

## SERMON VII.

*According to the good pleasure of his will; to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*—VER. 5, 6.

I COME to those other two causes mentioned in the text; as—

1. The efficient and principal cause that cast it; and that is merely the ‘good pleasure of his will.’

And, 2. here is another motive, besides the glory of Christ before-mentioned; and that is, ‘the praise of the glory of God’s grace.’ ‘According to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace.’ The one is mentioned first, as that which did only cast the act, and move God to predestinate; the other, as that which yet moved him in the act itself.

Now, for the explication of both these in general, you may thus conceive the difference between them. God, blessed for ever, deliberating, as it were, with himself whether he should make any creature or no, whether he should decree any children unto himself, or his Son to take human nature; that which cast the matter was merely the good pleasure of his will. He might have been blessed for ever without this; he needed not have cared to make so much as one creature, nor to ordain the second Person’s assumption of a human nature to glorify him. He needed not that external praise of the glory of his grace that ariseth from us. He was glorious enough without all this. What cast it then? Nothing but the good pleasure of his will. Here is God’s prerogative and blessedness.

And the reason why nothing but God’s own will could move him to it is, because all that the creature can be to him, or do for him, falleth short of him, and of the glory due unto him. Neh. ix. 5, ‘Bless the Lord your God: blessed be his glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.’ God is above all blessing and praise; for him, therefore, to aim at the praise of his grace, this was not motive sufficient to determine his will simply to do it. It was his own will that merely cast it, only it being determined to predestinate creatures, it propounded to itself the praise of the glory of God’s grace, wisdom, and other his attributes; and so they move him in predestinating, though not to predestinate.

More particularly, for the first, *the efficient, determining cause of predestination.* If you observe it, it is not only put upon God’s will, but upon the ‘good pleasure of his will;’ so saith the text. And this also is to be confined only to that part of his decrees of election, and predestinating men unto salvation; so as, between those decrees and all other there is this difference, that when other things, and making of other creatures are spoken of, the decrees about them are only put upon his will; as Eph. i. 11, ‘He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will’—barely ‘his own will.’ But when he comes to predestinate and to save poor creatures by Christ, there comes in the ‘good pleasure of his will,’ as the determining cause. ‘He predestinated us according to the good pleasure of his will,’ κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶτος αὐτοῦ,—that is, this is the strength, the height

of his whole will ; this is the chief pleasure of it, even to predestinate us for Christ. Piscator, upon Matt. xi. 26, where the same word is used that here we meet with, 'Father, I thank thee that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent ones, and revealed them to babes ; even so, Father, it pleased thee,' *ὅτι ὡς ἔργετο εὐδοκία ἔμπεσοῦν σου*—therefore, says Piscator, reprobation is an act of God's good pleasure of his will, as well as election is.

My answer to this is, first, that when he there thanks his Father, and says it was his good pleasure, this hath not relation so much unto God's reprobating others as to his revealing of those things unto these babes ; only this his good pleasure towards them is set off by his hiding it from others whom he reprobateth. The like manner of speech we have in many other scriptures, both in the Old Testament and the New ; as, Rom. vi. 17, when Paul says, 'God be thanked ye were the servants of sin, but now have obeyed,' &c., his thanking God hath no reference at all to their having been the servants of sin, simply as such considered, but unto their having been now converted, and so obeyed, &c. ; only, comparatively, the mercy of their conversion is set forth by their having been the servants of sin. So here, Christ gives thanks only for the converting of these babes, and not for the reprobating of any. Only he mentions their reprobation and rejection, as that which made this benefit the greater, and his good pleasure in shewing his free grace the more visible and apparent.

But, secondly, whatever God willeth may in a general sense be called his good pleasure ; for if it did not please him, he would not will it. But still it is not said there, as here it is, that it was the good pleasure of his will. The phrase there hath not that *adjectum*, that addition to it, that here it hath. The meaning whereof is, that of all the things that God willeth, this alone (comparatively) is his good pleasure. He is pleased with nothing that he willeth so as he is with this. It is true he damneth men, but he doth it as a judge that condemneth a malefactor with a kind of regret and displeasure. And this may be truly said of it, that it is a mixed action. God hath something in him that moves him to the contrary, for he loveth his creature ; only other ends prevail. But when he cometh to save men, here is the good pleasure of his will ; his whole heart is poured forth in this : Jer. xxxii. 41, 'I will assuredly establish them with my whole heart, and with my whole soul.' God, when he shews mercy, when he predestinates unto glory, he doth it with his whole heart ; there is nothing in him to contradict it ; here is no mixture in this, all that is in him agreeth with it. It is therefore not only according to his good-will, but it is the top and height of his will ; the most pleasing thing unto him of all the things that he willeth. It is 'according to the good pleasure of his will.'

Thus you have that which is the chief cause, which I call the determining cause—namely, the will of God, 'the good pleasure of his will ;' that was it that caused him to predestinate.

Now, let us come to the other, *the end that moved God*, even 'the praise of the glory of his grace.' And here, for explication, take notice of the difference between the 'glory of his grace,' and the 'praise of that glory.'

