

SERMON XXIII.

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of the might of his power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.—VER. 19, 20.

I SHEWED the last day, the reference or coherence that these words have with and to the former. I did it in many particulars; the chief whereof is this: whereas he had spoken, in the former verses, of the riches of the glory of that inheritance that is provided for the saints, that their hearts might be strengthened against all doubts of attaining that glory, he prayeth that they might see, as the riches of that inheritance, so what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, &c. And he propoundeth, for their comfort, two things to them: the greatness of the power, and the efficacy of it; whereof already they had some experience in their first conversion; which power was engaged to perfect and finish their salvation, and bring them to that glory. And to confirm their faith thus, he presenteth Christ to them as their Head, (as the 22d verse hath it,) whom, as their Head, God hath raised up from the dead, to that surpassing glory which he hath in heaven, far above all principalities and powers, as a pawn that they should one day come thither as well as he; for the same power that wrought in him in raising him from the dead, is engaged, saith he, by virtue of him, and of his being a Common Person for you, to work likewise in you. This, in brief, is the main scope of the Apostle in these and the following words, to the end of the chapter.

The parts of these 19th and 20th verses, or, if you will, of this 19th verse in a more especial manner, are these four:—

Here is, first, a magnificent and glorious description—one word heaped upon another—of the power that is in God. And take it, first, as it is a general description of it; he setteth out concerning it three things—

First, the superexcellent greatness of it. He calleth it not only a greatness of power, but he calleth it an exceeding greatness of power.

He setteth it out, *secondly*, by that infallible and irresistible efficacy of it in its working: 'according,' saith he, 'to the energy or effectual working,'—working that always hath success, faileth not,—the thorough 'working of the might of his power.'

Then the *third* thing concerning the description of this power is the proportion of its work: 'according to its working,' saith he. Those are the three things concerning this power in the general. I despatched two of them the last day.

I shewed, *first*, the excellency of this power; it is a greatness of power, it is ὑπερβάλλον μέγεθος τῆς δυνάμεως, it is a superexcelling power. I shewed that the force of those words contained three things in them: it was a power above all we are able to ask or think in that sense—above all our knowledge, as I shewed the word is used in this epistle to the Ephesians; it is a power

above all resistance which any creature can oppose; and it is so great a power, so excelling, as in comparison of it the creature hath no power. This I shewed to be the force of the words from parallel places of the New Testament.

Then, *secondly*, here he setteth forth the efficacy of this power; he calleth it the effectual working of the might of his power; *κατὰ τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ*. I shewed you that the phrase is put for efficacy of working, such as hath always success, takes effect, and brings the things to pass. And therefore now, to shew that God when he thus worketh, worketh effectually, he doth put two words together; 'the effectual working,' saith he, 'of the might of his strength,' the might of his power; so you may see the words varied in your margins.

The word that is translated power, *ἰσχύος*, signifieth natural strength; the word *κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος*, the might of that strength, is the utmost extension of it; as when a man is said to do a thing with the might of his strength, the meaning is, he putteth as it were the utmost strength but that he will effect it. The word *κράτος* is so taken in the Virgin Mary's song, Luke i. 51. That which is here translated might, is taken there for the extension, the stretching forth of the arm of God, *ἐποίησε κράτος ἐν βραχίονι*, 'He hath shewed strength,' saith she—it is the same word—'with his arm.' Now the arm, you know, is the strongest part of a man; he wrought strength with his arm, he put it forth to the full; and she speaketh it of the greatest work that ever God did, which was the incarnation of the Son of God.

Or the word *ὑπερέβαλλον* is the authority, the command of his strength, the prerogative of his strength. He doth not work in this with an ordinary power; but as kings work with their extraordinary power, and they will stretch their prerogative, so doth God in this; it is the working of the prerogative of his might and of his power.

So now you see, first, the excellency of this power in those words, 'the exceeding greatness of his power.' You see the efficacy of it in those words, 'according to the working of his mighty power.'

Now, then, in the *third* place, observe concerning the power of God in general, *that God hath proportions of work, putteth forth his power more or less*. When he speaks here of the power toward believers, saith he, it holdeth proportion, it is according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead. Always God proportioneth the putting forth of his power to his work, sheweth more power in one work than in another. Therefore you find in Scripture sometimes mention of the finger of God; as in those miracles in Egypt, Exod. viii. 19, the magicians acknowledge that it was the finger of God. And our Saviour Christ, when he wrought miracles here below, Moses being his type, and those magicians that opposed Moses being types of the Pharisees, therefore useth the same phrase; 'If I,' saith he, 'by the finger of God cast out devils.' Here is the finger of God you see. Well, sometimes God putteth forth his hand, which is more than his finger; as it is said he brought the people out of the land of Egypt with a strong hand. But then in other works he putteth forth his arm, which is more than his hand, and then he cometh to his might, 'He sheweth might with his arm,' saith she, Luke i. 51. And Ps. lxxxix. 13, 'Thou hast a mighty arm,' saith he, speaking of God. So that you see there are proportions of power God putteth forth, and in this work, whatever it be, there is the might of his arm, the might of his power, there is the prerogative of his power; there is the exceeding greatness of his power exercised toward believers, as I shewed the last day.—And so

much now for the consideration of the power of God as here in general it is spoken of God.

