

SERMON XIV.

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will : that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, &c.—VER. 11-14.

THE scope of these verses I shewed you in my last discourse to be this : An application of all that which he had doctrinally delivered about predestination, vocation, and the like benefits,—an application of them, with some interlacings of what was not said before,—unto both the Jews and the Gentiles. Unto the Jews, or rather the apostles put for all the Jews, themselves being Jews, in the 11th and 12th verses : ‘In whom we have obtained an inheritance who first trusted in Christ.’ And, secondly, unto the Gentiles in the 13th verse : ‘In whom ye also,’ Ephesians, speaking to them in the name of all the Gentiles, as speaking of himself and the other of the apostles in the name of all the Jews.

His application unto himself and the rest of the apostles, and so to the Jews, is in the 11th and 12th verses. I made entrance into them in my last discourse. The 11th verse containeth in it two particulars.

First, It sheweth what God had done for them, and that in *three things*.

Secondly, He illustrateth those three things which God had done for them, by a *general proposition*, whereof each particular in the one answereth to the other.

First, He sheweth what God had done for them in *three things* ; he giveth them the comfort of three things.

1. By effectual calling of them, by sanctifying of them, and working faith in them, by their having trusted in him, they were interested in a glorious inheritance. ‘In whom,’ saith he, ‘we have obtained’—namely, by this sanctification and faith, as I shewed you before—‘an inheritance.’

2. He mentioneth the ground and the spring (he applieth that also, and brings it home to their hearts) of God’s calling them, viz., predestination ; we having ‘obtained an inheritance, being predestinated.’

3. He mentioneth the immutability of God’s predestinating them ; it was ‘according to his purpose.’

So much for what he sheweth God hath done for them before, of which he giveth them the comfort.

Secondly, He doth illustrate these things by a *general proposition*, which containeth three things in it, answerable to these three. ‘In whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose’ (these are the three first particulars) ‘of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will.’ I shewed the coherence of these latter words before. That which now I shall cast in is, that the apostle doth fit, and suit, and proportion this general proposition, *that God worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will*,—he fitteth it unto the particulars God had

done for them. He had called them to obtain an inheritance, being predestinated according to his purpose.

The meaning is this: that by the same counsel of his will, and by the same power that he had wrought all things else, by the same power he had called them, and sanctified them, by which they had obtained an inheritance; and by the same counsel of his will he had predestinated them according to his purpose by the same wherewith he works all things else. He sheweth that the principle by which he works all things is the same principle by which he wrought grace in their hearts. First, in working all things, there is an omnipotent power, an efficacious hand; for he is said to work, *ἐνεργεῖν*, to work effectually; by the same power, saith he, did he work grace in your hearts. In the second place, all things that he doth work, he did contrive beforehand by his counsel; by the same counsel, saith he, he did predestinate. Then, thirdly, that which causeth all, according to his counsel, was his will; 'He works all things according to the counsel of his own will.' Why, according to that will, saith he, He hath predestinated you; 'He hath predestinated you according to his purpose,' namely of that will. So that now, *will* in the one answereth to the *purpose* in the other; and *counsel* in the one answereth to *predestination* in the other; for indeed predestination implieth an ordering, a disposing of things by counsel. And then, thirdly, his *working grace*, by which they were called, answereth to that *power* which he wrought all things by.

Here then, you see, there are three principles of God's working all things whatsoever he works, the salvation of men and all things else. Here is, first, an omnipotent power, which is *executionis*, as the thing that executeth and performeth all; he is said to work, and work effectually, so the word signifieth. Secondly, here is his will and the sovereignty of it, which is *imperationis*, that which giveth the command for a powerful execution. Thirdly, here is his wisdom, that is *directionis*, as that which giveth direction both to will and power. 'He works all things according to the counsel of his own will.'

And, first, for the *power of God* in working, which is the first thing briefly to be explained; secondly, his *counsel*; and thirdly, the *counsel of his will*. I shall speak briefly of all these three. He works all things by an omnipotent power; and by counsel; and by the counsel of his own will.

First, For the power wherewith he worketh all things. The first thing I shewed about it before was this, that God hath an effectual hand in all things. I went over things natural, things moral, things contingent, the wills of men, and the like; I shall repeat nothing now. That is the first thing that the text affordeth, that God works, and works effectually; he hath a hand in everything.

