leave, and peace I give.' Yet withal, industriously instructing them both that it was another manner of peace than the men of the world in their farewells used to wish : 'My peace I give unto you ;' *my peace*—that is, a peace with God, Rom. v. 1, purchased with my blood, a 'peace which passeth understanding,' Phil. iv. 7 ; and further withal intimating the difference between this last solemn farewell of his, and those which the world useth to make, 'Not as the world giveth, give I unto you'—that is, they use in their farewells to wish or give peace, but out of compliment ; or if they be hearty, they cannot give what they wish ; such wishes are but words in them, and have no force to convey a blessing ; only they wish their goodwill, and at best it is but an outward peace they mean : but I am most hearty real in mine, and I am able to give what I wish, for it is *my peace*, a peace of my own purchasing, and in my power to make good, and I will give it indeed.

Now, all this tends but to open the salutation of the apostle here. Herein he followed Christ ; for although he wisheth these Ephesians (as the Jews and Gentiles used to do) peace, yet I may say of it as Christ did of his, not as the world, or in their sense, doth he wish it ; for it is both a further peace than they intended in their salutes, even the same that Christ wished, *his peace*. Therefore here, 'from Jesus Christ,' is added by our apostle ; and he gives it them also not as the world by a bare well-wishing, but with an apostolical and ministerial blessing. And whereas the salutation of the Jews was but, 'Peace be to you,' the Apostle, as became the gospel and preachers of it, adds grace thereto, 'Grace be to you ;' yea, grace as the first, and principal, and most comprehensive of all good else. And withal, as became the gospel also, he makes a distinct mention of those persons of the Trinity that were the fountain of that grace and peace, 'God the Father and the Son.'

Obs.—Thus religion doth not abolish, but spiritualise and improve civility and humanity, as it also turns all outward good things—which the Jews ordinarily intended, when they wished peace, and which were but 'the shadow of good things to come,' Heb. x. 1—into spiritual and heavenly ; and the gospel further adds grace thereunto, and discovers it as the fountain of all, itself being called the 'grace of God,' Tit. ii. 11, (as the patent for a pardon is called a man's pardon,) as containing and revealing it : 'The law came by

Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ,' John i. 17 ;—Grace and peace be to you, &c.—This for the *first*, as they are a salutation.

2. These words, say some, are not a bare salutation, but, in an apostle's mouth and pen, an apostolical blessing; and so, an institution, an ordinance to convey a blessing; such as that of the priests, Num. vi. 23. The apostles were the patriarchs of the Church of the New Testament, as the sons of Jacob of that of the Old, the 'foundation,' as they are called, Eph. ii. 20. And as there were thirteen tribes, reckoning the two sons of Joseph, so thirteen apostles, taking in this of ours; and these therefore, as patriarchs and spiritual fathers, 1 Cor. iv. 15, blessed their children, as here, with grace and peace. So our Apostle blessed Timothy under this very relation, 1 Tim. i. 2, 'To Timothy, my own son in the faith, Grace and peace,' &c.; the like he doth to Titus, and so to these Ephesians and others he wrote to.

And that which more confirms the taking it for a blessing, is the conformity which the matter of the blessing hath with that blessing the priests—the ministers of the Old Testament, as we are of the New—were to pronounce upon the people as an ordinance of God, Num. vi. 23–25. For if you more exactly view and compare the matter of their blessing there, and of this here, it comes all to one, and is the same for substance; which I the rather observe, that you may see how the words of blessing under the gospel were derived from the Jews, as the words of salutation were, as was afore observed. The blessing then ran thus, ver. 25, 'Jehovah make his face shine on thee, and be gracious to thee,' (his *face* imports his grace or favour, as Ps. lxxx. 19, 'Cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved;' and so the words following interpret it, 'and be gracious to thee,') here you see is grace; then ver. 26, 'The Lord lift up his countenance, and give thee peace,' namely, as the fruit of that his favour, and as the conclusion of all blessings, as it is often made, (so Ps. xxix. 11, 'The Lord will bless his people with peace;' and likewise Ps. cxxv. 5, 'Peace be upon Israel,') which he pronounceth at last as the sum and substance of all blessings, there is peace also. But yet, whether it be a New Testament institution for ministers to pronounce such words as a blessing, or a farewell salutation only, is a question made by some; because in the New Testament there is no mention of any such ordinance under the term of blessing. There is of praying for them, James v. 14. There is of blessing the elements in the sacraments; so 1 Cor. x. 16; but nowhere of blessing (say they) the churches publicly; and further, say they, the priests in that were types of Christ, as in sacrificing also they were, who was 'sent to bless his people,' Acts iii. 26.