The second head that I observed in these words is, *the subject of this power*, whom it works upon, the persons; 'what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward'—to us whom he had spoken of in the former verses, elected in Christ before all worlds; and the observation I raised from thence was this: That of all the works of God, seeing he hath the same proportion of power, more in some works and less in others, in the works of salvation toward believers, therein he sheweth the exceeding greatness of his power. The power of God, as I shewed, is seen in hell; the power of his wrath. The power of God was seen in creating the world; but the greatness of his power, the exceeding greatness of his power, to us-ward. The love that is in God calleth forth all his strength, and engageth it for the good of believers. As he sheweth forth, not only mercy, but riches of mercy, yea, exceeding riches of mercy; as it is Eph. iii. 8, it is the same word, ἀνεξίχνιαστος πλεῖστος, that is here; so likewise it is said of his power to us-ward, he sheweth forth the greatness of his power, the exceeding greatness of his power.

Now, my brethren, raise up your thoughts, you that are believers. If exceeding greatness of mercy shall be the contriver of what good you shall have, and if the exceeding greatness of power shall be the worker, and undertake to work all that mercy doth contrive; what will God do with you then? What will God bring you to, upon whom he will shew forth, ere he hath done, the exceeding riches of his grace, the exceeding greatness of his power?—And so much now for the persons; 'to us-ward.'

III. The third head which I propounded to be handled out of these words, and which is indeed the most difficult, is *wherein this greatness of God's power is shewed*. One instance you have of it, wherein it was shewed, in raising up our Head, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, from death to glory; that he instanceth in plainly; 'The same power,' saith he, 'that wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, in the heavenly places;' there is no question made of that by none that open these words. But then, in what work this greatness of power, proportionable to the raising Christ from death to life, can be spent as wrought in us; of that there is a great controversy about the words.

There are some of our divines and interpreters that restrain the Apostle's scope only to the working of faith at first, and they make the coherence of the words thus and thus only, 'that you may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward.' There make a stop. 'Who believe according to the working of his mighty power;' joining, 'who believe,' and, 'according to the working of his mighty power,' together. Their meaning is this: who have had faith wrought in them, according to the working of his mighty power. So that now all this mighty power is in the working of faith at first, and so they restrain it; as if the Apostle had said, You know what power went to work faith in you; it was not the power of your own will, but it was the exceeding greatness of his power; you believed according to the working of the might of his power, such as was in Christ when he was raised from the dead. That is the first sense given of it.

The Remonstrants, or those whom you call the followers of Arminius, go a clean contrary way, and they quote Calvin himself against the former opinion; and indeed to restrain it only to faith and the working of faith, which Calvin is against. But then they contend the scope of the Apostle to be only to shew what the power of God shall be in us, in raising us up

at the last day to glory, and that that is the Apostle's scope and his only scope here. They would cut off all the power of God working in us at first when we believe, yea, and cut off from the Apostle's aim here all the power that works in us before the latter day; but that power that shall raise us up from the dead, and set us in glory, that is the power which the Apostle meaneth here, which is answerable to the raising up of Christ from death to life. And there is a great deal of appearance for it, that this should be the Apostle's scope. He had spoken of heaven in the very words before, 'what are the riches of the inheritance of the saints;' now he speaks therefore of that power that raiseth the saints up to that glory; then in the words following you have the instance of Christ raised up from death to glory as your Head, as a pawn that God will raise you up likewise from the bodily death of the grave to life and glory; and it is a great comfort to believers to know that the same power that raised up Christ shall one day raise up them.

Now, for my own part, if you would know my thoughts of these words, and what the scope of the Apostle is, wherein the power to us-ward is shewed,—as usually all truth lies between two extremes, and yet takes something of both extremes,—I think this, that the Apostle's scope is to shew that all the saving workings of God, both of grace and glory, from first to last, from the first act of conversion to the setting of a man upon the highest pinnacle of glory in heaven, raising of him up at the latter day, and the like; they are all the plain scope and meaning of the Apostle here. He meaneth both that efficacious power put forth in working faith at first; 'who believe according to the working of his mighty power.' He meaneth that mighty power that keepeth us to salvation; 'who are kept by the power of God through faith to salvation,' 1 Peter i. 5. And last of all, he meaneth that almighty power that shall 'change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like to the glorious body of Christ,' Phil. iii. 21. The Apostle looks not forward only to the glorious resurrection to come, nor backward only to the work of conversion and first believing, but likewise to their present keeping in the state of grace, that those whom God had already by such a power converted, he would by the same power keep them to salvation, and raise them up at the latter day. And all these works are works of the exceeding greatness of his power, and they all hold proportion with raising up Jesus Christ from death to life.

So that now I do grant to both sides what they would have; and the truth is, that this sense doth Vostrius, one of the Remonstrants' side, in his comment upon this place, incline unto in his paraphrase; though afterward in his *scholia* upon his paraphrase he denieth it. 'The exceeding greatness of his power,'—that is, saith he, partly already put forth, and which shall be put forth in us.

