

## SERMON XVIII.

*Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, &c.—VER. 15, 16.*

*General coherence and parts of the words:—*

In the former verse he had set forth the causes of salvation and the original and fundamental benefits of election, predestination, redemption, calling, &c., from the 3d verse to the 11th. And then from the 11th to this 15th verse he had made application of it, both to the Jews, of which nation he was,—‘in whom *we* have obtained an inheritance,’—and then to the Gentiles, under the persons of those Ephesians, ‘in whom *ye* also trusted,’ and so obtained an inheritance. After which, at the 15th verse, he beginneth to express his own particular affection to them, upon God’s having endowed them with all those blessings before, thereby provoking these Ephesians, unto whom he had applied these great benefits, unto two great duties.

1. *Unto thanksgiving unto God*, who had bestowed such great things on them.

2. *To the further increasing in grace*, through the knowledge of them both; which he provokes them to by shewing what his own prayers and thanksgivings were to God for them.

Now he provokes them to these two duties most strongly, and yet but secretly and impliedly. He doth not say in express words, *Wherefore, do ye give thanks, and do ye pray, &c.*; but he doth more, he lays before them his own example, ‘*Wherefore,*’ saith he, ‘*I also do give thanks for you, and have not ceased to pray for you since I heard of your faith and love.*’ And this must needs strike all their hearts. Hath Paul, that is but as a stander-by, such a sense of the greatness of those things God hath bestowed upon us, that he giveth thanks for us, and out of his love to God and our souls prayeth that we may attain the knowledge of, and an increase in that knowledge of these things? How much more should we ourselves do it! If I, saith Paul; for he frameth his expression to such a meaning, *καὶ ἐγὼ*; even I, saith he,—or *I also*, as it is here translated,—do give thanks unto God for you, making mention of you in my prayers, then you yourselves much more should do it.

There are three things in these 15th and 16th verses.

First, *What Paul did for them*; which are two. 1. He gave thanks for them. 2. He had prayed for them; both amplified by this, ‘*without ceasing.*’

There is, secondly, *The occasion of these*; Having heard, saith he—1. Of their faith in Christ; 2. Of their love to all saints.

Then, thirdly, there is *The subject-matter or cause of his thanks*, noted out in this particule ‘*wherefore,*’ *διὰ τοῦτο*, or ‘*for this,*’ I give thanks, which referreth to all those benefits he had before enumerated, made theirs hereby.

*Exposition of the words:—*

*Wherefore.*—This holds out the cause of his thanksgiving; and, first, it referreth to what he saith in the next words, ‘hearing of your faith and love.’ You shall find in that parallel epistle to the Colossians, chap. i. 3, 4, the same in the very same words: ‘We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love you have to all the saints.’ This was the cause of his giving thanks, their faith in Christ, and the love which they had to all the saints, as graces which did evidence their interest in all those benefits.

It referreth also, secondly, to all that went before. Paul had a comprehensive eye to all the benefits mentioned in the former verses, which God had bestowed upon them; this *wherefore* draweth all in. When I consider, saith he, how God hath elected you, predestinated you, redeemed you by the blood of his Son, given you faith, sealed you up by his Spirit, which Spirit is the earnest of your inheritance; *διὰ τοῦτο*, ‘for this cause,’ saith he, since I heard of your faith and love, and of your increase in these things, and so was confirmed thereby of the certainty of your interest in all these, I do give thanks for you, and I cease not to do it. Paul’s giving of thanks for those he writes to, although usual in other epistles, yet is with this difference here from what elsewhere, namely, in respect of his ordering the bringing of it in. In other epistles it comes in in the preface or beginning, and stands alone and entire by itself; but here he ranks it in the midst of a discourse, after a large, exact, doctrinal enumeration of the great benefits we have in Christ, and withal after an application to the Ephesians, by shewing them their personal interest in those benefits; and so it comes in a way of coherence to all the rest foregoing, and upon occasion of those benefits. So as indeed Paul, looking back through this small particle, *διὰ τοῦτο*, *for this cause*, upon all the former beams of grace and benefits mentioned, and having taken a full and a summary prospect of them, gives thanks in the consideration of them for these Ephesians.

Yea, and, thirdly, this particle referreth to the very last words immediately before, ‘to the praise of his glory.’ God, saith he, had made this the end of all the benefits of our salvation, that himself should be glorified for them: *wherefore* I give thanks to God for you, and give him the praise of his glory on your behalf. God is not to lose his end, it is therefore my duty: wherefore I cease not to give thanks for you, &c. These three particulars, to which the words refer, are the cause of his thanks.

*Obs.*—Now the observation and meditation from hence is this: That the consideration of the greatness of the benefits of God towards us, when we take a full prospect of them, such as here the Apostle had given them, and withal our interest therein, with application to ourselves, which the Apostle here likewise made, together with this, that the end of all these is the praise of his glory,—when the soul considereth all this, it is provoked to give thanks to God. Learn, then, by this the way of stirring up your hearts to thankfulness to God. Take a view of all his benefits to you in Christ, labour to see your interest in them, and then consider that all this God hath ordained not for my salvation only, but for the praise of his glory. All this, if thoroughly apprehended by a fresh view of faith, will at any time move a good heart to give thanks to God.