The second thing concerning his power that the text affordeth is, that God's power is limited in his workings by his will. He doth not work all things that he can work; 'Unto thee,' saith Christ, Mark xiv. 36, 'all things are possible.' It is possible, saith he, that this cup should pass from me, and that men should be saved another way; but his power did not work this, it was limited by his will; so you know that Christ saith, 'Thy will be done.' God can, saith John, Matt. iii. 9, raise out of these stones that you tread upon sons unto Abraham; he never did it, but do it he could. God doth not shew himself omnipotent by doing all he can do, but everything that he doth do, he sheweth an almighty power in it. Therefore divines use to say, that God, though he is omnipotent, yet he is not omnipotent; though he can do all things infinitely more than he hath done, yet

he doth not will to do all things that he is able, for his power is limited by his will; so saith the text: 'He worketh all things according to the counsel of his will.' 'If thou wilt,' saith he, 'thou canst make me clean,' Matt. viii. 2. His power was able, but whether his will had determined his power to do it or not, that he knew not.

The third thing which this text holdeth forth concerning his power is this, that whatsoever God will do, that he doth effectually. 'He works all things according to the counsel of his will.' The meaning is, not only that all that he doth, he doth by counsel; but that all that his counsel and will decreeth, that he doth. 'My counsel shall stand,' saith he, Isa. xli. 10.

So much now for that first thing, his power; which are all bottomed full upon the text.

Secondly, The second is concerning *God's counsel* in working. You know counsel referreth to the understanding, to the judgment. It is a considering what one meaneth to do, how to do it, and to do it the best way and most wisely; that is properly counsel. There is something in counsel which is in man which we must not attribute unto God, and something in man which may be attributed to God; for we must cut off all imperfection in what we attribute to God. There are two things in counsel in a man. There is, first, a discourse and inquiry what is best; he setteth his reason a-work, and one thought cometh in after another. And then there is, secondly, a judgment, when he hath considered all, what is the best. Now the first part we must cut off from God; he doth not advise and deliberate as men do, to take this thing, or that thing, one after another, by way of inquiry into his mind. No, for 'known to God are all his works from eternity,' saith the Apostle, Acts xv. 18; as the word signifieth, 'he hath them all before him.'

How then is counsel attributed unto God?

Thus; that which is the result, that which ariseth in men's minds or judgments out of inquiry, a mature pitching upon what is best; this now, which is the perfection of counsel, which is the ripening and the maturity of it, this is attributed to God. This is *certum judicium*, a certain judgment of what is best to do. Thus God works all things according to his counsel. I will give you but one scripture for it; for we must still back everything with some parallel word, that in the mouth of two witnesses everything might be established. Isa. xxviii. 29; it is said there of God, that he is 'wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.' I cannot stand to open the coherence of the place, but it falleth in full to the business in hand. He is excellent in working, for whatsoever he willeth that he doth; and he is as wonderful in his counsel, for all that he doth is with the greatest ripeness of judgment, with the highest wisdom, that shall declare him as much to be God in the wise doing of it, as to declare he is God in the powerful doing of it. Thus you see in the second place what is meant by counsel.

Thirdly, Now then, in the third place, why is it said the *counsel of his will*? Here is a third principle, *his will*; and it is called the *counsel of his will*. I shall open it briefly. It implieth these particulars following:—

First, That God's will doth not pitch upon things blindly, but by an advised act; he knoweth what he doth, wittingly and willingly in all he doth; his will hath counsel joined with it.

It is said, secondly, to be the counsel of his own will, for so the text hath it, because he doth not go forth of himself for counsel; he neither doth regard the conveniency among the creatures one with another, but their conveniency depends upon his counsel. Men, when they counsel, look upon

things; and as things are framed and fashioned, so they must frame their counsels; but with God it is otherwise, he frameth things according to the counsel of his own will, he adviseth with none: 'Who hath been his counsellor?' Rom. xi. 34.

In the third place, it is called the counsel of his own will, to shew that in casting whatsoever he meaneth to do, his will hath the supreme stroke. Still you shall find it in the Scripture, that all is attributed to his will; and observe the phrase here, it is not called the will of his counsel, but it is called rather the counsel of his will,—it is the observation of Catherinus and Musculus upon the place,—to shew the difference between man's will and God's. The law of man's will is still to be determined by the understanding, so that the will of a man is the will of his counsel. My brethren, when God considered whether he would make a world or no, the consultation was not whether it was best to make it or not to make it. Why? Because there was no best to God to do the one or the other; there is the greatest reason for it that can be, for it was all one to him whether he did it or no. What caused him then to do it? What did cast it? It was his will. His will setteth his counsel so to work, as it were, to do it the best way; but it is not his will being determined by his counsel as judging it best, for it was neither better one way nor other for God, for he standeth in need of no creature. So that in Scripture you have election attributed to his will, 'He hath mercy on whom he will;' you have creation attributed to his will, 'By thy will all things were created,' Rev. iv. 11.