Now, my brethren, the reason why I interpret it is, because you see the Apostle neither restrains it to the time past,—he doth not say, 'who have believed,'—nor doth he restrain it unto the time to come. He doth not say, 'the power that shall work in you;' but he speaks indefinitely, because he would take all in, 'what is the power,' saith he, 'to us-ward who believe.' And that which is translated 'to us-ward,' εἰς ἡμᾶς, is either *towards us*, or *in us*. The words will signify either, because the Apostle's scope is for either, either the power that is towards us for the future, to keep us for heaven and raise us up at the latter day, or the power that works in us for the present; the words bear both. And those other words, 'according to the effectual working,' we shall find are applied both to conversion, to growth in grace, and to raising us up at last; and so what is else-

where said in parcels, is all meant here. You have it applied to conversion, Eph. iii. 7, where he saith, that he was made an apostle and converted according to the effectual working of his power; 'whereof,' saith he, 'I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God, given to me by the effectual working of his power.' It is the same word that is used here. His meaning is, either by that effectual working that wrought upon my heart, or that effectual working he works upon the hearts of others to convert them. He speaks of conversion. So likewise for growth in grace; Eph. iv. 16, he saith, 'The whole body increaseth with the increase of God, by the effectual working in the measure of every part.' Here it is applied to growth in grace. And then, last of all, Phil. iii. 21, he saith, 'He will change our vile bodies,' (speaking of glory,) 'according to the effectual working of his mighty power,' (it is the same word still,) 'whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.' So that indeed the Apostle here takes in all the works of God upon believers first and last; and that I take to be most properly the scope of the Apostle here, that in them all he sheweth the exceeding greatness of his power, the same that wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.

Now, my brethren, because there is a controversy about the words, and that the Remonstrants, as I told you, would cut off all aims that the Apostle should have to the work of faith and conversion at first; they would not have it to be understood of that by no means, and of that only is the controversy; therefore I will take some pains to clear unto you that that is one part of the meaning the Apostle here takes in, and a great part too. You shall give me leave to do it, for it is the gaining of one of the strongest forts we have, and the fortifying of it, for the glory of the grace of God in conversion.

Whereas our divines, some of them, would read the words thus, 'who believed according to the working of his mighty power,' as if their faith and believing were wrought by such a mighty power; here, say they, the words 'who believed' do not come in to any such sense; it is not to shew what power goeth to work faith, but to describe who they are whom God will shew his power upon one day; they are those that believe. It supposeth them already believers; he doth not speak, say they, at all of faith, as the fruit of this power, in which this power is put forth, but as the qualification of the persons in whom it shall be put forth: so that those that are believers may comfort themselves that one day the same power that was put forth in Jesus Christ to raise him from the dead to glory, shall raise them up too. So that they make the words, 'who believed,' a mere *exegesis*, a mere explanation of what persons he meaneth, in whom this power shall be put forth.

There is a great reason that they should contend against this. Why? For if it should prove to be the meaning of it, that all this power of God, the same that wrought in Christ in raising him from death to life, that that power should be put forth in conversion at first, and that that power should be engaged to keep a man to salvation; all the doctrine of free-will, as they hold it, and of falling from grace, falleth to the ground instantly. For if there be a power that is efficacious, and such a power as wrought in Christ, which was such a power as it was impossible but he should be raised from the dead; if such a power converteth a man at first, and afterward is engaged to keep him to salvation, then both conversion and faith is wrought maugre all opposite power in the creature, whatsoever it be: and likewise they are kept by the same power to salvation, and shall never fall away. Here will

therefore be a power beyond the power of moral persuasions or enlightenings; here will be a power that doth infallibly, efficaciously work faith in men.

Now, my brethren, in arguing which of these two is the scope of the Apostle, viz., whether that the power of God in converting a man at first, be not the aim of the Apostle in this place—in arguing this, I shall launch no further into the controversy than to clear the place; which as an interpreter I must do, and I shall do it with all fairness and simplicity, as in all controversies we ought to do.

To come, then, to the reasons of it. There are three sorts of arguments which I shall bring to prove that the Apostle's scope is *to take in the power of God working conversion at first*.

1. The first is taken from the very *letter* of the words.

2. The second shall be taken from the *coherence* of the words with what is before.

3. The third sort of arguments shall be taken from *what followeth after*.

1. First, that the Apostle here intendeth to speak of *the exceeding greatness of his power in the first working of faith*; take the letter of the words, and it will evidently bear this sense; 'who believe,' saith he, 'according to the working of his mighty power.' And whereas they say you should put the stop at 'who believe,' and read it thus, 'what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe;' and should not join them with what followeth, 'who believe according to the working of his mighty power,' it cometh all to one. We see that 'who believe' is hedged in with an almighty power on one side, 'the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe;' and with an almighty power on the other side, 'who believe according to the working of his mighty power.' So that certainly his mighty power in working faith should be intended.

Then again, in the second place; whereas when he spake of the riches of the glory that is in heaven, the persons there in whom he had said this glory is, he calleth saints; 'the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints;' that is, as I interpreted it when I handled it, in saints made perfect; for it is only in those saints that are now perfect in heaven. But mark it, when he cometh to speak of the power that is to us-ward, he doth not say the power in saints, or toward saints made perfect, but *to us-ward who believe*; he changeth the phrase. What is the meaning of that? We that believe at present, we have this power put forth in us; he distinguisheth believers on earth from saints in heaven. When he speaks of the power that wrought before, and works at present in them, he calleth them believers; when he speaks of the riches of glory hereafter, he calleth them saints. Why? You know that perfect holiness is in heaven, but faith is not there; faith ceaseth there, saith the Apostle. So that his meaning in a word is this: that as there are riches of glory in the saints in heaven, so there is an exceeding greatness of power towards us that believe on earth. As we believe at present, so the power is at present.