This 'glory of his grace,' here spoken of, is that glorious attribute itself, which is God's essence, which was in itself glorious, and had continued so, though no creature had been predestinated. But the 'praise of that glory' is that holding forth of the glory of this grace, that men might praise it, and give glory to it. So, then, conceive thus of it. The Lord had grace in him, glorious grace ; that was his essence. And that which moved him to predestinate us was, that this grace of his might be praised. This is the mean-

ing of these words, 'to the praise of the glory of his grace.' It is all one with what you have Rom. ix. 22, 23, 'He was willing to make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy.' God had riches of glory in him : yea, but, saith he, I will make it known. This was it that moved him ; yet not so but that he could have done otherwise, he needed not to have cared for it. But his will determining to go forth of himself to glorify himself, he will do it to purpose ; he will lay open all the riches that are in him 'to the praise of the glory of his grace,' as here you have it.

And the reason of this is, because as *bonum est sui diffusivum*, all goodness is communicative of itself, so glory is manifestive of itself, even as the light is ; and this moves him to manifest this his glory.

You must know that God hath a double glory : an *essential glory*, namely, that of his attributes, as of wisdom, all-sufficiency, grace, &c. ; and he hath a *manifestative glory*, whereby the glory of all these attributes is manifested unto the world. And this may move him ; in that, although it be not his essence, yet it is his relatively, though not essentially.

Now observe further, that only the glory of God's grace is mentioned by the Apostle, when he speaks of that which moved him to predestinate. Why doth he not say, To the glory of his holiness ? or, To the glory of his justice or power ? All these were and are manifested in the things purposed in election too ; but he sheweth his holiness elsewhere, and his power and justice elsewhere. He sheweth his holiness in making the law, his power in making the world, his justice in throwing men to hell. But his grace he shews nowhere so much as in the predestination of his children, and what he hath predestinated them to. He sheweth all his attributes therein, and grace over and above all the rest. Therefore that is here singled out and alone mentioned, especially because the act of predestinating itself, that is simply and only from free grace. And therefore you still find, that wherever election is spoken of, it is put upon his grace ; both in that he chooseth freely, seeing nothing in the creature to move him, and in that he therein puts a difference between his elect and others. And therein lies the *formalis ratio* of grace, Rom. xi. 5, 6, 'There is a remnant according to the election of grace ; and if by grace, then it is no more of works.' Other men God left, to deal with them according to their works ; but in predestinating his children, he dealeth with them according to his free grace in Jesus Christ.

To come now to some observations.

*Obs. 1.*—You see that God is a glorious God : he hath glorious grace, so saith this text. He hath glorious power, so Rom. vi. 4. He hath glorious mercy, so Rom. ix. 23. All his attributes are glorious. 'Shew me thy glory,' said Moses, Exod. xxxiv. 6. Then 'the Lord passed by and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious,' &c. This is God's chief glory ; his essential attributes are his glory.

*Obs. 2.*—You see that which moved God, in doing all that he doth, is his glory. He predestinated us for the glory of his grace ; and certainly if in this, then in all things else he aimeth at his glory. If God should not, in all that he doth, aim more at his own glory than at our salvation, he were not a holy God. For what is holiness in God ? It is that whereby he aimeth at himself ; and he should descend from his being holy, if he should aim at our good more than at his own glory. This you have Isa. vi. 3, 'One angel cried unto another, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts ; the whole earth is full of his glory.' God was to shew himself to be a holy God ; that is, he was to glorify himself ; that is the meaning of it. And therefore of all sinners he hates a proud man ; 'He resists the proud,' because he is a com-

petitor with God himself for glory, and contends with him for that which is most dear unto him, and his own prerogative alone, which the great and glorious God of all things cannot endure. And therefore of all sins God hateth pride and vain-glory; for all glory is his due, and justly belongeth to him alone.

*Obs. 3.*—You see that God was so perfect in himself that he needed not to have made any world, nor predestinated any unto the adoption of sons; for it was merely the act of his own will. Though his own glory moved him in the act, yet it was his will that cast and determined the act itself. If God will manifest himself, he will do it like God; he will make his own glory the end of all; and it becomes him so to do. He should not be a holy God else. But yet the thing that cast it was his will; because he could have done otherwise if it had pleased him, Rom. xi. 35, ‘Who hath given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?’ All that the creature doth is nothing to him. Paul challengeth all the creatures. Bring in your bills, saith he, and if you can say you have added anything unto him, you shall have it recompensed unto you again. All the righteousness that the angels have in heaven, and that the saints have on earth, what is it? It is nothing to him. Job xxxv. 7, 8, ‘If thou beest righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy righteousness may profit a man as thou art,’ but it can never profit God, he is blessed in himself. Nay, I go further; our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ added nothing unto God by all that he did or suffered. It is true he sets forth the glory of God, but he addeth nothing to God. Ps. xvi. 2, ‘My righteousness reacheth not to thee.’ It is Christ that speaks those words, for that psalm is a psalm of his resurrection, and is quoted to that purpose by the Apostle, in Acts ii. 25–28. Now, says he, my goodness extends not to thee, O Father; it only reacheth to the saints that are on earth, to do them good; but as for thee, thou art above it. Therefore it must needs be God’s own will, and his mere will, that moved him to predestinate any. Fall we therefore down before this great God, in that he minded us to choose us, notwithstanding he was completely happy in himself before the world was, and could have continued so still, and all his works add nothing unto him; for if they did, he would have made them sooner, he would certainly have created them from everlasting. But he let almost an eternity of time run out, ere he put forth his hand to make any of them, for indeed he had no need of them. The three Persons delighted one in another from all eternity, and needed no companions else save themselves. God cared not for what the creature could add unto him. Nothing moved him to elect us but merely the good pleasure of his will.