*Wherefore I.*—Let us a little take notice of the grace of Paul, to quicken our own hearts by the example of it,—he was the highest example of grace,

but Christ, that ever was upon earth,—and consider how enlarged his heart was in thankfulness to God for the salvation of the souls of others, as well as in desires to save them. 2 Thess. ii. 13, ‘We are bound,’ saith he, ‘to give thanks,’ to give glory, ‘to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.’ It was not a matter of liberty, it was a matter of duty, as Paul here speaks of it; we are bound. And he speaks this, not as having been moved so much by his own interest in being the instrument of converting them; but he speaks of it as a brother, a member of that body, and accordingly, when he utters this thanksgiving, he calls them brethren: ‘We are bound to give thanks always to God for you brethren, for you beloved of the Lord;’ and the ground of it which he mentions is, that God hath loved them and chosen them. Here lieth much of the communion of saints, this is one great and high part of it. This is the angels’ grace, to rejoice at the conversion of sinners; and this will be one great exercise of our grace in heaven, that we shall be thankful to God for his having chosen and saved every soul there. This will make up one great part of the happiness of heaven, that each saint shall rejoice in the salvation of all and every one as in his own; which will be like the reflection of a multitude of looking-glasses, so placed and disposed as every one reflects the image of itself upon the other in a moment. To return to Paul. In 1 Thess. iii. 9, he is so deeply affected this way, that he doth not know how to express his thankfulness to God: ‘What thanks,’ saith he, ‘can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God?’ It was when he heard of their faith, ver. 5, 6. My brethren, this is the happiness of a Christian, and of a holy heart, when made exceeding spiritual; he hath all that concerneth God’s glory to rejoice in; the joy that we joy is ‘for your sakes,’ saith he; and yet not for their sakes simply, but ‘in the sight of God,’ having an eye to him too. This did fill his heart so full of joy, that he saith it kept him up in the midst of all his distresses; so, ver. 7, ‘We are comforted over you in all our afflictions and distresses by your faith.’ Oh, my brethren, where is the spirit of Paul?

*Wherefore I also.*—*Kai ἐγὼ*, or, as the Syriac expresseth it, *Lo I*. He holds it up, *tanquam notandum*, that he should thus do it. I that am a looker-on, yet, saith he, through the grace of Christ, as it is my duty, I do give thanks to God for you; much more ought you yourselves. You see, saith he, how my heart is affected about you with the consideration of these great things which God hath bestowed upon you; therefore much more should your souls be thus affected unto God for yourselves.

*Obs.*—It should be a mighty argument to move the heart of any one to work out his own salvation, when he shall see another take care for it. Thou that art an ungodly son or servant, perhaps thy parents or thy governors, as thou mayest perceive, and thy conscience telleth thee, aim to bring thee to God, and to save thy soul. Do they do it, and wilt thou not do it much more? Should not this strike thee? Saith the Apostle, Phil. ii. 13, ‘Work out your own salvation.’ There is a motive with an emphasis, *your own*. We apostles labour about it; you are engaged much more to work out your own salvation.

*After I heard.*—This is the third thing, the occasion; the other was the cause. ‘After I heard,’ saith he, ‘of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.’ Acts xxi., we read that Paul had been the means of their conversion, and therefore must needs have been an eye-witness of their faith and love at that their first conversion. Why then, may some say, doth he here only mention,

as matter of his thanksgiving, what he had by hearsay of them? It holds forth two things to us:—1. A further eminent grace and gracious practice of this apostle towards the saints, especially those to whom he was a means of conversion; namely, that when he had converted any, his calling of apostleship enforcing him to leave them, still his heart was longing, yearning after them, solicitous and inquisitive about them, to hear of their continuance in that faith, and growing up in grace. You shall see this too in 1 Thess. iii. 5, 'For this cause, when I could no longer forbear,'—mark his affection, he could not hold, he could have no rest in his spirit,—'I sent to know your faith;' and then, ver. 6, 'When Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith,' &c., it was even as gospel unto me, 'and we are comforted in all our afflictions by your faith,' so ver. 7. 'And what thanks,' saith he, 'can we render to God again for you?' so at the 9th verse. You shall find the like, my brethren, in all his epistles. News of the saints thriving in grace kept Paul alive. 'Now do I live,' saith he, 'if ye stand fast in the Lord;' so it is ver. 8 of that chapter to the Thessalonians. It comforteth me in all my distresses; though I have I know not how many personal distresses, yet I draw that comfort out of the news of your faith, which upholds my heart, and doth counterbalance my afflictions.

2. It holds forth, that not only the work of conversion in others, but withal their growing up in faith and love, and walking suitably, is a great cause and matter of thanksgiving to God; for that this is both an evidence of the truth of conversion at first, without which it proves itself to be unsound, as also that whereby God is as much glorified.

*Of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and love unto all the saints.*—

1. In general. You shall find the same words to the same purpose used both in Col. i. 4, 5, 'We give thanks, since we heard of your faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and love unto all saints;' and in his Epistle to Philemon, a particular person, 'Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and to all saints.' He coupleth faith and love, you see, together, both as the two eminent graces, and as the two great evangelical commandments, summing up all in these two. Thus, in 1 John iii. 23, 'This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.' Thus, likewise, the whole work of conversion: 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was exceeding abundant in faith and love,' saith the Apostle of his own conversion, reducing all to these two, 1 Tim. i. 14.