Again, thirdly, if you mark it, he doth not say the power that *shall work* in you, as if it were to be confined only to the raising men up at the latter day. He doth not speak it in the future, as if he restrained it to the glory of heaven to come; but, saith he, 'that ye may know what is the power,' *τῆς δυνάμεως*, the power at present. If he had meant the power only that shall work hereafter, he would have expressed it in the future tense; for so he doth express the resurrection of Christ in the time past; 'which hath wrought in Christ,' saith he.

Then, in the fourth place, there is something in this word 'to us-ward;' at least the Apostle's meaning must be to include himself who was an apostle, he shuffeth himself in with these Ephesians, and with all believers; 'to us-ward.' Now, how was Paul converted? When he was converted, he had experience of the exceeding greatness of his power, if any man in the world ever had, or shall have. Nay, his example is acknowledged by many of those that are contrary-minded to be an exception. God did work, say they, infallibly in his conversion. For a man to be taken in the height of his persecution; Christ met him in the field, he was going out against him armed; he strikes him off his horse at first blow, turned him clean contrary; 'I that was a persecutor and injurious,' I had nothing else in my heart; 'Lord,' saith he, 'what wilt thou have me to do?' 'The exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward,' Paul among the rest. And the Scripture seemeth to lean that way, that Paul had an effectual work, as our translators translate the word *ἐνεργεία* there, in the place I quoted even now, Eph. iii. 7, 'I was made a minister of the gospel,' saith he, 'according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me, by the effectual working of his power.'

To open these words a little. He speaks, as I take it, with Rollock and Calvin, of his conversion, together with which he received his apostleship and commission for it. You shall find that Paul's conversion is expressed by receiving his apostleship, and the one is put for the other. You have many places for that; whenever almost his conversion is mentioned, you have his apostleship likewise, and the commission for it put in. When our Saviour Christ would convert him from heaven, what doth he say to him? Read Acts xxvi. 16, 'Stand upon thy feet,' saith he; 'for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee.' In his conversion here Christ telleth him that he would make him an apostle; he expresseth his conversion by it. You may find the like in Acts ix. 14, 15, where his conversion is likewise related; when Ananias was sent to him, Christ speaks of him as of a man new struck. 'Go thy way,' saith he, 'for he is a chosen vessel, to bear my name before the Gentiles,' &c. The like you may find, 1 Tim. i. 12. Read his conversion there; how doth he express it? Saith he, 'He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, I that was before a persecutor and blasphemer; and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was exceeding abundant.' He expresseth his conversion by being put into the ministry of apostleship, such as Paul had.

Now therefore, when he saith here in Eph. iii. 7, 'Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given to me, by the effectual working of his power;' this is the Apostle's meaning, that he was converted by the effectual working of his power. And as here in the text it is said, the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, the same that wrought in raising Christ from the dead, so compare with this Gal. i. 1, 'I was made an apostle,' saith he, 'not of men, neither by men; but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father.' I was converted, saith he, and what followeth? 'Who raised him from the dead.' Why cometh that in? The same effectual working, saith he, that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, made me an apostle, converted me to the faith. Now then, the Apostle, out of his own experience of 'the exceeding greatness of his power,' putteth himself in too; 'to us-ward,' saith he, the same power that converted me, converted you; although there was some extraordinariness in it in respect of the manner of doing it, yet the power is the same. As we receive like faith, as

the apostle Peter saith, so the same power is no less to work in the poorest believer's faith, than what wrought in the heart of Paul. And so much now for the reading of the words, that they will bear that sense; not to relate only to the power put forth in believers at the resurrection, but in the first work of faith.

2. The second sort of arguments shall be taken from the scope of the Apostle here, in *the coherence of these words with the former*, and with those that follow after; for you shall see that the coherence of both will carry it, as well to refer it to the *working of faith* at the first, as to the *raising us up* at the last.

One scope of the Apostle, which I mentioned when I shewed the coherence, was this, to comfort believers in the weakness of their faith for the obtaining this glory, against all doubting. Now, my brethren, what is the great doubt that possesseth the hearts of Christians, that usually takes up their thoughts? It is not so much a questioning the power of God to raise them up hereafter, as it is the power of God to keep them for the present. Therefore, when the Apostle would comfort their hearts, that they should attain this glory, he doth not pray only that they may know the power that should raise up saints at the latter day; but the power that should keep them, that they might know the power that is engaged to us-ward that believe, to preserve us to this glory. I say, believers are not so much, or not so usually, taken up with doubtings or questionings about the power of God in raising them hereafter with Christ; all men's thoughts take that for granted; but the doubt is about keeping them until then.

I will give you a scripture for it, John xi. 23. Poor Martha there, when Christ came to raise up Lazarus, and told her, 'Thy brother shall rise again;' 'I know,' saith she, 'that he shall rise again at the resurrection of the last day.' She doubted not of this; this did not trouble her at all, but she only doubted of the power of Christ to raise him presently, her faith stuck at that. 'By this time,' saith she, 'he stinketh, for he hath lain four days in the grave.' It was the present resurrection she doubted of, and the power of Christ in that. 'Therefore,' saith he, ver. 40, 'said I not unto thee, that if thou believest, thou shouldst see the glory of God?' see it presently. I quote it for this purpose, to shew that if the scope of the Apostle be to take away the doubting of Christians concerning their attaining this glory, it is not so much he prayeth that they may see the power that shall raise men at last, for that few men doubt of,—ordinarily they do not,—but how they shall be kept by the power of God to this salvation; the present power that shall keep them and preserve them, that they doubt of. This is that, therefore, that the Apostle prayeth for that they may see. Therefore, 1 Peter i. 5, after he had mentioned the glory of that inheritance, he comforteth them with this, that they are 'kept by the power of God unto salvation;' he speaks to their hearts, for that is the great thing they doubt of. Now then, mark how I argue. If this be the scope of the Apostle to comfort believers, that there is an almighty, an omnipotent power that shall keep them in the state they are in, that they shall attain to glory, the argument is strong, that if such a power as this be to keep them and preserve them, that much more such a power was put forth in their first conversion, when they first came to believe. If to preserve them in faith after they have believed, and were sealed; then much more, to persuade them to believe at first, when they were heathens, to bring them to the faith, would require an exceeding greatness of power.