But the mistake I conceive lies in this, that that eminent way of blessing us, which is peculiar unto Jesus Christ, was typified out on purpose by a far greater priesthood than that of Aaron's sons, even by Melchisedec's priesthood, who therefore, as a more transcendent type of Christ, blessed Abraham, the father of the faithful, and so all faithful in him, Heb. vii. 6, 7, and in that blessing personated a greater person than Abraham, ver. 7, even Christ. But otherwise, to bless is a moral institution, and not merely typical, for one man blesseth another, and that as brethren; Ps. cxxix. 8, they that go by the reapers of corn, say, 'The blessing of the Lord be upon thee: we bless you in the name of the Lord.' And as thus one man may bless another, so those who have any special relations unto others may, according to the compass or extent of that relation, bless those they have relation to, and that with a special blessing suiting that their relation. Thus parents bless their children with a special blessing; thus kings, subjects; so David, 2 Sam. vi. 18, and Solomon, 1 Kings xviii. 55. And so in like manner the priests the people,

in respect of their ministerial relation unto them ; and therefore there is not the like reason for their blessing the people, and of their sacrificing for the people, which kings were not to do. Sacrifice was wholly a ceremonial action, but blessing a moral institution. And besides, the priests, as they are types of Christ, so of the ministers of the gospel also ; as in the prophecy of the times of the gospel, Isa. lxi. 21 ; and therefore in what was moral in their office, (as in teaching, &c., so in blessing,) what they did may safely be taken as types of those ministerial actions which we are to perform. And that which confirms me in it is, that the Apostle's blessing, as we have seen, for the matter of it, is the same that that of the priests' was, Num. vi., and so the action of blessing of the same morality with the matter itself.

And I see no reason but that if they bless the elements in our sacraments, as the priests did their ordinances then, but that they should bless the people also, and that as ministers, they being in Christ's stead in and unto both, as the Apostle speaks, 2 Cor. v. 20. And surely (as was said) every relation of receiving or doing good to others, is made by God a ground of conveying a blessing by the well-wishes of those in that relation. Thus, if a poor man receives relief from a rich man, so he is endowed with power, or rather privilege from God, to bless him that is the instrument of good to him, and by his hearty blessing him effectually to return that good which he received, and is an instrument of God so far to convey that blessing, of that promise made to those that consider the poor, Job xxix. 13. 'The blessing of him,' says Job, having relieved them, ver. 12, 'that was ready to perish, came upon me ;' so in like manner those whom God hath made ordinances of some special good to others, God also accompanies their prayer and well-wishing with power to convey that good in a more special manner than others, that yet do in a common relation of brethren wish it. Thus, parents being instruments of conveying life in this world, and the good blessings of life to their children, and if godly, have the promises of the covenant of grace to them, thence they are especially honoured, that by blessing their children they should bring down those good things which they are in other respects really appointed the instruments of ; and when through their children's obedience they are comforted, the promise of long life, &c., being made to such children, and they thereupon blessing them, as the patriarchs did, God regards that blessing of theirs so far as to fulfil those promises thereupon.

So it is in kings also blessing their people, being set up for their good, Rom. xiii. 4, &c. And answerably, ministers being set up as stewards of the good blessings of the gospel, 'to bring the glad tidings of peace,' &c., hence their well-wishings of grace and peace, and of all those blessings of the gospel, which in their preaching they bring, they are a special means sanctified by God to bring down those blessings upon those that obey their ministry : and therefore, as when they come to a people, they are said to come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel, as Rom. xv. 29 ; so when they depart, their farewells and salutes and well-wishes, made up of those desires of the blessings of the gospel which they preach, have a special efficacy in their mouths above any other, as their ministry also hath, and their prayers are said to have, James v. 14, and therefore God bade them, as to preach peace, so to wish peace, Luke x. 5, even that peace which they preached. But however in that, as was shewn, 'grace and peace,' &c., are as well a salutation Christian, there is in that respect warrant enough for ministers to dismiss their congregations with them, or the like to them. And it is certain that so far as any such kind of well-wishes are warranted

of God to be used, as it is acknowledged of all hands they are, either by way of farewell or institution, that there will an answerable blessing from God accompany them; for else holy things, and so God's name, should be used in vain.