2. Particularly—

*Faith.*—That goeth first, you see; for faith works by love, and it is love out of faith, 1 Tim. i. 5. Faith brings home the love of God to the heart, or else fixes the heart in a dependence upon it, and pursuit after it; and then these do cause love to all the saints. Be sure thou find faith in Christ coupled with love to the saints, yea, and to be the rise of it.

*Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*—It is Christ that is the object of faith. Faith, indeed, takes in, and looks at all things else in the world; but faith, as justifying, preyeth and seizeth upon Christ, as its proper object. This is, therefore, the usual style of the Scripture, speaking of or describing faith: 'Faith that is in me,' saith Christ, Acts xxvi. 18, for Christ is the more immediate object of faith; we believe in God through Christ, that through him our faith might be in God, 1 Pet. i. 20, 21. And it is not only upon the person of Christ simply considered, but it is upon Christ as *Jesus*; so here, 'faith in our Lord Jesus.' It is faith on Christ as a Saviour, for as such only he is fitted to a sinner's faith. Take Christ in his personal excellencies, he

is rather the object of love than of faith ; but take him as a Saviour, and as made justification to the ungodly, so justifying faith looks upon him. But of this elsewhere.

Yet further, by 'faith,' as he meaneth the work of faith, so he meaneth constancy in faith, persevering in faith ; he doth not speak simply of their believing at first, for then he would have spoken of it, as out of his own experience himself had seen that. It was of the continuation of their faith, whereof he had heard. And thus the Apostle of the Thessalonians also ; he calleth their continuing in faith, their faith, 1 Thess. iii. 6. Timothy, saith he, 'brought tidings of your faith.' He had said in the first chapter, they had believed,—and himself was their converter, as of these here,—but yet afterwards he sent, and had heard by Timothy of their faith : that is, of their continuance and their constancy therein.

*Your faith.*—Here is one phrase more to be taken notice of. That which our translators have rendered *your faith*, in the original is *καθ' ὑμᾶς*, faith which is *amongst you*. And it denotes the eminency and renown of their faith. Faith in Christ being held out amongst them as the great and main business and matter of salvation, and not the doctrine of it only professed, but in the work of it ; and this generally and ordinarily by them that were believers, so that it was notorious. *Passim apud vos*, as we in Latin speak, frequent or current amongst you ; so eminently in the generality of believers, that their faith was renowned *tanquam fides Ephesina*, as the Ephesian faith. As in like phrase of speech, when we would speak of the learning in a university or society, as generally eminent, we say, The learning that is amongst you ; as Paul of the Romans' faith, 'Your faith, which is spoken of in all the world,' Rom. i. 8.

Musculus carrieth it to this sense, that because Paul did not think them all godly, therefore he doth use a more wary expression ; not saying, the 'faith that is in you,' but the 'faith that is among you.' Others, that the Apostle intended only an outward profession of faith, common to carnal Christians ; because many wicked men may be—as it is certain *de facto* they are, though *de jure* they should not—in the Church, yet so as still it may be said, *apud ecclesiam est fides*, it is amongst them. But, besides the former interpretation given, and that if he should mean outward profession of faith by 'faith' here, such a profession is like to have been in all and every one, I answer—1. If you consult his style in other epistles, he speaks of all and every one of other churches as having true grace, as of the Philippians : 'Even as it is meet for me,' saith he, 'to think of every one of you,' chap. i. 7. And it is not merely an outward profession of faith he speaks of there, but a persuasion of a good work of faith, which God would fulfil to the day of Christ. So, at ver. 6, 'Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work will perfect it ;' and then follows, 'even as it is meet for me to think this of you all.' In 2 Thess. i. 3, there is yet a more distinct phrase to this purpose : 'We are bound,' saith he, 'to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity *ἐνός ἐκάστου πάντων ὑμῶν*, of every one of you all aboundeth.' 2. If Musculus' criticism should have place here, yet there may be this account given of the variation of his style to the church of the Ephesians, that in a special manner Paul had it revealed to him by the Spirit of prophecy, of this church of Ephesus, that many, or some of them at least, should prove unsound in the faith, and so useth here a more wary and indefinite phrase. For look into Acts xx. 29, in a speech he made to the elders of Ephesus, he saith plainly, 'I know this, that after my departure there shall enter in

among you grievous wolves, not sparing the flock : also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.' And, 3. If any would make use of this his interpretation, that therefore the rule for receiving men into churches is not put upon a judgment of their holiness, but outward profession only ; then let us see such a profession of faith in any such as is mentioned here, that hath 'love to all the saints' joined with it, and I affirm they ought to be received. But when men are enemies to the saints, and do make them the men of their hatred, then let them profess what they will, there is not that faith which the apostles gave signs of for to judge of others by. When men do discover a spirit contradictory to the power of religion, of such, or in the like cases, I may say as 1 John iii. 17, 'How dwells the love of God in him?' Truly, says John, I know not. It is to me, says he, a contradiction which I know not how to believe ; nor would all the charity in John, the beloved disciple's heart, have relieved him. Neither was the testimony the Apostle gives here of these Ephesians, and, in the fore-cited places, of those he writ to, a judgment of mere charity, such as useth to be pleaded for, founded upon an outward profession, and a knowing nothing to the contrary. For as Calvin well observes upon this place, In that he gives thanks thus solemnly before God for their faith, it was not a bare testimony of charity, but of judgment.\* Paul gives thanks here for what was positive—namely, their faith in Christ, and love to all the saints. Such was the judgment the apostles gave of men, and so grounded.