*Obs. 4.*—You see here that God predestinated us ‘for the praise of the glory of his grace.’ God’s glory therefore is more interested in our salvation than our own good is, for not our benefit comes in here, in the mention of what moved God, but the praise of the glory of his grace only. You think it so difficult a thing to work God off to save you. Why, he hath that in him which moveth him now, and did move him from everlasting to do it! He hath the glory of his own grace to move him to it. This is to us the greatest ground of security in the world, that God’s glory is interested with our good: Eph. i. 12, ‘That we should be to the praise of his glory who first believed on Christ.’ Wilt thou come and believe? Thou canst not do God a better turn; for this advanceth the praise of the glory of his grace; and God is for this reason more moved to save thee than thy heart can be to be saved thyself.

*Obs. 5.*—I told you it was the highest pleasure of his will; nothing pleased

him so as this. Observe then, that of all things else which God purposeth, this, even to shew grace to poor sinners, pleaseth him the most. He willet many things, and he works all things by the counsel of his own will; but this is according to the good pleasure of his will. There are many scriptures to this purpose. 'In these things,' speaking of acts of mercy, 'I delight,' Jer. ix. 24. 'Mercy is his delight,' Micah vii. 18. Yea, his delights are said to have been in this before the world was, Prov. viii. 31; where besides this there is nothing else mentioned.

*Obs. 6.*—Observe that God hath set up his Son, 'for him,' saith ver. 5; and his own free grace, 'to the praise of the glory of his grace,' saith ver. 6. These two are to share the glory between them; even Jesus Christ and himself. If Christ had not been his Son, and equal with himself, he would never have done it. No creature shall have a share in this glory, but all things are ordained for his Son, and for the praise of the glory of his own free grace. And accordingly, he hath wrought faith in our hearts to give all the glory unto free grace and to his Son. If you had been saved by love, that would have been diminishing from free grace and from Christ; and so would works and duties. But faith, that is a principle fully suited to God's own intent; which is, to set up his Son and free grace, and to magnify these two. You shall find in Scripture that God is said to be 'all in all,' and so is Christ said to be 'all in all' too. For these two share all the glory between them, that so men may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father, as I said even now. In 1 Cor. viii. 6, the Apostle says, 'To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for him;' (as you have it in your margins;) 'and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.' Here, you see, they share it between them; only with this difference, that all things are said to be *of* God, and *by* him too; but all things are not said to be *of* Jesus Christ, but only *by* him.

We have seen and explicated two of those blessings intended to us, and bestowed on us from everlasting. *First*, election in Christ to be perfectly holy, as we shall be in heaven, for God looked at his works as he would like them to be at last; and, *secondly*, predestination to that glory that adoption, or being a son of God, bringeth with it. Now follows a *third* benefit: 'wherein,' saith the apostle, 'he hath made us accepted in the beloved.' This I am now to speak to; and so to proceed—

*Ἐξαίρωμεν*, 'He hath made us accepted.' I must open the force and signification of this word first. It is as much as if he had said, he hath made us *caros*, 'dear,' to him. Out of God's free grace he hath made us pleasant unto him in the beloved; so saith Calvin. The Papists, they would have the word to signify God's bestowing inherent grace of holiness upon us, and making us gracious or holy; and that which perverts them in this their interpretation is, their aiming to magnify the virgin Mary, for the word here in the original is used but once besides in all the New Testament, and that is Luke i. 28, 'Thou art highly favoured,' &c. It was spoken by the angel unto Mary. So we translate it; but they read it, 'Thou art full of grace.' They will needs carry this word to inherent grace in us, that so by this the fulness of grace in the virgin Mary may be extolled; that she being, and that God foreseeing her so full of grace, had therefore chosen her to be the mother of Christ. But the word is, in respect of us, a passive word, and indeed a made word, usurped by the apostle himself for his purpose; and there in Luke signifieth this, that God made her acceptable to him, and cast an infinite favour upon her; and this is proved by what is said in ver.

30 of the same chapter, 'Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God.' It was not that she had grace in her, but that God had cast grace and favour upon her; so that the meaning of the word is, he hath rendered us acceptable or gracious; or, most fitly in one word, he hath *ingratiated* us. The meaning is, not that God foresaw grace in us, but that he cast his favour upon us, and settled his delight in us—he made us dear, precious, and delightful to himself. And this to be the meaning of the word, and not that, as the Papists would have it, appears—

*First*, Because the apostle had mentioned the blessing of inherent holiness before, 'to be holy before him in love;' and also mentions conversion and regeneration, the imperfect work of faith and holiness in this life, afterwards, in ver. 18.