My brethren, there is as great a power, and a greater, if we may make

comparisons, in converting at first, than in keeping afterward, Rom. v. 9, 10. The Apostle makes it there a greater work to reconcile us, being enemies, than to keep us friends, being reconciled. It is a greater work to put life into a dead man, of which the comparison is there, than to keep life in him; you know heat will do that. Conversion is a greater work in some regards than glorifying a man is. Why? Because the glorifying a man is but a gradual change, it is but from grace to glory; but to convert a man is a special change, it altereth the state of a man, a wolf becometh a lamb; it altereth the kind, the other addeth but a new degree. Now therefore, if the Apostle's scope be, as most evidently it is, they may know his power, to the end to comfort them, to take all doubts away;—they knew the hope of his calling before, he prayed for that in the former verse; that they might know the riches of the glory of his inheritance, that he prayed for in the last words before; now, that they might know the power that would keep them, according to their hope, unto that salvation;—so that now it agreeth well with this scope of the Apostle.

Again, in the second place; suppose the Apostle's scope be to comfort them, and to strengthen their faith in this point, that there shall be an almighty power put forth in them, to raise them up at the latter day; you shall find—take this in too—that they may know the power that first converted them, is the strongest argument that can be to persuade them of the other. My meaning is this: that the strongest argument that could be brought to persuade the Ephesians, to strengthen their faith, that an almighty power should one day work to raise them from death to glory,—I say, the strongest argument to work this in them, is to see the power that first converted them. Here is one argument indeed to strengthen their faith, namely, they saw by faith their Head, Jesus Christ, to have been raised from death to glory; but then add but this to it, We saw as great a power, and found as great a power in working faith in us, and conversion in us, in changing our hearts, as was put forth in raising of Christ from death to life; here is a double argument. And so, indeed, I find most of the Greek fathers run that way in their interpreting this place. The Apostle, say they, doth declare what God already hath done for them and in them; how he had wrought them to believe by an almighty power, to strengthen and confirm their faith for the future, that he would shew forth the same power in raising them up from death to life.

To this purpose Theophylact and Chrysostom,—I name him because he was as much for the freedom of will as any other, being an orator to persuade men to turn to God; a holy and a good man, as good as Austin, that was of another mind, living in the same age with him,—yet he interpreteth this place of working faith at first; for to this purpose is his speech. The Apostle's scope, saith he, is to demonstrate by what already was manifested in them, namely, the power of God in working faith; to raise up their hearts to believe what was not manifested, namely, the raising of them up from death to life: it being, saith he, a far more wonderful work to persuade a soul to believe in Christ than to raise up a dead man, a far more admirable work of the two. To raise up a dead man, saith he, God made but one word of it,—I speak it to shew that that is his scope,—‘Lazarus, arise; and he that was dead arose, and came forth bound hand and foot,’ &c. Saith Peter to Tabitha, ‘Arise; and she opened her eyes and sat up.’ But here it costs God many words when he cometh to convert a man, ‘How often would I have gathered you under my wings?’ I allege it to this purpose, to shew that they likewise interpret it to this sense, that by what they had already

experience of in their own hearts, they might from thence see and believe that great power that would work in them hereafter. And whereas now,—take the other sense,—all the weight of the argument to persuade their faith of the truth of this, that they shall one day be raised up from the dead, lieth upon their mere faith to believe that God raised up Christ, which is a thing they did not see, nor had experience of; take this argument in too, that a believer hath found the same power in him in working faith that wrought in Christ; he hath not only a double argument, but an argument in his own experience of that power, and so more suitable to him for his heart to be more taken with it, and he hath this comfort besides, that that power which converted me is engaged, and will certainly keep me, and raise me up at the last day. So that the Apostle's scope will be every way more full.

And then another scope the Apostle hath—as appeareth by the 15th and 16th verses—is to provoke them to thankfulness. He saith that he thanked God for the work of grace in them, whereby they had obtained an inheritance, ver. 13. Now, to the end that they may be thankful, and thankful to purpose, he prayeth that they might know this great power that thus wrought faith in them, whereby they were interested in that inheritance, that thus they might be thankful also. Did you but know, saith he, what power it was that works in you that believe, you would be astonished with the love of God toward you; you would be overcome with it; how thankful would you be! It is Austin's observation upon this Eph. i. 16. He argueth from it because Paul gave thanks. If God's power, saith he, were not in it, in turning a man to God; and were it not the cast of his own will, and yet the will of man work freely too, how could a man heartily give thanks unto God? There is one absurdity put upon his opinion. Say they, If you do not hold that the will of man casteth it freely, to what end are all exhortations made by God to man? But on the other side, If the power of God do not cast it, and yet the will work freely too, why are thanks given to God, as the author of all, more than to man's own will? And the truth is, there would less absurdity fall upon the other than upon this.