*And love unto all the saints.*

*To saints.*—You see he mentioneth not love to God, and why? for if there be a love to all saints, as saints,—as if it be to all, it is to them as saints,—they must needs be supposed to love God also, as the Apostle saith, 1 John v. 1, 'He that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.' As, on the contrary, the same John had said in the chapter before, ver. 20, 'If a man say he loves God, and hateth his brother,' (that is, any saint,) 'he is a liar : for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?' That is, if men do not love them in whom they see the image of God, certainly they love not God himself, whom they see not ; as on the contrary also, if they do love that image, certainly they love God. If men's eyes cannot endure the light of a candle, I will never believe they would endure the light of the sun.

Again, the Apostle mentions not love to every man, though that be a duty, but love to *saints*. It is a duty to love a man's neighbour, as Matt. xxii., Luke x. ; but that is not mentioned here as a sign of their interest in Christ ; there is a humanity in man's nature to love his kind ; but it is, you see, loving the saints, under that notion as saints. Our Saviour is very accurate in distinguishing it thus, as you find it, Matt. x. 41 : 'He that giveth,' saith he, 'a cup of cold water to a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward : he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man'—that is, as we in the Latin express it, *eo nomine*, under that notion and abstracted consideration that he is a righteous man, and therefore loves him—'shall receive a righteous man's reward.' In another Evangelist it is yet more emphatical to this purpose : Mark ix. 41, 'Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name,' (because you are Christ's,) 'he shall not lose his reward.'

\* Hæc gratiarum actio non modo testimonium amoris erat erga Ephesos, sed etiam iudicii, quod de illis habebat Paulus. Nam ita coram Deo illis gratulabatur.

*Obs.*—My brethren, look upon saintship as the greatest excellency to love it. So Christ did, Ps. xvi. 1. His eye was ‘upon the excellent ones in the earth;’ that is, upon the saints, who were excellent to him; yea, also, even when not saints, because God loved them, as Isa. xliii. 4. It is strange to hear how men by their speeches will undervalue a saint as such, if without some other outward excellency. For whilst they acknowledge a man a saint, yet in other respects they will contemn him; he is a holy man, they will say, but is weak, &c. But is he a saint? And can there be any such other imperfection or weakness found as shall lay him low in thy thoughts in comparison of other carnal men more excellent? Hath not Christ loved him, bought him, redeemed him?

*To all saints.*—All those they judged to be saints. And this universal love unto all the saints, to be a certain evidence of true faith, follows from what was mentioned even now. For if a man love a righteous man, or saint, in the name or under the notion of a righteous man, as Matthew, or because he is Christ’s, as Mark, then he will love all saints and righteous men, and all that are Christ’s; for *à quatenus ad omne valet consequentia*, he will love the *totum genus*, the whole kind and tribe of them, in whom ever he sees the image of God, and upon whomsoever the love of God is pitched.

Here then lieth the trial of grace indeed, to love all kind of saints. There are saints that are froward, and peevish saints, and proud saints, &c.,—that is, they express a great many of these corruptions in their converses with men,—yet as we must love these, so it is a great sign of grace notwithstanding to love them, merely because they are saints, and that they are Christ’s. A brother loveth his crooked brother, and a lame brother, and a little brother, as well as those brethren that have none of these defects; and they do it because they are brethren, and for the parents’ sake who love them. Rich saints and poor saints, gifted saints and weak saints, these all together must be loved. Or, as the Holy Ghost’s expression is, Rev. xix. 5, ‘the servants of God, small and great.’ Some are great saints, some are small saints; there is little holiness appears in them, and yet love them all, for God and Christ doth. It is an excellent argument which the Apostle hath, urging of Christ’s example to this purpose, in Rom. xv. 1: ‘We that are strong,’ saith he, ‘ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves; for,’ ver. 3, ‘even Christ pleased not himself, as it is written,’ &c. There are saints that have infirmities, and great infirmities. He had instanced in the chapter before in differences of opinion and judgment, and discoursed thereof throughout that chapter, and upon that occasion thereof it was he makes this exhortation. ‘One believes,’ saith he, ‘that he may eat all things,’ that is, believeth it fully; others—speaking of the Jewish ceremonies that continued to some men’s consciences—eat not flesh, but they eat herbs rather. These were opinions opposite, and which produced contrary practices; each of these must bear the infirmities of either—they are saints. Yea, further, some of them were censorious, and judging all others rashly that were not of their minds, as these words import, ver. 3, ‘Let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth.’ And again, others were apt to despise their brethren, as the following exhortation implies, ‘Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not.’ The word there used is so to despise as to set at nought, disdain, vilify, as Herod and his soldiers did Christ, Luke xxiii. 11; it is the same word, *μη ἐξουθενεῖτω*. These were high and great infirmities, not in respect of difference in opinion only, but distempers in affection also.