And, *secondly*, it appeareth likewise by what followeth, 'in his beloved;' that is, as he hath loved Jesus Christ, and delighted in him, so in this his beloved he loveth, pleaseth himself in, and delighteth in us. This is the meaning of his making us accepted in the beloved.

In the interpretation of these words, I have not a little been troubled unto what rank to refer this blessing: whether I should refer it to a part of justification, (which, we know, consisteth of these two particulars, forgiveness of sins and acceptance of our persons,) and so this to be a part of our justification in Christ, bestowed upon us in time here in this life; or whether I should interpret it of an action of God passed towards us from everlasting, (such as are election and predestination,) and that action as including also a blessing principally intended to our persons unto everlasting, and after this life, such as I have shewed you perfect holiness and adoption to be. I confess, in the end I inclined unto the latter, and found that Zanchy is with me in it; and I will give you these reasons for it, why it is not meant so much of that acceptance of our persons which is a part of justification,—though it may include that also, and that acceptance of our persons is the fruit of this,—but rather referreth to an eternal act towards us, and an eternal blessing, even to eternity, to be bestowed on us. For, *first*, it runneth in the same key with the other two, 'he hath blessed us,' and 'he hath chosen us;' so 'he hath accepted us'—they are all spoken in the time past; whereas, when he cometh to redemption or justification, he changeth the phrase and tense, 'in whom we have redemption.' Therefore, I cast this, 'having accepted us,' into the former rank, with having chosen and blessed us from eternity, as noting out three prime instances of God's eternal love.

*Second*, The order of the apostle's ranking of it, and his bringing of it in, would argue that he did not intend to speak of that acceptance of our persons which is a part of justification.

For, first, it comes in before forgiveness of sins, whereas that acceptance of our persons unto justification of life follows upon forgiveness, and doth necessarily first suppose it.

And, secondly, it is not only mentioned before forgiveness, but redemption comes in between it and forgiveness.

So that, I say, I rather account it to be one special act of God's love done towards us from everlasting, such as election and predestination was; and so it implieth both a third act and a third blessing, of the same sort with the two former.

It is not that acceptance of us which is the second part of our justification, for that is expressed by an accounting us righteous in Christ as our righteousness, and some such thing should have been put in as the ground of it; but this is an acceptance of our persons in Christ as he is God's beloved, and simply refers thereto, and so unto Christ's person as God's beloved one.

But then the question will be, both what distinct act of God's this is, differing from election and predestination, and what differing blessing it is from perfect holiness and adoption unto glory?

In the first place, some say, that it imports that love of God which was the foundation both of God's choice and of his predestination; that he hath therefore chosen and predestinated us, because he hath accepted us, that is, set his love upon us, in his beloved Son.

But that was supposed in God's *choosing us*; for *dilectio præsупponitur electioni*, as Aquinas well speaks. Yea, and this is also sufficiently expressed in the words foregoing, 'to the praise of the glory of his grace;' that is, of this his free love borne to us.

Again, this acceptance of our persons is not, as here it succeeds, that love or acceptation upon which he chose us, but is a branch or fruit following of it, and distinct from the act of his choosing us; it hath not an identity or sameness of act with choosing us itself. Though it is put forth in and together with choosing us,—yea, though it be said to have been in the beloved, Christ,—yet that first love that caused him to choose us, and not others, was immediately carried unto us in the act of choosing us as unto Christ himself, and moved him to choose our individual persons as immediately as he was moved to choose Christ himself; only, he was pleased to choose us in Christ, as a foundation or ground which he planted us into when he chose us, and by choosing, or when he chose us, he put us into Christ. But being thus chosen in Christ, then this fruit followed upon it, to accept us in Christ, as his beloved for ever after.

I take it, therefore, not so much to be an antecedent love to the election of our persons, as a consequent love or complacency, as I may so call it, or delighting in us, and accepting of us through his beloved, when he had chosen us in him, and set us into him; his delight even then was with the sons of men, Prov. viii., in his forethoughts about them.

And here I take not *antecedent* and *consequent love* in the Jesuitical or Arminian sense, whereby God should be said to love us with such a consequent love as ariseth from a foresight that we will believe, and so chooseth us, and in that sense should be said to choose us in Christ. There is a twofold love—*amor beneplaciti* and *amor complacentiæ*, an old distinction.

First, *a love of good will*, whereby God doth bear a good-will to us, and so resolveth to choose us and give us to Christ; and this is spoken of in the former verse, 'He hath chosen us in him, according to the good pleasure of his will.'