But now, though his will had the casting of it clearly, and therein lieth the sovereignty and liberty of the will of God in his works *ad extra*, yet you will ask me, *How far did counsel attend his will?*

I answer in these particulars. First, God knew all that he could do, all that his power is able to do, and therefore did not pitch upon things that had a contradiction in them. As for example, that God should make a thing to be and not to be at the same time; his will did not pitch upon this, because his counsel dictated that they were not compatible; it was not fit for God to do. So likewise 'it is impossible for God to lie;' his understanding knew this, so his will did not pitch upon such a thing. Here is one act of counsel, he did not pitch upon things that have a contradiction in them.

In the second place, his counsel dictated to him, if I may so speak, that it was good to create, and to communicate himself to the creatures, to choose men to salvation, and that it is the property of goodness to communicate itself, and that it becometh goodness to do it. But yet still all this is not best, it is not best to God; we cannot say so; for he could be as happy without doing this as he is with doing of it; only I say his counsel said it was good.

Then, thirdly, if his will cometh to create and produce creatures, then wisdom dictates that it was best to do it the best way; if God will manifest himself, to do it to the uttermost; so will setteth counsel on work, or rather counsel presenteth to the will the utmost and best ways of glorifying of himself. Therefore, Heb. xi., you shall find there that all things that are made are said to be made of things not seen, namely, of God. 'By faith,' saith he, ver. 3, 'we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things that do appear.' The meaning is this, that his understanding did present to him models of worlds, as it doth to an artificer, if he will raise up a building, how to make it and contrive it. He made things out of things that did not appear, that were in his own mind,—the ideas, the mould, the pattern of

things, such as men have in their heads when they make a house and the like; and he pitcheth upon what is best. And thus far now his counsel attends his will. If his will resolveth to create, to do a thing, then counsel is set a-work to do it the best way; although it may be said that God had other ways as good, for his wisdom is not limited to one world, or to the things that are or shall be.

To conclude with one scripture, and so pass off from this: Ps. civ. 24, 'Wonderful are thy manifold works; in wisdom hast thou made them all.' They are wonderful, and they are manifold, and he hath made them all in wisdom; and his wisdom sheweth itself to be as truly the wisdom of God, as his power shewed itself to be the power of God, in making them. And this is the subserviency or the concurrency that counsel hath with his will in working all things.

Obs. 1.—Now, my brethren, I should give you some observations from hence. I did anticipate some in my last, as namely this: If God works all things according to the counsel of his own will, you should not lean to your own will, nor to your own wisdom; give up yourselves fully unto God, as it is, Prov. xxiii. 4.

Obs. 2.—In the second place, more particularly, If God works grace by the same kind of counsel of his will, and by the same power that he works all things else, as the text plainly saith, then he works grace infallible; for we see he worketh other things infallible. 'Let there be light,' saith he, and there was light. Let there be light, saith he, in that man's soul, and there is light. He works in us the will and the deed; not only the power to will, but the will itself.

Obs. 3.—The third thing that I observed is this, That the same thing that cast it why he would work all things, it was his will, not as judging it best for him,—it was not following the dictates of his understanding, as always is in us,—but only he saw it was good so to do. So likewise, of his choosing men, this or that man, of predestinating you and you, (for so the coherence carrieth it,) it was merely his own will, his own goodness.

There is no reason why thou shouldst believe, and another not; no reason, I say, why God, having infinite things before him, should choose such and such; why he should take such and such of those he meant to make; why he should love such, and not others; there is no reason but his will. His counsel propounded that it was good to love these; but that it was better to love this man than that man, here his will determineth it. It is not the will of his counsel, but the *counsel of his will*. As when he came to create, (it is the comparison that Aquinas hath, and it is an exceeding good one,) Take, saith he, that first *chaos*, that lump of darkness, out of which God made all things; that out of this piece fire should be made, that that piece should go to make earth, that the other piece should go to make air; that such a piece of the element should make a tree, such a piece should make beasts, such fishes; that that dust should make a man, Adam, rather than other dust; there is no reason of it, it is his will. That of mankind, that nature of man should be assumed, that Jesus Christ hath now in heaven, it was his will. So, saith he, is it in election; for God works all things, not according to the will of his counsel, as judging this man better than that by an act of counsel; but it is the counsel of his will. But when he hath pitched his love upon these and these men, then counsel is set a-work indeed, to contrive all ways to shew love to them; and all the ways the wisdom of God takes, is but to vent that love that was in his heart. Therefore Christ is given to die, and you to fall into sin; there are a thousand contrivements that the counsel of