In chap. xv. 1, the Apostle lays this command upon each, to bear

the infirmities of either. The word βαρᾶζειν is used of porters carrying burdens. We must be as 'porters' for our brethren; the worst and irksomest of services; and bear their greatest burdens, that may consist with their being brethren. And thus, Gal. vi. 2, you have the word used, and to this sense there again explained: 'Bear ye one another's burdens.' For what he calls 'infirmities,' Rom. xv. 1, he calls 'burdens' here; and in both commands our bearing them, because they are brethren, as ver. 1. And as for the measure and proportion of bearing, the word refers us even to what porters do, who of all mankind are inured to the greatest strainings and stretchings of their limbs. And for the obligation and motive thereunto, the metaphor insinuates that also. Kindness and common humanity in men, who are of a knot, and travel in company, doth afford to any of their companions mutual assistance. If there be any among them who through his having an infirmity, or a burden too heavy for him, which himself cannot carry alone, and so comes *lag*, as we say, or faints in the way, then the rest of his fellows that are stronger will do what they can to ease him in it, and bear it with him, or take it off from him. And then, in that Rom. xv.—for we walk to and fro, from one of these places to another—it follows, 'and not to please ourselves.' If a man consults with self-love, a man will find this irksome to self, that useth to seek pleasure in itself and in its own opinions, and boasts itself in its own understanding, and cannot bear contradiction from others, minds not others' good, much less is pleased with bearing others' infirmities, or supporting them in them; but seeks to depress another for them.

But to enforce this, and the rest of these exhortations, he propounds the disposition and example of Christ too, ver. 3, 'For even Christ pleased not himself.' Never was any one burdened, and so oppressed with the burdens of others he converseth withal, as Christ was with those he walked with. His human nature coming into the world, was to take and cleave to such company as God had chosen for him; and take them all, from first to last, and how unsuitable and displeasing consorts they were, and must needs be unto him! First, his parents, of mean birth and breeding, of low understandings. He could have taught them, for at twelve years he posed the doctors, yet he was obedient to them. The next which we read of that he conversed with were his disciples; all of them men of contrary spirits to his. Of two of them he says, 'You know not what spirit you are of.' Fire must come down from heaven presently, to satisfy their zeal, upon those that were opposite to them, and their master Christ; which was as contrary to his spirit as any one thing can be to another. He was perfectly of another spirit; he was meek, they were fiery; yet he loveth them, still holds in with them. Yea, one of these fiery sons of thunder and lightning was peculiarly his beloved disciple, and lay in his bosom. Then also Peter, how bold and saucy was he with him, and so great a provocation to him, that he once with full mouth cried out against him, 'Get thee behind me, Satan;' yet he loves him, dies for him. In a word, he bitterly complains of all his disciples at once, Matt. xvii. 17, 'O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?' He had borne so much, and so long, as he now at length speaks as one overpressed, as a cart with sheaves, groaning under it as weary.

Nor was there, or ever could there be supposed, any man so put to it this way as he; wisdom to converse with folly, perfect holiness with sin and impurity, truth with errors and mistakes. In converses of near relations, contrarities and antipathies of dispositions, how burdensome are they! He

could have much better and more suitable company in heaven; yet Christ with an unwearied patience bore all this, and loved them not a whit the less in the main; but died for them after all, and in dying bore their sins, and all ours also, 1 Pet. ii. 24, with an infinite far deeper and higher kind of suffering for them, when 'God laid on him the iniquities of us all,' than this of ours from our brethren he here speaks of; which was his righteous soul's being vexed with seeing and hearing what was contrary to the perfect transcendent holiness thereof. And now he is in heaven, those his saints that are on earth are of cross natures one to another, bad-natured creatures to God and man; yet he holdeth in with all sorts of saints, useth them kindly, and maintaineth such a fellowship with them all, as they all speak well of him.

Now follow, saith the Apostle, this example of your Lord and Master. And according to this his exhortation, in the 5th verse, he frameth his prayer for them: 'The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus.' He mentions such attributes in God as were suitable to the thing prayed for: to be like-minded, when differing thus in judgment, and needed patience; therefore he prays to God, as the God of patience, to give and bestow on you the grace of patience towards your dissenting brethren, who himself is a God of patience towards you, in bearing with you that differ from him in infinitely more things than you from your brethren; and also to be a God of consolation to you, and that will help you to bear the infirmities of the saints, and to love and cherish them; for if once the heart be filled with the comforts of the Almighty, 'if there be any comfort in love,' as the Apostle speaks, Phil. ii. 1, they will be like-minded, and then they will bear with their brethren. He adds, 'according to Jesus Christ;' that is, the example of Jesus Christ, of which you heard out of Rom. xv., and also according to the law of Jesus Christ; for upon that ground,—if now you return again to Gal. vi. 2, and to what immediately follows there, 'Bear one another's burdens,' says he, 'and so fulfil the law of Christ;' and thus to love, and love *all* the saints, is commended to us by Christ, by that great and special law of his, which you find enacted by him, John xiii. 34, 'A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another'—you will find he urgeth it under the old law: they were to love every one, because they had one and the same God their Creator. Moses commanded to love every one as their neighbour, whether they were Samaritans or Jews; but Christ hath brought up a new law, and new motives thereto, and a new way of loving, by his example. 'A new commandment I write to you,' says John, 1 Epist. ii. 8, 'which is true,' and so holds good, 'in him,' who began to set us the copy of it, 'and in you,' the followers of him. And when he was on earth, all his delight was in the saints, Ps. xvi. 3.