And, secondly, there is *a love of acceptation* or *complacency*, or of delight and resting in what he hath done. God thereby delights himself in the creature which he hath thus set up and chosen in Christ, and this from everlasting, as I shall shew you by and by. It is called in Zeph. iii. 17, a 'resting in his love,' and supposeth election first. When God hath chosen us, he takes delight in and is infinitely well pleased, both with this design and contrivement he hath towards us, and with our persons also, as considered in and through his beloved Son; even as a father that means to bestow his son upon such a woman, first takes a liking to the woman, (here is the love of good-will,) which makes him choose her for his daughter, and pitch upon her, rather than upon any other, to make her his son's wife. But yet, when he hath betrothed her to his son, then he loves her with another and a further kind of love—he accepts her, he delights in her, and hath a complacency in her, as considering her to be his daughter, as wife unto this his son. This I take to be the orderly joining and meaning of these two words, 'having pre-

destinated us unto adoption,' and 'accepted us in his beloved,' the latter act following upon the former.

The next question is, how this act of God towards us may be said to have been *from everlasting*; and how God may be said to have delighted in us before we were?

1. For this, that God did put forth such an act from everlasting, consider that scripture, Prov. viii. 30, 31. If you read the verses before, Christ tells you there what God and he did before the world was. 'I,' says Wisdom, or Christ, 'was by him, I was brought up with him, and I was daily his delight; rejoicing always before him in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.' All this was from everlasting, for read ver. 25-27, and he saith, 'it was before the mountains were settled, or the hills brought forth,' &c. So that Christ did then look upon us as delightful unto him, and God did the same in his Son.

2. For the clearing of it, we must remember what was said before; that when once God had first chosen us in Christ, look how far it may be said we had a being in him. So far God might take, and did take a view of us, as represented existing in him; and so please himself with us, as so viewed and considered, and look upon us with a gracious eye; and also rejoice and comfort himself in what he had done for us. And by this our representative being as in Christ, I mean not that kind of being before God which all other creatures he meant to produce had in their several ideas or appearances in his thoughts. But we further had a representative being in Christ, who actually stood before God, or 'by him,' as Solomon's word is. This representation becometh then real, when made in him and by him, by his undertaking to stand for us, and as in our stead undertaking as our head to represent us. And this gave us a real being in Christ, and as far differing and excelling those ideas of other creatures as the images or shadows of men, pictured for the ghosts of men when they are dead, do from those drawn with the brightest orient colours in oil, which painters make to set out men alive to the utmost life that may be. And by way of difference, we call the first but shadows; and such were the ideas of all other creatures in the mind of God, in comparison to what the elect had in God's mind, being set in Christ, who gives a being of him, yea, and in Christ Jesus. But still I must remember you of these two things I so often mentioned, that my meaning may be understood:—

The *first*, that this benefit of acceptation of our persons in the beloved I refer to those other antelapsarian benefits, severed from those of redemption, as hath been all along inculcated; that is, as flowing to us from Christ as our head of union with God; and to us as considered as purely creatures and abstractly before sin befell us, in that supernatural state which we were, at the first sight of us by him, ordained unto as creatures, and our persons also considered as one with Christ.

The *second*, that it is that acceptance of us in Christ which comes and flows merely from the person of Christ as God-man.

From which you may observe, that when the Apostle saith, God hath thus accepted us in the beloved, he doth not say that this acceptation of us is in the blood of the beloved, or the merits of the beloved. It is not so founded, but it is founded upon our relation to his person. God had chosen us in him to have relation to his person; and so, Jesus Christ being beloved, God accepteth us in him, for this our relation's sake unto him as the principal beloved. As a father when he hath betrothed his son unto a woman, he loves her for the relation she hath to the person of his son; so

doth our God. This acceptance of us, even of our persons from everlasting, it is founded upon Christ's being beloved. And therefore you shall find, that the love wherewith God loved Christ, and the love wherewith he loved us, are said to be one and the same love, John xvii. 23, 'That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.' We were so represented by Christ, and considered in him, that we made up one Christ mystical; as the head and the body make up but one man.

Again, this seems to be some special favour and peculiar grace unto the sons of men elect, and not to the angels, as here it is spoken of. The angels, we read, are elect, 'the elect angels;' but we nowhere read of them that they are elect *in Christ*. Likewise that they are the sons of God, by creation namely; but not adopted sons through Christ, as we here are said to be. And so they are highly favoured of God; but nowhere that they are accepted in the beloved, as here we are said to be. It may be said, they are highly favoured as menial servants to God, but not as sons adopted. Many courtiers were in high favour with Saul; but David speaks of his being son to him as an higher matter by far. As in nobility there are higher ranks than other, so among the nobles in heaven. The angels, it may be said, God hath loved them with a special love, and he hath loved Christ and both from eternity; but it is nowhere said, that he hath loved the angels as Christ said there, 'Thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.' And how special a privilege this is I shall express to you by this similitude. The sun, you know, shines upon all the world; but if you take a burning-glass and hold it in the point of union or concentration, between the shining sun and something that you would have inflamed, hereby the sunbeams are contracted, and do fall upon that object with a more intense heat and fervour, even to an inflammation of it; and this by reason that the beams were first contracted in the centre of the glass, and then diffused and with more vehemency darted upon the object under it. Thus God loveth all his creatures; his love is 'over all his works,' so the Scripture expresseth it; but he loves them not in his beloved, he accepts them not in him. But now for the sons of men elect, that Son of God, who is his beloved, contracts all the beams of God's love into himself; they fall all upon him first, and then they through him shine and diffuse themselves upon us all, with a ray infinitely more strong and vigorous than they would have done if we had been considered in ourselves alone. And this is the advantage of being accepted in the beloved. God loves us with the same love wherewith he loved his Son.