Thus much as concerning the more general scope of this and the like apostolical salutations and blessings used sometimes at the beginning, sometimes at the end of their epistles, sometimes in both. What difference there is in this from those in other epistles (for they used a variety of words) I will not now take notice of, my work being to interpret this only. The parts thereof are these—

1. The good things wished, 'Grace and peace.'

2. The authors of both these, 'God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.'

3. The persons to whom, 'to you,' whom he had afore styled 'saints and faithful.'

The particular exposition of the words:—

Grace and Peace.—For the understanding of these two, I shall shew the difference between them.

Grace is the free favour of God, and that importing here, not the attribute as it is in God, for that is incommunicable unto us, and so cannot be wished us, as those gracious acts of his favour and love towards us immanent in God, but set upon poor creatures, whom he hath chosen in Christ, even 'thoughts of grace and peace towards us,' as Jer. xxix. 11, which are the cause, the fountain of all the good things bestowed; which good things are therefore distinguished from this grace as it is in God towards us; thus, Rom. v. 15, 'The grace of God, and the gift by grace,' are made two distinct things; grace is there mentioned as the cause of bestowing the good things bestowed, or rather called gifts by grace. And thus grace and the free favour of God are held forth, in this very chapter, as the spring of all good to us, for he resolveth all the blessings bestowed upon us into the 'riches of his grace' as the efficient cause, ver. 7, and 'to the glory of his grace' as the final, ver. 6, and so likewise chap. ii. 7, 8; yea, and in the text here he says, 'Grace be to you,' singly, and apart, that only first; and not 'Grace and peace to you,' as usually elsewhere; and when he after adds 'and peace,' he seems to speak of it but as a thing cast in by grace, as all other things are said to be, to the kingdom of God sought first.

Peace, then, is the fruit and effect thence flowing, and one of the effects or gifts of grace, and that synecdochically mentioned for all the rest. Peace with God is the first benefit bestowed, that follows upon faith; so Rom. v. 1. The scope of that chapter being to enumerate the fruits of faith, he mentions that first, 'Being justified by faith we have peace with God;' and as it is put to express the first, so the last blessing bestowed also. 'The end of that man is peace,' saith the Psalmist, Ps. xxxvii. 37. So the joys of heaven are termed, Isa. lvii. 2. The righteous, when he dies, is said to enter into peace, and it is called 'peace in heaven,' Luke xix. 38, and accordingly peace is reckoned as the reward given the righteous at the latter day, Rom. ii. 10. Glory, saith he, and peace be to him, &c., and therefore it must needs comprehend all other blessings coming between, and so even all from the first to the last. It is a perfection of good, as in the acceptation of the Jews, and the perfection of all spiritual good in the sense of the apostles, Rom. xiv. 17. The whole kingdom of God consists in righteousness, and peace, and joy. Thus not justification only is called peace, but sanctification also, 1 Thess. v. 23, 'The very God of peace sanctify you.' Yea, and the growth and perfection of that is said there to be from God, as he is a God of peace; so it follows, 'Sanctify

you wholly;’ the word *ἀποτελείς* is totally and finally, it signifies both. Thus likewise, joy in the Holy Ghost and communion with God is called peace, ‘peace which passeth all understanding,’ Phil. iv. 7.

To conclude then, as grace and peace are the sum of the gospel, so of this evangelical blessing here; and so express even the fulness of the blessing of the gospel, as the expression is, Rom. xv. 29. And more particularly and restrainedly, our reconciliation with God consists of two parts, *peace* and *good-will*; as with men also all reconciliation doth. Thus, if you would make an enemy to be friends with one, you must first make peace for him; and when you have done, because a man may still say, I will be at peace with him, but I can never love him again as I have done; therefore to have made him a friend, a favourite again, and so reconciled perfectly, you must obtain grace and favour and good-will for him too. Thus it is between God and us, Col. i. 20, ‘Christ having made peace through the blood of his cross, he reconciled all things to himself;’ when he had once made peace, then he reconciled them, made them friends, which is clear out of free grace. You have both in the song of the angels (for they began to preach the gospel.) Say they, Luke ii. 14, ‘Peace on earth, good-will towards men.’ Here is grace and peace, *i.e.*, good-will; that is, he will not only pardon you, and be at peace with you, but he will love you, and be a friend very gracious to you. These two are all one with what here are termed grace and peace.