A new motive we have also for it—namely, our participation and communion together in Christ's blood. Men were before united in one God, their Creator, and in being 'made of one blood,' Acts xvii., and upon that ought to have loved one another as men, or if of the same nation. But the saints are all made of Christ's blood, and in that respect are a royal generation, a chosen nation, having of his blood all of them running in their veins. And accordingly he hath chalked out a new way of loving also. He gave his life for us, yea, himself, and all his glory; and so it follows in that John xv. 12, 13, 'Love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, to lay down his life for his friend;' and so should we do,

as 1 John iii. 16, for the spiritual good of our brethren. And as Christ singled out the saints thus to love them, and that with a special love, and all and every of the saints, so should we.

The last thing I observe, which gives light to the text, and instruction to us, is from the style the Apostle useth: 'Love to *all* saints.' That this was the primitive language, and this then made the great outward sign of a man's being in Christ in those times, as may appear both by this Apostle's so frequent mention of it in his Epistles, as Col. i. 4, Philem. 5, so also in that our Saviour Christ himself made it his badge, in that fore-named John xiii. 35, 'By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.' The disciples were known by some peculiar badge: as John Baptist's disciples, by austerity of life; and those that were the disciples of the Pharisees, by their habit and traditions; and thereupon saith Christ to his disciples, I will give you a badge whereby ye shall be known, and that by all men. It shall not be miracles. I will give you a greater sign. What is that? *Love one another.* Let that love be amongst you saints that is not amongst any generation in the world else; and so shall not I only know you that you are mine, and own you, nor you yourselves only know that you are mine, but all men shall know. The love of those first times to saints was such, according to this prophecy of Christ's, that the very heathen, taking notice of their mutual love, did distinguish and decipher them out by it. Tertullian, in his Apology for the Christians, writes: 'The love,' says he, 'amongst us is such, so great, that it is set as a mark and brand upon us. See,' say they, speaking of the heathens, their usual saying of us Christians, 'how they love one another.' Whereas they, the heathens, hate one another, saith he. 'And see,' say they, 'how they are ready to die one for another;' whereas you heathens, says Tertullian, 'are ready to kill one another.'

*Application:—*

My brethren, how far are these times off from this temper; wherein a little difference in judgment, what a great deal of judging one another and despising one another doth it breed in the hearts of men professing Christianity, in the hearts of saints! As the Apostle's words are there, in that Rom. xiv.,—and the discourse in that chapter, and his exhortation to forbearance, is not only in point of things merely indifferent, but in matters of exceeding great moment and consequence, namely, about the Jewish ceremonies and ceremonial worship: one would have them in the Church as once instituted of God, and another not; one esteemed one day above another; these were not matters of indifferency;—yet, saith he, receive one another for all this, own one another for all this; for God, saith he, hath received him into his own family. That is one motive he useth there in ver. 4. He is God's servant; the word is not δούλος, a servant any way, at large spoken, but οἰκίτης, he is a household servant. Jew and Gentile, both differing in opinion and practice, were both of the same family to God, whereof Christ is named; therefore do not you dare to cast him out from you.

Yea, at the third verse of chap. xiv. the Apostle, upon this ground, would not have them so much as judge them for such kind of opinions as might stand with their continuing the true servants of Christ, and the power of holiness in them. 'Judge not him that eateth,' speaking to the ceremonious Jew, 'for God hath received him;' that is, into his favour and grace, notwithstanding that opinion and practice of his: so as though he should die in that error, which thou thinkest such, through want of conviction, and never repent of it, yet God would save him. God accepts of him, and shall the

subject take on him to reject and condemn him, when his king doth not? Yea, ver. 4, 'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?' To judge thy fellow-servants in matters of this nature is an invasion of, and intrusion upon God's proper right, according to the law of nations; which therefore no power, civil or ecclesiastical, is to meddle in. He is, notwithstanding this, as faithful a servant to God as thou art. And who art thou? and, Who are ye? Be you the major part, and have the power in your hands; yet matters of difference from you of this alloy are not in your cognisance. And who are you, to assume this? Give to God the things that are God's, and to the magistrate, and to churches, what are theirs. But we would keep them, will men say, from falling into error. Let God look to and take care of that; saith he, 'He stands or falls to his own master,' who in a judicatory way is only to deal with him, without thy judging of him.