To come now unto some observations from hence.

*Obs. 1.*—Observe here, that Jesus Christ is God's beloved in an eminent manner. Look, as God put all light into the sun, and that diffuseth and communicateth light unto all the stars; so Jesus Christ hath contracted all the love of God to himself, and through him it is diffused upon us. He is *Υἱὸς τῆς ἀγάπης*, the Son of his love, as he is called, Col. i. 13. You read it translated there 'his dear Son;' but the Greek hath it 'the Son of his love.' Christ hath, as it were, engrossed all God's love unto him: 'This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' Yea, indeed and in truth God is not well pleased with any of the creatures, but as they have relation to him and are his servants. Otherwise, he findeth folly in his angels, Job iv. 18. They would not have pleased him, had they not come under his Son, and had relation unto him some way or other, and subserved for his glory. In loving his Son he loved them; but he loveth us as being

planted into him. The Trinity could not please itself out of itself. He is the beloved.

*Obs. 2.*—Is Christ thus God's beloved, with and in whom he is so fully pleased; and is he not thy beloved, as it is in the Canticles? What is the matter? Is thy narrow soul more curious about an object for its love than God himself is? Oh, let him be to each of us our beloved! If he be God's beloved, he may as well be thine. Is he able to satisfy God's vast thoughts; and is he not able to satisfy thee, poor creature? God himself is satisfied and at rest in him: 'I was daily his delight,' says Christ, Prov. viii.; and wouldst thou be happier than God is? Is he God's beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased; and wilt thou be pleased in anything else save Christ?

*Obs. 3.*—Observe that Christ is said to be 'the beloved' simply in and for himself, and 'in whom we have redemption' comes afterward, as a super-added thing. So that, set aside the work and benefit of redemption that is to be had in and by Christ, and there is a loveliness in his very person beyond all, for which we should desire him. You that are sinners do love him because he hath redemption for you, and so you have need of him; and you do well so to love him, for he deserves it. But yet, let me tell you, *Est aliquid in Christo formosius salvatore*,—There is something in Christ more beautiful, more amiable and glorious, than his being a Saviour. God cannot love him for any benefit of redemption by him; and yet he is God's beloved. He is *primum amabile*, loved for himself; and so let him be to thee.

This is the first sort of observations from hence.

A second sort is this:—

*Obs. 1.*—If thou art in Christ, fear not sin; for God from everlasting saw all thy sins, and yet, for all that, he continued to accept thee in his beloved, It altered his mind not a whit. He was so much pleased with his beloved, that though in his own prescience he foresaw what we would be, yet, having chosen us in his Son, he accepteth us in him; and so, now that we actually exist and sin against him, he, notwithstanding, finds so much contentment at home in his Son, having him by him, that he can patiently bear with us, and please himself in Christ. And so, though he see thee sinful for the present, and foresaw thee sinful from everlasting, yet he still accepts thee in his beloved. And the reason is, because Jesus Christ is more beloved of him than sin is or can be hated by him. If ever sin should come to have more interest for hatred in the heart of God than Christ hath for love, thou mightest well fear: but he hath accepted thee in his beloved, therefore be not thou afraid.

*Obs. 2.*—Hath God accepted thee, and rendered thee thus dear unto himself in his beloved? No matter though the world hate thee. The world shall hate you, says Christ, John xvi. 33: 'In the world you shall have tribulation;' but it is no matter, 'in me you shall have peace,' &c. God accepts thee in Christ; he renders thee dear unto himself in his beloved.

*Obs. 3.*—Go therefore unto God, to be accepted only in and through his beloved. Here is the greatest and strongest argument for it that can be. It is said before, in ver. 4, that God chose us unto perfect holiness, and ordained us to perfect glory, and to be sons to him, ver. 5, and both these as we shall one day be in heaven. And yet, after both these, the acceptation of our persons in the beloved comes in as a third and distinct benefit; so that all this would not have pleased him so much as one look upon us in his beloved. It is not perfect holiness, nor that complete glory which we shall

have in heaven, that makes us accepted with God comparatively to this, to be considered and accepted in the beloved. And wilt thou now go and bring thy imperfect graces and menstuous duties? Art thou in glory yet? Art thou perfectly holy? If thou wert, yet consider here is a third benefit besides all these, 'He hath accepted us in his beloved;' which let thy soul look out for, notwithstanding all thy grace and holiness.