his will had, to manifest the glory of his grace, and the riches of his love.—And so now I fall off from that, and come to the 12th verse.

That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

Here are two things in this verse :—

1. Here are the *persons* whom he applieth this to, designed out with a special privilege. We, apostles and Jews, that had this privilege first to ‘trust in Christ;’ we, saith he, were thus predestinated and called, and have obtained an inheritance.

2. You have what ought to be the end, what is the duty that every man is obliged unto, that cometh unto these benefits, that is predestinated thus, and called thus. ‘We should be,’ saith he, ‘to the praise of his glory.’

To begin with the latter, because it lieth first in the text. The coming in of these words, the coherence of them, is not so much to shew what was God’s end in predestinating us, (that he had shewed before,) as what is the duty of every one that is predestinated; what this benefit should work upon their hearts; for here the apostle speaks by way of application; their duty is this, saith he, to ‘be to the praise of his glory.’

I will not stand distinguishing *praise* and *glory*; I did it before, when I opened the ‘praise of the glory of his grace.’ Only first here; praise is all that God requireth. Ps. l, Wilt thou, saith he, offer to me the rams or the bullocks upon a thousand hills? They are all mine already; what do I care for them, I can make enough of them. Thou wilt offer God thy duties, what are they to him? What is it then that will please him? Saith he at the last verse, ‘He that offereth praise, glorifieth me.’ It is glory he would have, nothing takes God else. Do what you will, if you do not aim at the praise of his glory, it never pleaseth him. He turns away a chapman, that would have given him rivers of oil. What care I, saith he, for thy first-born, that is the fruit of thy body? Why, he would have glory. Nothing, I say, takes God else.

In the second place, observe, he doth not, as before, say, ‘to the praise of the glory of his grace’ only, he doth not limit it to that; but he saith, when he cometh to obedience, to the praise of his glory in the general. For though in our faith we do most magnify the glory of his free grace in the pardon of sin, which faith layeth hold upon; yet in obedience we should aim at all his glory, all the ways he can be glorified in. And he will have glory out of every thing you do. ‘Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God,’ 1 Cor. x. 31.

In the third place, observe this concerning it: he doth not say, ‘to the praise of his glory,’ by words and by thanksgiving only; but ‘to be to the praise of his glory.’ It is real things, things that have being, that God requireth. My meaning is this, that your being, all you are and have, should be to his glory, not only in word, so the force of the word will carry it: ‘that we should be,’ saith he, that all you are, that all you have, should be sacrificed and given up to God, ‘to the praise of his glory.’

Now, though I might shew you how this is enforced from all the former, yet I should be too long. I will pass that by.—So much for the first thing.

Secondly, he cometh to the *persons* to whom he applieth this, designed out by a special privilege; namely, those ‘who first trusted in Christ.’ He hath predestinated us, called us, apostles and Jews, but to whom he vouchsafed this privilege, that we should first trust in Christ. He speaks, as I take it, especially of that *we*—that is, we apostles. Paul was an apostle; you know they were all Jews; but in their name and under them he meaneth all the Jews too that were believers. He applieth it to themselves first, and unto

the Jews, as contained under them. As likewise, when he applieth it to the Ephesians, 'in whom ye also trusted,' he speaks but to the Ephesians only, but he meaneth all Gentiles. I speak this to reconcile two opinions of interpreters. Some say that the apostles are meant; others say that the Jews are meant. The apostles had the honour to be the first-fruits of the Christian church, of the church of the New Testament; and therefore, as Christ preached to them first, and called them first himself,—for so you know he did,—so when he prayeth for his church, how doth he pray? For the apostles first, and then for all them that 'shall believe on him through their word,' John xvii. 20. For the apostles were the first-fruits; therefore we are said to be 'built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles,' Eph. ii. 20. They were laid as the first stones of this great building.