Yea, but he is in an error, which will prejudice and endanger him; but yet, not his salvation, says the Apostle. All sins for which a man shall be judged in the church are of that nature as, unless repented of, a man shall not be saved, as is strongly insinuated, 1 Cor. v. 5. For though you that are contrary-minded are apt, in the severity of self, to condemn what is opposite to you, as that which will endanger, or not stand with grace, yet he shall be holden up: and he speaks it with a peremptoriness, 'Yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand;' so as an error of invincible ignorance shall not endanger him, he embracing all the principles and practices that are necessary to salvation. What! is there nothing but presently casting out for this? No, saith he, receive one another notwithstanding. 'Let not him,' saith he, 'that eateth,' or is strong, 'despise another that eateth not,' or set him at naught, and say he is weak and silly, and I know not what: and let not the other 'that eateth not, judge him that eateth.' In these two lieth the rule of peace between them. Now, it is not likely that these men should presently be brought to one and the same mind or judgment; but let this rule be pressed in the meantime, not to judge one another for such things. There will be one believing one thing, and another believing another thing; and it will be so to the end of the world. In that Rom. xv. there is this expression in ver. 7, 'Let us receive one another,' saith he, 'as Christ hath received us, to the glory of God.' When the difference is but in such things as these, in God's name, saith he, if one heaven must hold us all, let churches hold us all. At least, let none dare to hinder the children from that bread, the children's bread, which Christ left as his last legacy for all whom he hath received at present. Yea, says he, *unto glory*: let the same land hold us all. Christ, saith he, 'hath received us to glory;' even now whilst the saints are as yet on earth, with their infirmities and differences, both from himself and one another. If he think men meet for glory, and that they shall live together in heaven; then, if the difference will never exclude them from heaven, they may not be excluded from the food of heaven; how far off is this from what the Apostle saith here, 'Love to all the saints?'

Ver. 16, *Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.*

In this verse are—1. The two duties he performed for them; 2. The constancy of his performance of them.

First, The duties: he prays for them, and gives thanks for them.

Secondly, The constancy, expressed twice by these two words, 'always,' and 'I cease not.'

*General scope:—*

*Since I heard.*—Musculus observes that Paul had himself been the instrument of their conversion, as Acts xix. And he used to pray for those churches which he had converted,—as you may see in his epistles, as to the Philippians also, chap. i,—and that so his meaning should be, says he, my prayers have ever been for you. But, secondly, since I heard of your perseverance in faith and love, and increase in both, I have been abundantly more enlarged, and have added new petitions to my prayers, which follow after, as those which befitted the estate of grown and sealed Christians. And, thirdly, I have given thanks accordingly, and have been enlarged in that duty also.

*First duty, Prayer—In my prayers.*—It is private personal prayer he means. ‘My prayer;’ so in Philemon, ‘in every prayer of mine;’ not those prayers which he made in public, as the mouth of those congregations. To distinguish it from which he says, *my prayers*; that is, which he made alone by himself, as also in Philem. 4.

*Making mention of you.*—The word here signifieth either *remembrance*, or it signifieth *mention*. When it is taken for remembrance, then it is joined with the word ‘to have’ remembrance; ἔχω μνησάν, as you have it, 2 Tim. i. 3, but here that which is joined with it is *making*, ποιούμενος, and not *having*. For to say, *to make remembrance* of one, is not proper; therefore they translate it rightly, ‘making mention.’ Only this you must know, this same word here used signifieth remembrance, and signifieth mention, and are both applied to prayer for others; the one in 2 Tim. i. 3, the other here.

*Obs. 1.*—Observe out of it, in general, The *remembrance* of another in prayer is as the inward part, which is a special work of the Holy Ghost, bringing to mind a man, or persons, for whom he would have one to pray; and *mention* is the outward part, a praying for them by name; as whom the Holy Ghost doth set upon a man’s heart,—as Paul, telling the Philippians how he prayed for them, and gave thanks for them, as he doth here, adds, ‘I have you in my heart,’ says he, chap. i. 7,—those, I say, whom God hath specially set upon a man’s heart, and whom the Holy Ghost in prayer bringeth to his remembrance, a man should in a special manner make mention of. This from the signification of the word, both *remembrance* and *mention*. And withal know, to encourage you in the practice hereof, that the particular, express mention, especially in private prayers, of persons that are in our heart, and of whom the Holy Ghost bringeth the remembrance to us in prayer, is that which is exceeding acceptable to God, as being conformable to the mind of the Holy Ghost, who guides us in praying. The Apostle doth not only pray thus for, and make mention of churches by name; but you shall find he makes mention of particular persons in his prayers by name, as of Philemon, ver. 3, 4, ‘I thank my God,’ saith he, ‘making mention of thee always in my prayers, hearing of thy love and faith.’ The like he did of Timothy, 2 Tim. i. 2.

*Obs. 2.*—Secondly, observe the largeness of Paul’s heart in his private prayers, as he had the care of all the churches. Read all his epistles, and you shall see almost every church that he writeth unto, he telleth them he prayed for them. And he telleth some special, particular persons so too, whom he had in his heart. And not only he, but other ministers did the same. Thus he tells the Thessalonians, that Timotheus and Sylvanus likewise made mention of them in their prayers, 1 Thess. i. Paul, my brethren

was nearest to Christ of any saint that ever was, and near unto Christ in this; for Jesus Christ in heaven hath the names of all saints in his breast, as the high priest had, and makes intercession for them. Paul maketh intercession for all the churches, and for many particular persons; he was abundant this way; and what a large time did he then spend in private prayer! Oh, think of the largeness of Christ's heart for us in his intercessions; as he knows his sheep by name, so every one that comes to God by him, he ceaseth not always to intercede for them, even every one of them in particular; as it follows there, 'He ever lives to make intercession.'