So now you have two sorts of arguments despatched. First, from the letter of the words; secondly, that this agreeth with the scope of the Apostle here in the words before.

3. I will name one more, and that is a great one, and it is *the coherence of these words with those that follow after*; that the Apostle doth here evidently mean the exceeding greatness of his power in converting a man at first, that he takes this in eminently in his aim. To make this plain unto you. After that the Apostle had discoursed of the power of God in raising up Christ from the dead, from the 20th verse to the 23d; having said likewise that the same power works in us that wrought in Christ when he was thus raised; mark what he saith in the 2d chapter, ver. 1 and 6, 'And you who were dead in sins and trespasses, wherein in time past ye walked, hath he quickened. Even when we were dead in sins, hath he quickened us' (so ver. 5) 'together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' Here the Apostle plainly declares that his scope and meaning is, speaking of the exceeding greatness of power that works in those that believe, the same that wrought in Christ in raising him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places; the same power, saith he, hath quickened you, when you were dead in sins and trespasses, the same power, saith he, hath raised you up, and set you with Christ, your Head, in heavenly places. When he saith, 'You hath he quickened,' as he doth at the 1st and 5th verses of the 2d chapter, his mean-

ing is, he hath put life into you, put a principle of godliness into you: 2 Peter i. 3, 'According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.'

Now, to shut up this discourse, the Apostle, from the 19th verse of this chapter to the 6th verse of the 2d chapter, saith these two things, and all is summed up in them—to give you the coherence, and mark it. First, he layeth down a general proposition in the 19th verse, That they may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power in them that believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from death to glory. Here is the general proposition, that God sheweth the same power in them that believe that he shewed in Christ in raising him. Well, there are two enlargements of this. First, he telleth and explaineth what a great power was shewed in Christ; and that he doth from the 21st verse to the end of the chapter; how he was raised up, and set far above all principalities and powers, and above every name that is named in heaven and in earth. Then, secondly, he explaineth how it was, and when, this same power wrought in them that believe. 'And you,' saith he, 'hath he quickened, when ye were dead in sins and trespasses, together with him, and hath raised you up,'—not only *will* but *hath* done it. Therefore evidently the Apostle speaks of the conversion of believers; the same power that wrought in Christ and raised him up, is that which works in them and raised them up also.

Now, my brethren, to back this with one parallel place, which I ever love to do, and so I shall go off from this. As here in the text he makes mention of the greatness of his power in working faith, and paralleled it with the power that raised up Christ from the dead; so read Col. ii. 12, 13, and you shall find the very same thing said there too. Saith he, 'Ye are buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.' Parallel this with the words of the text. Saith the words of the text, 'the power that works in you to believe;' he speaks of faith. Saith the Apostle here, 'Ye are buried with him, but ye are risen through faith.' Again, secondly, he compareth believing in the text (being compared with those following verses in the 2d chapter) to a rising from the dead. So here in the Colossians, 'Ye are risen with him through faith,' saith he. Then again, in the third place, as in the text he makes a parallel of the work of faith with the resurrection of Christ; 'who believed,' saith he, 'according to the power that wrought in Christ when he was raised:' so he makes the same parallel here in the Colossians, 'through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead,' viz., Christ. And, fourthly, as we are said to believe according to the efficacious work, the word *ἐνεργεια* is likewise here in the Colossians called faith of the working, or efficacious working of God. And as here God is said to be the author, the same that raised up Christ did work faith in them, so likewise in this place it is faith of the operation of God, who raised up Christ from the dead. So that every way the one place is parallel with the other.

I will give you but one evasion of some against this place, and shew the weakness of it, and presently conclude.

Say they, the meaning of the phrase, 'through faith of the operation of God,' doth not note out that the operation of God is the efficient cause of faith; but that the operation of God that raised up Christ from the dead is the object of faith, therefore it is called faith of the operation of God; that is, say they, that hath the power and operation of God that raised

up Christ from the dead for its object, to believe that we shall likewise be raised up.

But, my brethren, that the Apostle when he saith, 'faith of the operation of God,' meaneth that faith was wrought by God, and that he takes it in that sense, appeareth plainly by comparing it with the 11th verse that went before. Speaking there of sanctification, as he doth here of faith,—of sanctification under the notion of circumcision, for you know it is called circumcision of the heart,—saith he, 'In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.' Now, to open these words unto you. Here is an allusion of the work of sanctification and faith to be the fruits and effects of two sacraments, the Old Testament circumcision, and the New Testament baptism. When he speaks of sanctification as the work and fruit, the inward work of the old circumcision, he distinguisheth of circumcision. There is one, saith he, that is outward, made with hands, of those that did circumcise the child with their hands, that is outward circumcision; but then, saith he, there is a circumcision that is by the power of God immediately, and that is called a circumcision without hands, an inward circumcision that is without hands. What is the meaning of that? Whereof God is the immediate author, that is the Apostle's meaning; wherein a man doth make no resistance, wherein a man is, as it were, passive, for so you know in circumcision he was. Now then, the very same thing which he had said of sanctification in allusion to the old circumcision,—that sanctification was a work without hands, that is, of God's power immediately,—the same he expresseth of faith in the next words under the notion of baptism, calling it faith of the operation of God. So that when he saith, 'faith of the operation of God,' his meaning is, that it is wrought, as the inward circumcision is, by the immediate power of God, and by that very power that raised Christ from death to glory.