Now for the *second* thing—the author of both these—

From God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.—You shall observe how in that blessing of the Old Testament, Num. vi., Jehovah is mentioned three times, ‘Jehovah bless thee, &c., Jehovah be gracious, and Jehovah give thee peace,’ &c., whereby the three Persons and their blessing of us are intended, though not explicitly mentioned. But here, as became the gospel, they are distinctly named, ‘From God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why God is called the Father, and Christ the Lord, I shall shew in opening the next verse. Only this here, that God bestows not this grace as he is a creator, or author of nature in common to men as his creatures, but as he is become a Father in Christ, and so bestows it in a peculiar love, out of which he will give all good things, ‘How much more shall not your Father which is in heaven give good things? Matt. vii. 11.

And although peace, as well as grace, are both of them from God the Father, and both also from the Son, (for God is the ‘God of peace,’ Heb. xiii. 20, as well as ‘God of grace,’ 1 Pet. v. 10.) And likewise Jesus Christ he is the Prince of peace, (and so peace is his gift,) so grace also, and therefore the grace of our Lord Jesus is wished in the end of all Epistles; of whom we are graciously accepted (say3 ver. 6 of this chapter.) Yet,

Grace from the Father.—It is more usually and especially attributed to him, for it is his free grace that chose us (ver. 4–6 of this chapter compared) that also justifies us, Rom. iii. 24, &c. And as he is the fountain of the Deity, so is his free grace the spring of peace, and also of all those works of the other two Persons for us.

Peace from Jesus Christ.—And this is from him in a more peculiar manner, for ‘the chastisement of our peace was upon him,’ Isa. liii. 5, and he is said to have ‘made peace by the blood of his cross,’ Col. i. 20; and thereupon God out of his free grace owns us, accepts, justifies us.

And although the particle ‘from’ Jesus Christ be not in the original, yet other Epistles warrant the putting it in. So 2 John 3 hath it expressly ‘from the Father, and from Jesus Christ;’ and the grammatical construction in

those parallel salutations, Gal. i. 3 and 2 Tim. i. 2, do all evince it against the cavils of some heretics.

Now *lastly*, both grace and peace may be said to be from the Father and the Lord Christ in a double sense. *First*, efficiently; that is, in respect of real influence into these things themselves, as the authors and causes of both. Thus God the Father is the author of grace in his decreeing first to set his love upon us; and Christ our Lord in purchasing all that good which was out of this love decreed. And *secondly*, objectively; that is, this grace and love in God the Father, and this peace and satisfaction that is in Jesus Christ, as they come to be more and more apprehended by us, they thereby come to be more and more communicated unto us, and multiplied in us and upon us. This that benediction, 2 Pet. i. 2, evidently holds forth, 'Grace and peace (the same things there wished) be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ.' Mark how he says, 'through the knowledge,' &c. The meaning is, that as those two Persons are the cause of these things towards us, so through our apprehension of them, and of what they have done therein for us, and wrought in us, these are increased towards us, and multiplied upon us.

But then you will say, Where is the Holy Spirit? Here is only God the Father and Jesus Christ mentioned as those that he wished grace and peace unto from the Holy Ghost; what should be the reason of that?

For answer, *first*, it is not that the Holy Ghost is not the author of both these as well as the Father and the Son, nor that he is not intended here in this blessing. No, the works of the Trinity are undivided. If therefore from the Father and Son, then also from the Holy Ghost; and to this purpose it is observable, that by that forementioned form of blessing prescribed the priests in the Old Law, the word Jehovah, as we observed, is repeated thrice, to note it was pronounced in the name of all three Persons. And besides, once in the New Testament itself, you have grace and peace in one benediction wished from all three Persons, and therein the Spirit mentioned as well as God the Father and God the Son, and it is in the last of all apostolical benedictions in the last book of all, the Revelations, chap. i. *First*, from God the Father; and so in ver. 4, 'Grace and peace from him, that is, and was, and is to come.' Then *secondly*, from the Holy Ghost: so it follows, 'and from the seven Spirits,' the Holy Ghost being set forth by the fulness of those gifts (even a number of perfection) which he works in us, for though there be diversity of gifts, yet one and the same Spirit, 1 Cor. xii. 4. And then *thirdly*, from Christ, 'and from Jesus Christ,' &c., ver. 5.