The word which we translate *trusted* is, in the original, and you may see it in your margins, *hoped*; 'who first hoped in Christ;' for, my brethren, hope is sometimes put for faith, as John v. 45, 'Moses, in whom ye trust;' in the original it is, 'in whom ye hope.' For the truth is this, I do not say the grace of hope is the foundation of faith, but it is most certain that a hopefulness *that it may be I*, founded upon the indefinite promise, is the foundation of faith. And, take the very apostles' faith, it was but at first a hoping in Christ; 'who first,' saith he, 'hoped in Christ.'

Now, the thing I would have you observe is this, that he mentioneth it as a privilege to be the first trusters or hoppers in Christ, and he applieth it to the Jews and to the apostles. You shall see parallel scriptures fall in with this: Rom. i. 16, 'The gospel,' saith he, 'is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first,' mark! 'and also unto the Greek;' but to the Jew first. Take another place, Acts iii. 26. When Peter there first preacheth to the Jews, speaking of the resurrection of Christ, he saith, 'God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him unto you first, to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.' The Jews, therefore, and the apostles, were the first that trusted in Christ; and then afterwards it was diffused from the Jews, by the apostles, unto all nations: 'Preach the gospel,' saith he, 'to every creature;' but 'to the Jew first;' they were to believe first—'who first trusted in him.'

I have wondered, when I considered this one thing, which will further open the text, that God should call so many Jews, and call them first,—for so he did, and there were multitudes of them, if you read the story of the Acts,—and after that cast off that nation. And why were they, when he meant to convert no more of them afterwards, to have this great privilege the apostle mentioneth here?

I will give you one reason of it. It is because they were the first-fruits of the Jews to be called afterwards in the fulness of time. Because God meant to call them afterward, as it is certain to me he meaneth to do, therefore he called so great a flush of them at first; and called them first, to shew that they shall be the elder brethren under the gospel, though they be cast off for so many hundreds of years. That which makes me think so is that which the Apostle saith, 1 Tim. i. 16; and I know them that interpret it as spoken of the Jews. Speaking of his own conversion, 'He shewed mercy,' saith he, 'to me first,' as one of the first-fruits of my nation, as in a type, (so the word is,) as in 'a pattern to them who should hereafter believe,' namely, to the Jews. They expound it particularly, as being a type of the conversion of his own nation; yea, and some have thought that in the same extraordinary way that he was called shall they be called too. So much now for the expounding of this—'who first trusted in Christ.'

Obs. 1.—I will give you an observation, and so pass off from it; and it is this, *That it is a great privilege, much to be valued by every Christian, to be before others in Christ.* You see the Apostle here mentioneth it as the only privilege, distinct, that the Jews had from the Gentiles, that they ‘first trusted in Christ.’ It is a privilege either to be before others in time; you shall find that, Rom. xvi. 7, where Paul giveth the upper hand of fellowship to Andronicus and Junia upon this ground: ‘They were,’ saith he, ‘in Christ before me.’ And so should younger Christians give unto elder, which may allay the pride and pertness of young ones, who are rather apt to censure old ones. Paul giveth it as an honour in that respect, ‘who were in Christ before me;’ as here it is made a privilege of the Jews, ‘who first trusted in Christ.’ Or, secondly, it is a privilege, not only when one is in Christ before another, but more especially when one is the first-fruits either of a family or of a nation that have believed. You shall read, 1 Cor. xvi. 15, of the household of Stephanas, that it was the ‘first-fruits of Achaia.’

Hath God singled thee out of a family where never one was converted before? This is thy privilege, thou didst first trust in Christ, and thou art the first-fruits that hast sanctified that family unto God; it is likely he will have more out of it, for you know the first-fruits sanctified the lump. Certainly there is that covenant which God makes with nations, that where he beginneth to convert, there are the first-fruits of more to come; and God goeth on to continue that covenant to that nation for ever, though for a while he may cast them off; for they that are converted are the first-fruits. You may observe it, that scarce ever the gospel came to a nation, but it hath continued more or less to this day. The Christian name is as much over the world as ever it was; though Turks dwell with them, and domineer and tyrannise over them, yet the Christian name is in all nations where it once was, because the first converted were the first-fruits of those nations that sanctified the whole lump. Therefore was Abraham called the Father of the Faithful; he was one of the first great believers in a way of difficulty. Therefore was Eve the Mother of all Living, she was the first believer; we have a warrant that she believed, we have not a certain ground that Adam did; for the covenant is made with her, the promise is made to the woman; she is called, therefore, the Mother of all Living, because she first trusted in Christ.