And so I have gone over the three first blessings, which are eternal ones, and absolutely pitched upon our persons in the relation we have to the person of Christ. God *chose us* to be in him, and because he is holy, we must be holy: holiness, therefore, is essential to our being in Christ. God *predestinated us in Christ*, therefore we must be sons, as he is; and so we are predestinated to adoption in him, his natural Son. And then, God hath *accepted us in his beloved*; and therefore as he loveth him, so he loveth us. All these three blessings are not founded so much upon the merits of Christ as upon the relation we have unto his person. And they are the blessings which were first and absolutely intended to our persons, simply in the relation which by election we had given us to the person of Christ.

And so much for the sixth verse.

Come we now to the mercies which we have in relation to Christ's merits, couched in these three following verses:—

*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.*—VER. 7–9.

The Apostle here changeth the key of his language: 'He hath chosen, he hath blessed, he hath accepted.' This was his language before; but here he beginneth to alter it. Here he varies the tense, and says, 'In whom we have redemption,' &c. Because he comes now to a new sort of blessings, therefore he speaks in a new key. And so interpreters almost generally observe.

Now for the general analysis, both of all these words from ver. 4, and likewise of these blessings.

There are two sorts of divisions, which these words and the former may be cast into.

The *first* is a *trichotomy*, or dividing of them into three parts.

You know there are three Persons in the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And these three Persons have three several works:—

1. *The Father's work* was to choose, to predestinate, and to accept in his beloved. His work therefore is in the 4th, 5th, and 6th verses.

2. *The work of the Son* is redemption, &c.: 'In whom we have redemption through his blood,' ver. 7, &c. It is not meant of redemption passive, or which we receive as the fruit of his having redeemed us; but of that redemption active, which was in him, and wrought by himself. And therefore it is not said '*by whom*,' but '*in whom* we have redemption through his blood.'

3. And then *the Holy Ghost's work* is the application of all these unto us, when the Spirit doth in and by conversion bring home all these to our hearts. And this you have in the 8th and 9th verses, 'Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will,' &c.—This is one division whereinto you may cast these verses and the blessings mentioned in them.

But there is a *second*, and that is a *dichotomy*, or division of them into two parts.

There is one sort of blessings from the 4th verse to the 7th, and another sort of blessings from the 7th verse to the 10th. And so, as there are three Persons, and their works described to be three, so there are also two triplicities of blessings, as I may so call them.

The first three are such blessings unto which God absolutely chose us in relation to Christ's person. And they are—

1. *Perfect holiness*, ver. 4.

2. *Perfect glory*, or *adoption*, ver. 5.

3. *Acceptation of our persons* in and upon that our relation to his beloved, ver. 6.

But then, secondly, there are three other blessings, founded upon our relation to Christ through his *merits*. As—

1. *Redemption*, taking it in the largest sense for whatever redemption may extend to; for redeeming us as well from misery as from sin, and for the purchasing of all those blessings which we had forfeited: 'In whom we have redemption through his blood,' ver. 7.

2. *Justification*; which is one fruit of redemption: 'The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace,' ver. 7.

3. *Vocation*, or *calling us*; which is the work of the Spirit: 'Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known to us,' &c., ver. 8, 9.

Calling, you know, is either external or internal. *External* is the preaching of the gospel; that you have in the 9th verse, 'Having made known to us the mystery of his will.' *Internal* is the working faith and holiness in us; which is mentioned in the 8th verse, 'He hath abounded to us in all wisdom,' the principle of faith; 'and prudence,' which is the principle of holiness, as interpreters carry it.

Now, observe what is common to these two several sorts of blessings.

*First*, They come from God's decree, both the three latter and the three former. How this is true of the three former you have already seen. We were elected to be holy, and predestinated to adoption, according to the good pleasure of his will, &c. And the three latter do depend upon the same good pleasure of his will from everlasting: 'In whom we have redemption, &c., according to the good pleasure of his will,' ver. 9. So that God's good pleasure is as well the fountain of these three latter sort of mercies, and therefore cometh in the rear of them too, as it was of the three former. And so Erasmus saith that this, 'according to the good pleasure of his will,' referreth as well unto redemption and forgiveness of sins, as it doth to calling us and giving us wisdom and prudence.

*Secondly*, They have this likewise common unto them, that there is *free grace* in them both. For the Apostle speaking of the first sort of blessings, he saith, 'He hath chosen us, and predestinated us, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved;' and then coming to the other sort of blessings, at the 7th verse he saith, 'We have redemption and forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.' And then it follows, 'In which,' namely, grace, 'he hath abounded toward us,' in converting us also, ver. 8. So that still here is free grace in both.

And, *Thirdly*, They are both sorts *in Christ*. God chose us in Christ, predestinated us through Christ, and accepted us in the beloved: there is the first sort. 'In whom we have redemption, and the forgiveness of sins through his blood:' there is the second sort. We have all in and through

Christ, both the one sort of blessings and the other. These are common to them all.

But before I come to expound these words in the 7th, 8th, and 9th verses, and give you observations out of them, give me leave from the connexion, and the Apostle's thus ranking these blessings into these two sorts, to give you in my transition between them the greatest matter of note—that I know of—I can commend to you, and it shews their distinction.