Yet, *secondly*, so as ordinarily in all other Epistles, in their blessings prefixed, the mention of the Spirit is omitted; and the reason is, because it is both his office and work to reveal and communicate this grace from the Father, and peace from the Son. Hence in deed and in truth, blessing from the Holy Ghost comes to be wished in the very praying for a communication of grace and peace from God the Father and Christ; for, as Rom. v. 5, 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given us.' He is that Person that leadeth us out of ourselves unto the grace of God the Father, and the peace and satisfaction made by Jesus Christ. Those other two Persons are in their several works rather the objects of our faith and consolation, but the Holy Ghost is the author and efficient both of our faith on them, and comfort enjoyed in and from them. We look up to God the Father as the fountain of grace; and we look up to Jesus Christ as the fountain of our peace. But we are to look at the Holy Ghost as the revealer of both these from both. You will understand the justness of this reason,

why he omitted the mention of him by this like instance : when you make your prayers, (and a blessing is a kind of prayer,) you use to pray to the Father, and likewise in the name of Christ, but you do not at all, or seldom, read in all the Scriptures of prayers made to the Holy Ghost. And why? Because it is his office to make the prayers themselves, which you thus put up to the other two Persons, and therein lieth his honour. Thus here, 'grace from God the Father, and peace from Jesus Christ;' but he that revealeth both these is the Spirit. I will shut up this with one scripture, wherein this our Apostle, making the same kind of prayer or blessing, confirmeth this notion, mentioning all these three several parts and influences of the three Persons in the same order and difference I have now given, and unto the same purpose : 2 Cor. xiii. 14, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you,' &c. That which is attributed to the Holy Ghost is, as was said, to communicate and reveal all both that grace and love in God, and in Jesus Christ.

To you.—That is, every one of you in particular. I will not omit this mention of the persons to whom these are wished, which was the third thing mentioned. He had enstyleth them saints and faithful in the first verse ; and yet after that, wisheth grace and peace to them.

Obs.—The best Christians here need peace, and to that end Christ's blood and satisfaction, which is alone the procurer of all our peace, to wash their souls daily with the efficiency and spirits of that blood ; and likewise for the acceptation even of their holiness and faithfulness they need grace too, the free favour of God. 'Grace and peace to you saints, and faithful Ephesians.' They both need the things themselves to be daily continued unto them ; and their souls need to apprehend more of them, and about them, to have more enlarged revelation of them made to their faith. Hast thou peace already with God through faith? Yet still thou hast guilt and doubtings ; thy faith is mixed with unbelief ; therefore thou needest more of peace, 'Peace be to you.' Again, hast thou assurance of God's love? Yet, oh how little dost thou know of it ! (as Job speaks.) This grace and love of God and Christ passeth knowledge, Eph. iii. 19. As in like manner this peace is said to pass understanding, 2 Pet. i. 2 ; Phil. iv. 7. And this is the Apostle's meaning in his benediction in both Epistles, 'Grace and peace be multiplied (says he) through the knowledge of God (the Father and his love) and of Jesus our Lord' (and his satisfaction for you.) Hence it is evident, that the communication of these to us is through our knowledge and apprehension thereof increased and multiplied ; as also a further possession of them thereby.

Many are the observations that interpreters, upon several Epistles, do from hence raise, for which I refer the reader to their comments. I shall sum up that which I would commend to you in this one Meditation.

Seeing the grace and free favour of God cast upon us, and peace with God, as a fruit of that favour and of Christ's satisfaction, are the sum of the apostles' ordinary wishes and salutes, (who to be sure in such a breviary would wish the highest, who were willing to impart their own souls to those saints they wrote to,) let this be a directory to us what to make the more ordinary and continual scope of our desires and prosecutions, even the obtaining peace with God, and grace of God. Seek this peace and ensue it, peace with God through Christ. And yet learn, from this apostolical addition, to seek grace also, and not to rest in peace, but to seek God's favour. Good and evangelical spirits cannot content themselves with peace ; they must have grace too ; God's heart and love to be set upon them, his good-will. Seek to be pardoned, but above all seek to be beloved.