Obs. 2.—Observe again, in the second place, *That if you have any privilege in grace above another, it dependeth upon predestination, as well as your salvation doth; it dependeth upon an act of God’s eternal love.* The Apostle, as he ascribed their salvation to predestination, so this privilege, that they first trusted in Christ; it was ordered by the counsel of God’s everlasting will, ‘being predestinated,’ saith he, ‘who first trusted in Christ.’ Therefore, not only have recourse to bless God and his eternal decrees for his love in saving thee, but for any particular privilege that thou hast before others in point of grace; have recourse to God’s eternal counsel, for it was the fountain of it, as well of the degrees of grace as of glory; they have all their spring from God’s eternal decree, as well as who shall be saved and who not.

Obs. 3.—*It may be made a motive to any one that hath been long in Christ, and in Christ before others, to be more holy than they.* Why? ‘That we,’ saith he, ‘should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.’ We that were the first-fruits of the world, we that were in Christ before you; we, saith he, should more especially be to his praise. As there is a more especial favour, which God in his predestination shewed us, so

there is a more especial duty lieth upon us, to be to the praise of his glory. Therefore the Apostle findeth fault with them, Heb. v. 12, that whereas for the time they might have been teachers of others,—they might have had abundance of grace and knowledge,—they were dullards, they were dwarfs in respect of growth in grace.

Obs. 4.—And last of all : You that mean to repent, when you come to lie upon your death-beds, if you do so, what do you lose ? You last trust in Christ, and so you shall be dishonoured. Is it not better to turn while you are young, and so to be of those that first trust in Christ ? The apostle here, you see, makes it a privilege of the Jews, that they were those that first trusted in Christ.—And so much likewise for the application of what he had said unto the Jews.

To come now to his application of it to the Gentiles. ‘In whom ye also,’ saith he ; he saith no more ; you have it indeed put into your translation, ‘trusted ;’ it is not in the original, but he speaks by way of ellipsis, shortly, and cutteth off his speech. ‘In whom you also,’ you Ephesians, you Gentiles—you also ; which you may refer either unto *trusting*, which was in the verse before : ‘In whom you also trusted,’ as well as they, though they first, ‘after you heard,’ for so it followeth ;—or else you may refer it, for the Holy Ghost hath a comprehensive meaning, and the Scripture is the shortest writing in the world, to what he had said to the Jews, cutting off this privilege, that they first trusted in Christ. ‘In whom also you have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, that you should be to the praise of his glory ; having also trusted in him when you heard of the gospel of truth,’ &c. You may refer it either to the one or to the other, and indeed to both. For, my brethren, the Apostle’s scope is to make application of all he had said both to Jew and Gentile. Now, to go over the same thing twice to both had not been so comely ; therefore he divideth them, and saith something of the Jew, which he applieth to them, and something of the Gentile, which he applieth to them, yet so as what is said of the Jew is applicable to the Gentile, ‘In whom ye also had an inheritance, and were predestinated,’ &c. And what is said of the Gentile, that ‘after they heard the word of truth they believed, and were sealed,’ is true also of the Jew ; and because it would have been too long to mention them both, he divides it therefore, and cutteth it off with a short speech, ‘In whom you also,’ having reference to all that went before. So much for the coherence.

There are in this verse these three things :—

1. That the Gentiles did also trust in Christ and were called, and by calling had an inheritance as well as the Jews.

2. That this calling, and their faith, was by hearing the gospel, which he applieth by two encomiums of it :—

(1.) That it is the ‘word of truth.’

(2.) That it is the ‘gospel of their salvation.’

3. After that they had believed, they were ‘sealed with the Spirit of promise.’

These are the parts of this 13th verse.

And first of all from this,—that he saith the same thing of the Gentiles that he saith of the Jews, cutting off that privilege that they were the first ; the Jews trusted in Christ, and so did the Gentiles ; the Ephesians trusted in Christ, as well as the apostles ; they were by faith partakers of an inheritance, as well as the apostles,—what is the observation from hence ? In a word this—

That we are all saved by the same faith that the apostles are. We have all the same common inheritance, the same common faith. I will give you a scripture for both.