*Since I heard of your faith and love, I have not ceased, &c.*—From this coherence observe, The remembrance of eminent faith and love in Christians, or in churches, should provoke us to give thanks to God for them, and to pray much for them. And withal, it is a great encouragement to every saint to be very holy. For then God will stir up the hearts of many, to pray for them that are so, and the Holy Ghost will bring them to remembrance. Paul makes an argument for himself, Heb. xiii. 18, 'Pray for us,'—why?—'for we trust we have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly.' Seeing in all things we have a good conscience for the time past, but willing for the time to come to preserve it, you shall not lose your prayers in your praying for me. And in his Epistle to Timothy, he telleth him, that this moveth him to pray for him without ceasing; remembering, saith he, thy tears and thy faith, 2 Tim. i. 3, 4. Those that have much, shall have much added to them, and that by the prayers of others for them. And to that end God will stir up many to pray for them. This, among others, is a great motive and encouragement to holiness. Thou desirest many prayers for thee, this is the way to procure them.

*Second duty, Giving of thanks.*—By prayer we shew our dependence upon God for what we want. In thanks, we return an acknowledgment to God of what we have already received. Thanks is for mercies bestowed and past; and prayer is a seeking of God for mercies to come.

Now, first, mark the coherence. The words he had immediately before uttered were, that God had done thus and thus for them, 'to the praise of his glory.' And so it is as if he had said, The end of all the benefits God bestoweth being to the praise of his glory, and I, having this praise of his glory in mine eye and heart, as dearest to me, and 'having heard of your faith and love, cease not to give thanks for you.' My brethren, the highest way that we in this life are able to give glory to God is by thankfulness, Ps. l. 14, 15, compared with ver. 23, 'Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows to the Most High: and call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' And this glorifying is offering thanks: so, ver. 23, 'Whoso offereth praise doth glorify me.' So that now you are obliged unto this duty, upon the highest obligation, because of all duties else it doth tend so much to the glory of God.—I have despatched the two duties.

The second thing in the word is, *his constancy in praying*; 'I cease not.'

The meaning is this: In every prayer, as oft as I have prayed solemnly, which I have not ceased to do, 'I have not ceased to give thanks to God for you;' so Phil. i. 4, 'Always, in every prayer.' If we seek a great blessing at God's hand, we cease not praying for it till we have an answer. The parable so teacheth us, Luke xviii. 1. And then—

*Obs.*—The observation is, That (which we are wanting in the performance of) great mercies, either upon ourselves or others, which we are bound to thank God for, we should do it without ceasing a long while after. When

you are to seek to God for a great mercy, then you cease not to make mention of it in your prayers; but the Apostle, you see, ceaseth not to give thanks: they are both alike to the glory of God. And according to your prayers, so are your mercies; great and long prayers bring down in the end great and lasting mercies. And on the other hand, if your mercies be great and lasting, your thanksgivings should be great also.

Besides the reason I formerly mentioned,—that thanksgiving glorifieth God so much, and is to the praise of his glory,—take the measure of the duties themselves. Prayer and thanksgiving are of an equal latitude; they are both duties of the first commandment. And as we say of God's attributes, they are all of a like extent; so are those duties that are duties of the first commandment. It is a shame for us, that if we have been long and much in prayer for great mercies before we obtained them, we should make short and small work of our thanksgivings for them; that when you have not ceased to be instant in prayer to obtain them, you should cease to give thanks for them when you have received them. The glory of God is concerned alike in both. If they be great mercies, and such as have influence into the whole course of a man's life, whereof he hath the daily benefit, he should not cease to remember them, and to give thanks for them daily. If they be occasional mercies, they should work as occasional afflictions do. It is not to be said that every affliction a man should be continually thinking of, or making use of. No, but they are specially to operate till another affliction cometh. A man should make use of the last. So it is in mercies and thanksgivings. God stroweth some benefits, some mercies in our life, as a rhetorician doth flowers in his orations, here and there, up and down. Now the last mercy, till God hath put down that mercy by some greater, we should still remember it. Only, on solemn days of fasting, upon God's calling thereto by some eminent affliction, we should then take notice and a survey of as many former afflictions as we can call to mind, to humble ourselves under God's displeasure in multiplying of them. And thus of mercies, in days of thanksgivings.

Secondly, There are two words to shew this constancy: 'I cease not,' applied to his giving thanks, and 'always,' spoken of his prayings; and either denotes a constant set solemnity of praying and thanksgiving, but especially both joined do import it; which was morning and evening, as the worship of old was, 'night and day,' 2 Tim. i. 3. And though Daniel prayed thrice, and others seven times, yet the general constant custom, principle, and manner of the private worship of all the Jews was twice a-day, being conformable to the public institution of the sacrifices and incense twice a-day, which was termed 'continual sacrifice;' by which 'pray continually' may be interpreted, which was the rule of Paul's practice, Acts xxvi. 7, 'Unto the which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come.' But of that I have spoken more upon Phil. i. 4.