To open this yet a little further. This phrase, 'made without hands,' noteth out in Scripture still God's immediate power, and above the course of nature; an immediate power above second causes. When he speaks of heaven, 2 Cor. v. 1, he calleth it a house made without hands, that is, the glory we shall have shall be the immediate work of the power of God. He useth just the same phrase of the grace we have; it is circumcision without hands, and it is faith of the operation of God, which is all one. In Heb. ix. 11, you shall find that Christ's body, the framing of it and uniting of it to the Godhead,—which was the greatest work that ever God did, 'The power of the Highest,' saith he, 'shall overshadow thee;' he shewed strength with his arm when he did that,—it is said to be a 'tabernacle made without hands;' that is, it was done by the immediate power of God. So now, circumcision without hands is a circumcision immediately by God, and is all one with what he saith afterward of faith; 'faith of the operation of God.'

Now then, my brethren, to make an observation out of all this, and so to end at this time. There are three things that now remain to be handled:—

1. That God in converting and keeping of believers unto life, hath an efficacious working of his power. It is a work of the might of his power, working efficaciously and infallibly.

2. That there is an exceeding greatness of power put forth therein.

3. That the proportion of power put forth therein is the same that raised up Christ from death to glory. These are the three things that remain to be handled. I will only speak a word to the first, and so conclude:—

You see here, if that be taken, as it is evident it is, for the working of faith

and converting a man at first, that conversion is by an efficacious work, an infallible work. I shewed you that the meaning of this phrase, 'according to his working,' implieth so much, I cannot repeat that; and to instance in that, he backs it with the same power that wrought in Christ, strongly confirms it; for, saith the Apostle, Acts ii. 24, it was impossible that he should be holden of the grave; so that there is an efficacious work that works faith in a man at first that shall not be resisted.

But you will say, similitudes are not to be stretched too far. But if it be not stretched to shew the efficacy and infallibility of the success,—that God doth as infallibly convert a man as he raised up Christ,—you stretch it to nothing; for if that be not the scope, nothing is, supposing it to be meant of conversion.

We do acknowledge that there is a power of God working in men's hearts that is resisted, as he saith, Acts vii. 51, 'Ye always resist the Holy Ghost.' There is a work of the Holy Ghost upon corrupt nature, enlightening it so far to see spiritual things as to effect self-love, and it is a work of power too. And look how far God putteth forth this power, so far it works; it works so far as to move a man when he is moved; if God had intended that it should save a man effectually it should save him. Those enlightenings spoken of, Heb. vi., and tasting of the powers of the world to come, are all works tending to salvation; they are works of the power of God, they are called the powers of the world to come, which are powerfully set on upon a man's heart; but they are not according to the rate and proportion of this efficacy of power here mentioned, which raised up Christ from death to glory. To give you an instance:—

Deut. v. 28, 29: You shall find there that the people were exceedingly moved; We will do all, say they, that God by thee shall command us. What saith God? 'They have spoken well,' saith he; 'but oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always.' Compare with this now Deut. xxix. 2-4, 'Thou hast seen,' saith he, 'all that the Lord did in Egypt; the great temptations, the signs, and those great miracles: yet the Lord hath not given thee a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.' Here now was a work of the power of God, and it wrought upon self-love, they quaked and trembled, and it was the power of God to make them do so, and so far as God intended it, so far it wrought, it moved them; but still they had not a heart. To give a man a heart to perceive, and a heart to turn, and turn effectually, this is from the exceeding greatness of his power. So that now indeed there is a work and a powerful work too, which is and may be resisted; 'Ye always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers have done, so do ye;' but then there is a power that is not resisted, it is according to the effectual working of the might of his power, the same that raised up Christ from death to glory.

All those of the Remonstrants do acknowledge that God doth infallibly enlighten the mind of a man to see spiritual things; that likewise he doth work upon the affections of a man, and works good motions there. But, say they, the will, though thus beset both by the understanding and affections, must still be free, and God must, according to the law and course of things, so work upon it as to leave it to its liberty; therefore that may refuse for all this, and the only way of working upon it is but by moral persuasions.

On the other side, all the Jesuits almost, they acknowledge an efficacy and infallibility in conversion in those that are elected, predestinated; but they ascribe it all unto a congruity; that is, that God doth take a man at an advantage, spieth out a time wherein a man being under such and such

circumstances and considerations, he may certainly convert him. Now, say they, mere moral persuasions, mere arguments would not be enough, though they were never so abundant. On the other side, if God should put forth a power to turn the will, that were too much; that would spoil the liberty of it, say they. Therefore he spieth, say they, an opportunity, takes a man at such a time as he hath a good disposition, and putteth him into such circumstances as he shall be converted.