First, that we have a like faith: 2 Pet. i. 1, 'Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us;' with us apostles, therefore he mentioneth himself as an apostle when he speaks it. We have likewise the same common salvation, the same common seal of the Spirit, 1 John i. 3, 'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.' We have assurance of the love of God, and walk in communion with him. You, saith he, are capable of having the same assurance, and we write to you these things, that you may have it; for the scope of that epistle is to beget assurance in the hearts of the godly. We are all saved by the same faith, and are capable of the same assurance, and shall have all the same salvation; it is called 'common salvation,' Jude 3. That is the observation from the coherence, 'In whom ye also trusted,' or 'obtained an inheritance,'—for you may put in both,—or obtained it by faith, or by trusting, 'after you heard,' &c.

After you heard.—He sheweth that their faith was wrought by hearing. I will not stand upon that, only this observation I shall give you out of it: That presently, as it were, after they heard, they believed; the gospel came no sooner to them but they were converted. It was the manner in the primitive times, God made quick work then. You shall find it backed by what is said to the Colossians, chap. i. 6. He saith there, that they had obeyed from the first day that they heard the gospel. Which, my brethren, may shame us; we live under the gospel many years; it is not after we have heard, but after we have heard and heard again, that we are turned unto God. How obedient were they! 'From the first day,' saith the apostle of the Colossians, there; 'after you heard,' saith he, here; as it were presently upon it.

I come, secondly, to the encomiums which here the apostle giveth the gospel by which they were converted. He calls it first a 'word of truth;' and, secondly, the 'gospel of your salvation.' I shall but briefly speak of these two, and shall shew you, first, singly, why the gospel is called *a word of truth*, and why the *gospel of their salvation*. Secondly, I shall shew you jointly *why both are here mentioned together*.

First, The gospel is called a 'word of truth,' not only because it is a true word, as being a Hebraism, but it is τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας, a word of an eminent truth. The greatest truth that ever God uttered, or shall utter, is the gospel of salvation by Jesus Christ; therefore it is called 'the gospel of that truth,' as we may so expound it. When our Saviour Christ told them that he was the Messiah, John viii. 40, what saith he? 'I tell you the truth,' saith he, 'which I heard of God;' the greatest secret, the highest truth that ever was, which I heard of God, and which came down from heaven; as he telleth Pilate, John xviii. 37, that for this cause he came into the world to speak the truth. What was that truth? That he was the Son of God and the Messiah of the world. 'In him,' saith the apostle, 2 Cor. i. 20, 'are all the promises of God yea, and in him Amen.' He doth not only say, 'in him they are yea;' if *yea* will not serve, saith he, you shall have *Amen* to it; it is a truth of truths, it hath yea to it and Amen to it too. To give you an instance more. My brethren, there is no truth that ever God swore to, but this. The law is all truth, but the law was made without an oath, for if it had been with an oath we had been in an ill case, for God

could then never have recalled it ; what is a mere threatening he recalleth, but what is done with an oath he never recalls. The gospel is sealed with an oath. God sweareth by himself, Heb. vi. 13. Never any truth was sealed with an oath but the gospel, the promise made to Abraham.

It may, secondly, be called a word of truth in opposition to the law ; for the law represented but a shadow ; but now, saith he, you have the truth, you have Christ, that is the substance of all the law, you have him revealed and tendered to you in the gospel. It is a word of truth, of Christ that is the truth. 'The law came by Moses,' saith he, 'but grace and truth by Jesus Christ,' John i. 17.

Let your hearts, my brethren, get hold by faith of this truth. There are many controversies in the world on foot, as about the worship of God and a thousand such things. Though there be a truth in them, and a truth thou must inquire into, yet if thou hast learned this truth to lay hold upon salvation revealed in the gospel, thou hast learned the greatest truth of all, more than all truths whatsoever.

And believe this gospel, that it is a word of truth. The greater truth it is the more it requireth faith, and the greater sin it is not to believe it ; therefore the apostle aggravateth the sin of unbelief of the gospel, 1 John v. 10 : He that believeth not this gospel, saith he, this record that God giveth of his Son, 'hath made God a liar ;' for God hath uttered the greatest truth of all in the gospel, he hath bound it with an oath, which he never did any truth else. He hath really exhibited Christ in it. You had him in a promise before, but now you have him really ; when he gave Christ into the world, there is the truth of all the promises ; he therefore that believeth not the gospel makes God a liar. Unbelief is the greatest lie that ever was. Why ? Because this is the word of truth in an eminent way.

Secondly, Why the 'gospel of your salvation ?'