In these verses (take them all together from the 4th verse to the 10th) the Apostle seems to hold forth unto us two several parts of God's decree—two *designs* contained in it; and these framed according to those two ranks of blessings before-mentioned. There are two parts, I say, of the mystery of God's will towards us from everlasting; two contrivements that God had towards us poor creatures; and both of them, as you will see in the handling of them, infinitely glorious.

The one is, the *decree of the end* that God hath ordained to bring us unto, *decretum finis*.

The other is *decretum viæ*, or *medii*, the *decree of the way* through which God leads us in bringing us to that end. Divines use to distinguish them thus, terming the one *decretum intentionis*, the decree of God's utmost intention to us: the other *decretum executionis*, the decree of his executing or bringing about the things intended, and is likewise by them called *decretum mediorum*, but I rather call it *decretum viæ*. The distinction is common among divines; but I find but few that apply it unto this scripture, though some do it. And we shall see these words naturally to part themselves into these two decrees:—

1. Here are God's decrees concerning the *end* unto which he meaneth to bring us, or about what he meaneth to do with us, and make us to be at the last. He intendeth to make us perfectly holy and perfectly glorious, like his Son; he meaneth to delight in us for ever, as considered in his beloved. And these decrees the 4th, 5th, and 6th verses do contain.

2. Here are the decrees of the *way* unto this end; that is, of what shall fall out to us in his leading us through this way unto this end—namely, perfect holiness, glory, &c.—and of what shall betide us ere we come to enjoy all this. The Apostle plainly intimates unto us, that we shall fall both into sin and into misery, and so have need of a Redeemer. This same Head we were chosen in must come to redeem us, and our sins must be forgiven, and we must be called, and must have faith; and all these things wrought in us before we can come to heaven. This is the decree of the means, *decretum viæ*, as the other is *decretum patriæ*, (*via* and *patria*, you know, is an old distinction;) and this latter is expressed in the 7th, 8th, and 9th verses.

For this distinction itself, you shall find it founded upon Scripture; as Heb. ii. 10, where the Apostle, speaking that God had ordained Christ to be the author, captain, and leader, ἀρχηγός, of our salvation, says, thus it became him 'in bringing many sons into glory.' So we translate it. The words in the original are πολλοὺς υἱοὺς εἰς δόξαν ἀγαγόντα, 'in leading many sons unto glory.' Here you see is the glory which God means to bring us unto as the end, and here is a way implied through which he leads us unto that glory. Here is the Canaan, and here is the wilderness through which we are to pass unto it. And as we are thus ordained to an end, and led through a way unto it; so is our Redeemer too. You shall find the Scripture speaking in the same language concerning him also. So, Ps. cx. 7, the Psalmist, speaking of Christ, tells us what he shall be in heaven, ver. 1, 'Sit thou at my right hand,' &c.; but before he comes thither, 'he shall drink of the brook in the

way.' Our Saviour Christ is ordained to drink of fulness of pleasure in heaven at the end. 'At thy right hand,' says Christ, Ps. xvi. 11, which psalm was written of him, 'are pleasures for evermore : ' rivers of pleasure, as they are called elsewhere. But he must drink of a bitter cup before he comes thither ; he must ' drink of the brook by the way.' So that God had another decree about him too, even the decree of the way.

Now, to sum up all ; if you speak of what God hath ordained us unto as the end and issue of all, it is contained in the 4th, 5th, and 6th verses : to be perfectly holy, and perfectly happy, and for God perfectly to delight in us ; this is the end and upshot unto which God meaneth to bring us.

But by the way, to make the end and conclusion of all the more illustrious, God, in and by the same everlasting decree, ordained to permit the fall of these his elect. So that instead of these three, perfect holiness, perfect glory, and perfect acceptation with God, he throws you into a condition wherein you are perfectly unholy, perfectly unhappy, and perfectly hateful unto him, as in yourselves considered. This is an accident that falls out by the way ; you shall see who will cure it presently. Instead of perfect holiness, here you have nothing but sin ; instead of glory, and being the children of God by adoption, you have nothing but hell, and then being the children of wrath ; and instead of being accepted by God, you are made a curse : ' Cursed is every one that continueth not in all that is written in this book to do it.' This curse seizeth upon all mankind, and upon yourselves although elected to the contrary. Here God's first design about the end unto which he means to bring us, seems utterly dashed and spoiled ; and we are as far off from all that glory intended as possibly could be imagined. And what does God order then ? Even that this Christ, God-man, he in whom he chose us, and he to be a Head unto us from everlasting, who is the ' Captain of our salvation,' as he is called in that place before-named ; that he should come and take frail flesh, come ' in the likeness of sinful flesh,' and become our Redeemer : ' in whom we have redemption through his blood.' Through him, says God, I will forgive all their sins into which they are fallen, (as the word here used for sins fitly expresseth it, *παρὰπράματα*,) and though they have nothing but unholiness, wickedness, and unbelief in them, yet I will abound towards them in all wisdom and prudence, and turn them unto me, and that in this life ; and then bring them to that perfect holiness and glory, and to that perfect acceptation with me in the world to come, that I have ordained them unto.