My brethren, that which dasheth both these is this: the efficacy of working upon a man's heart is ascribed to the might of his power; so the text saith, 'according to the efficacy of the might of his power.' It doth dash first the working by moral persuasions only, for that is but a metaphorical working, so far as the objects propounded worketh; the will being set free by a power of grace. But such a kind of working doth no way require an exceeding greatness of power. If there were no other working upon a man's heart when he is turned, where should this exceeding greatness of power, Paul speaks of here, be spent? Not in assisting and accompanying moral persuasions or oratory arguments. The Apostle you see attributeth it to the might of his power, an efficacious power; therein lieth the efficacy of his grace. On the other side, take the congruity of the Jesuits; they say that when God doth mean infallibly to convert a man, he doth take him at such an advantage when he is so disposed, and every way so circumstantiated that it shall work. Saith the Apostle, it is according to the power of his might; therein lieth the efficacy of it too. He dasheth that likewise; for do but consider a little, to put the efficacy of the working of grace upon such circumstances as a man is cast into at such a time and not at another, is to cast the work upon mere accidents that will fall out; whereas here it is ascribed to the might of his power, not to his power only. And it may be a man is in such a disposition but once in his lifetime; suppose he be then converted, and he be out of that disposition the next day, how shall his heart be carried on to persevere in grace? Therefore certainly the efficacy of working grace and carrying it on lieth not in congruity,—it were ill for us if it did,—but it lieth in the power of his might. 'According,' saith he, 'to the efficacious working of the power of his might;' so saith the text.

My brethren, to end this; you shall find that the Scripture still attributeth it to the power of God. What saith the Apostle, 2 Thess. i. 11? 'That your faith,' saith he, 'may be perfected with power;' if perfected with power, then certainly begun with power. The thing I quote it for is this, he ascribeth it to power. Now, if a man carry a thing by power, you know it is beyond the force of arguments; we use to say, he carried it by force, by strength; I will not say by violence, for God works sweetly, and according to the nature of the will; but he saith, he carried it with power. Faith is perfected with power, and it is begun with power; yet God doth clothe his power with arguments and persuasions. You shall find likewise in Scripture, that the keeping of a man so as temptations do not overcome him, is not attributed to moral persuasions, to the liberty of the will being assisted and strengthened; but the victory that casteth it, whereby we overcome the world, the devil, and all, is attributed to the strength of God that is in us. 1 John iv. 4, 'He that is born of God overcometh the world, because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.' It is a victory, my brethren, (that which casteth the act still,) for that is properly victory to give a man power to overcome, but the victory itself is not attributed to the liberty of a man's will put into such a condition that he may turn or over-

come, but it is attributed to the strength of him that is in us, because he is greater, because he is stronger. How is he stronger if he do not overcome? Wherein is strength else seen? And so now as Paul in 1 Cor xv. 57, giveth thanks, triumpheth over Death, and Hell, and the Grave; 'Thanks be to God,' saith he, 'which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ:' so come to the work of faith and believing, and preserving a man to salvation; whence cometh the victory? Even from God, from strength, a greater strength that is in you than is against you, in your own hearts, or in the devil; therefore saith Paul, 'Who shall deliver me? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

It is a mighty instance that Austin hath. Take Adam, saith he, whom God did leave to shew the liberty of his will, according to the course and law of nature, to shew that he was a creature. He had all helps, he had habitual grace inclined his will to good, he had no corruption to tempt him, he had all sorts of encouragements, he had tasted how good God was; yet his will was tempted with the knowledge of a seeming good, and overcome. Take now a poor believer; he, saith he, hath but a little grace in him, and a great deal of corruption in his own heart; he hath habitually as much against him as for him, he is ensnared with all the pleasures of the world, he hath all the evil of it set against him; nay, he is put to deny himself: yet this man's will holdeth, when Adam with all his grace and no temptation fell away. What is the reason of this? It is the mighty power of God that worketh in him, that keepeth him, saith he. I use to say, that the weakest Christian and Jesus Christ are too hard for all the world and all their lusts. 'I am able to do all things,' saith Paul, 'through Christ that strengtheneth me.'

But you will say, the will is *a will*.

What then? Do you think that God made any creature that he doth not know how to rule it? Take the instance of Christ. He had a will and free, and more free it must be than any man's in the world; because if he had not that same full liberty that we have naturally, he had not merited, if his obedience had not been in the same nature free that ours is. For that is the argument; they say a man must have a free will, because his actions else are not worthy of praise or dispraise. Our Saviour Christ's actions had no merit in them (that is more than praise) if he had not the same liberty in working that we have; the human nature I speak of. Well, this human nature is joined to the Godhead. If God did not know how to carry on the will of the creature infallibly, what had followed here? That God now dwelling in the human nature might have sinned; for if the human nature had sinned, it had been attributed to him, as it is called the blood of God. The will of Christ therefore was an instrument, as we say his humanity was, which assuredly the power of God, which had engaged itself long before Christ came into the world, could rule and keep in obedience; yet keep it free, and most free, and free in that sense that we in this life are free. For otherwise, how could God have made the promises to all the seed, if he had not the will of this creature in his power to rule, and rule effectually, and yet the will be a will too? All the saints in the Old Testament must come down again else, all the promises must have been void, not a man had been saved, God could not undertake this, if he could not work upon the will to turn it to holiness, and yet be a will still. Therefore, certainly God hath a way to work upon the will of man efficaciously by the power of his might, by an omnipotent sweetness to carry a man on, and yet the will remain a will still.

In a word, my brethren, herein lieth liberty, when a man doth not only do actions out of his own inclinations as beasts do, but when he doth actions out of choice, and seeth full reason to do them ; because they are done with knowledge, they are therefore free. That it is both an exceeding greatness of power and an efficacy of power that works faith in us, the same that wrought in Christ when he was raised from the dead ; and the efficacy of it is ascribed to power and to the power of his might, that so you may give all the glory to God in the great work of conversion : ‘ Who according to the exceeding greatness of his power, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places.’