First, Why of salvation ? Secondly, Why of *your* salvation ? speaking to the Ephesians.

First, Why of salvation ? Because the matter of it is salvation. Beza, therefore, whereas he useth to translate it as we do, the gospel or the evangel, translates it here—and he doth it nowhere else but here, and in one place more—the 'glad tidings of your salvation.' He giveth it in the signification. Why ? Because salvation is the gladdest tidings in the world. My brethren, if a man were in danger of drowning, go and throw him a crown, and bid him take hold of that and come ashore, and he shall have all the kingdoms of the world with that crown, and throw him a rope ; he will take hold of the rope, and let go the crown. No, saith he, I will take this rope. Why ? It will save me, it will tow me ashore. I may be drowned for all the crown. What could God have said to have pleased you more, than that you poor sinners should be saved ? than to fling out to you the gospel of your salvation, as a tow to lay hold upon to get safe over the sea of his wrath, and to obtain at last an everlasting salvation ? The matter of the gospel is salvation ; it is called *salvation*, the gospel is, Heb. ii. 3 ; as the writing wherein a man's pardon is contained, is called the pardon itself.

It is likewise called the gospel of salvation, because it doth bring men to salvation, and because it is the 'power of God unto salvation,' as the Apostle saith, Rom. i. 16.

Now, my brethren, what observation shall we draw from hence ? It is the 'glad tidings of salvation,' so Beza translates it ; because, saith he, this is the best tidings that ever was. Here I will give it in the signification of it, saith he. I will not use the word *gospel* or *evangel*, but take it thus—

it is the glad tidings of salvation. Oh, how should salvation, therefore, be valued by us! When the Apostle would set out the gospel to you, It is the gospel, saith he, of your salvation. What could he speak more to have moved the hearts of men than this? It is a word of truth, or it is a faithful saying; it hath truth and faithfulness in it, 'worthy of all acceptation,' that may draw you; but it is a gospel of salvation, saith he. When first this gospel was preached to these poor Gentiles, it is said, Acts xiii. 48, 'they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord.' Oh, how glad should you be when you hear it preached! For you are not saved yet, you are not in heaven yet. It is the gospel which must save you and bring you there. It is the gospel of your salvation that works salvation in you, that bringeth you to salvation, that buildeth you up to eternal life, Acts xx. 32.

I should have likewise shewed you why it is called *your salvation*, but I will pass over that. I have shewed why it is called the 'word of truth,' why the 'gospel of salvation;' but why are both these here put together? You shall find it called the gospel of salvation somewhere else, as Heb. ii. 3, and the 'power of God unto salvation,' Rom. i. 16. And you shall find it often called 'the word of truth,' as Col. i. 5, and other places; but here both come in; for what reason? For two reasons—

First, Because if he had said only, 'the gospel of your salvation,' this is such mighty news to poor sinners that they would never have believed it, for men are not apt to believe too good news; therefore, saith he, it is the 'gospel of your salvation,' and the 'word of truth' too. As when the angel, Rev. xix., told John glorious things, because he thought they were too good to be true, the angel clappeth upon them this seal, ver. 9, 'These are the true sayings of God;' so the Apostle here, when he commendeth the gospel as the gospel of your salvation, that brings you news of being saved, to draw your hearts to believe it, saith he, It is the word of truth, the greatest truth that ever God uttered. The greatest truth, my brethren, and our salvation are met in one. It is the *word of truth*, and it is the *gospel of our salvation*.

The second reason why he mentioneth both is this: he speaks of faith, as you see, 'who first trusted in Christ; in whom ye also trusted; and after you believed you were sealed,' &c. Now, faith is seated in two faculties, in the understanding and in the will. Answerably, what hath the gospel? To satisfy the understanding, it hath the greatest truth in the world; it is the word of truth; the understanding closeth with that. To satisfy the will, it hath the greatest good in the world; it is the gospel of salvation. So that now first a man being persuaded of the truth of the gospel, and that truth being matter of salvation, his will hath reason to close with it, and so he makes up the bargain with God; that is, believeth. Heb. xi. 13, after they saw the promises, and were persuaded of them, they embraced them. There was seeing and being persuaded of them, as being the word of truth; there was embracing of them, as being the salvation of their souls.

Thus you see why the gospel is a word of truth and the gospel of salvation, and why the apostle here joins them both together.

There remains the third thing in the text to be handled: 'After that you believed you were sealed,' which sealing is an 'earnest,' for so it followeth ver. 14.