

SERMON XVIII.

That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.—VER. 7.

THIS chapter, as I have told you, sets out the proceedings of God, and the contrivements of his decrees, to magnify that rich grace which is in himself in the salvation of poor sinners: how when they were fallen into that dead and damnable estate, 'dead in sins and trespasses,' and 'children of wrath,' that God being rich in mercy, and bearing so great a love to them, took an advantage of that condition to magnify his love so much the more; not only delivered them out of it, but with an addition of an infinitely greater advancement. And the Apostle shews by what degrees God doth proceed to bring salvation to its accomplished perfection. He begins with our souls first here, they being dead in sins, and he quickeneth them; and he hath besides that done this for us now, that in Christ he hath raised up our souls and bodies, the whole man I mean, and he hath set us in heavenly places in him. The first we received, and have received in our own persons, together with Christ, here below. The other two are indeed received for us by Christ, and in Christ; they are made sure to us, but yet they are not accomplished and perfected; and of these the Apostle had spoken in the 4th, 5th, and 6th verses. Now in the words that I have read to you he comes to that which was God's end, or indeed which is itself the end of all, the perfection, the conclusion of all; it is contained in this 7th verse; that which God had in his eye as the perfection of salvation, as the utmost accomplishment of all that he had done, the crown, as I may so say, of all the former. And that the Apostle tells us is, 'that in the ages to come he might shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.'

In expounding every verse I have taken this course. Before I have given a particular explication of every word apart by itself, with observations, I have first endeavoured to fetch out the general scope, and to fix that; the general scope in every text being that which is the measure of the interpretation of every particular. And yet, notwithstanding, in doing of that I am oftentimes enforced to expound each word, to shew how it agrees to that general scope. I shall now be enforced to take this course, there being indeed a very great difficulty in these words, such as I could not have imagined to have been in them.

Now the words which occasion this difficulty are these, *in the ages to come*. For otherwise if these words had not been put in, the sense would have run currently and been easy and plain, that the end that God aimed at in his permitting man's fall, that he should be dead in sin, and then he should be thus quickened, raised, and the like, in Christ, that all this was done 'to the praise of the glory of his grace,' as in chap. i. 7, you have it simply and absolutely, and there is an end; there would have been no more question, but the words would have been simply and solely so taken.

But these words, 'in the ages to come,' or 'in the worlds to come,' coming in, they have occasioned two streams of interpretations, whereof if the one should be exclusive of the other, and if both should not stand together, as I hope they may, the truth is I should hardly know which to prefer.

I lay this for a premise to the opening of these words, that they must needs have a most vast and comprehensive meaning; and that not only because, as Chrysostom saith, his eloquence riseth here in 'the exceeding riches of his grace,' which is an epithet given nowhere else in the Scripture to the grace of God, but because it is evident that these words are the conclusion, the close, the period of the longest continued entire discourse that I know in the whole book of God. The Apostle had begun in ver. 18 of the first chapter, and prayed there for them, that they might know what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and the exceeding greatness of his power, &c. And he never made his discourse fully complete till the end of this verse. So as indeed this ver. 7 is another design like that in ver. 10 of the first chapter, which contains as it were the perfection of God's decrees about us; and this is the summary conclusion of the execution of God's decrees, as I take it.

All, my brethren, do acknowledge this, that here is contained God's end in saving man, to magnify the 'exceeding riches of his grace;' but then the question is of the time, what should be meant of these 'ages to come,' and of the manner and kind of the demonstration of these riches? There are, I say, two interpretations.

1. Some say that this shewing forth the riches of his grace here intended, is that dispensation and communication of the riches of his grace under the gospel in after ages; God holding forth, in that kindness which he had shewn to these Ephesians, and to the Jews, and all those primitive Christians, whom he had converted out of so desperate and damnable a condition, an assurance in these words of a communication of the like exceeding riches of his grace, in all ages to come, to the end of the world, whereof they were the patterns and examples. I find most of the Protestant writers run this way, and the most judicious of the Papists.

2. Others say that this shewing forth or demonstration of the riches of his grace in ages to come, is to eternity, after the resurrection, which he had spoken of in the words immediately before; and that these words do contain the utmost accomplishment, the manifestation and breaking up of the hidden treasure, which shall be expended in the world to come, and requires an eternity to be spending in; besides the riches of grace which he hath shewn us here in quickening us; besides what he doth for us representatively, in setting us in heavenly places in Christ, and the like. And I find this latter to be the sense that all the ancient interpreters run upon, not one exempted, and some of our Protestant writers, and most of the Papists. And of these two interpretations, I confess the reasons on both sides are so strong that I do not know which to exclude; and I believe it will be found to be the truth, that this being the conclusion and winding up of the Apostle's discourse, he had them both in his eye. The reasons for this I shall give you anon.

Now I shall do this. I shall first give you a fair account of the reasons on both sides, either which I find in others, or which God hath suggested to me; reasons taken from the coherence and the aspect of the words of the text, both backward and forward, and the opening of the phrases therein. And then I shall lay open to you what I conceive to be clearly and fully the scope of the Apostle in them.

I will begin with that first interpretation, and that is this, that God in bestowing so much grace upon these, both Jews and Gentiles, in converting them, and in doing so much for them, aimed to hold them forth therein as patterns to all ages to come, who may expect the like grace in all ages, and that he will dispense the like grace to all ages to the end of the world. And—

First, The phrase here, *in ages to come*, hath a relation comparatively to the times of the old law which were past. Now under the Old Testament, when Christ was not ascended, nor was sitting in heaven, so as the saints then could not be said to sit in heaven in Christ, he being not personally there as God-man, the riches of grace were not revealed, or but to a few. But now that Jesus Christ hath possessed heaven for us, he hath dispersed the gospel over all the world; and the doing this in the primitive times is a pawn and pledge that he will continue to break up those exceeding riches of his grace in all ages, one after another, to the end; and the example of these Ephesians is a real demonstration of this: and so now 'ages to come' should respect ages past. And therefore this interpretation is confirmed by that in chap. iii. 5, speaking of the mystery of the gospel, which, saith he, 'in other ages was not made known,'—that is, in ages past,—but now being made known to these Ephesians, and to other Gentiles in their conversion, God did shew that for the ages to come he would break open also the exceeding riches of his grace, as he had done comparatively to what was done before. And hence it is that the time of the gospel is called the day of grace, the day of salvation, as in 2 Cor. vi. 2; and Tit. ii. 11, 'The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men.'

And they give this reason why they are the ages of this world that are here intended. Because they are the ages that do follow one upon another, which do *supervene*,—the word is ἐπιερχομένοις,*—they do one come and follow upon the neck of another, succeed one another, as one wave doth another: whereas if it refer to the time after the resurrection, say they, this would not be so. And hence it is that he calls them 'exceeding riches of grace,' an epithet which he gives nowhere else. He calls them 'riches of grace' elsewhere, but here 'exceeding riches of grace.' Why? Because God had broken open such a mine as should never be drawn dry, no, not to all generations, though he meant to dispense the gospel, and to gather souls out of all the corners of the world. And—

Secondly, To confirm this interpretation further, they say that the conversion of these Ephesians hath something of a pattern and exemplar to confirm posterity in it; and to that end they urge, and truly, that the word ἐπιδείξεται, which is here translated 'to shew,' is to shew forth as in a pattern or example; it is not simply to hold forth, but to give an example of it, to evidence it notoriously, by a token, or by a sign, as it were. The word is sometimes so used, as in Rom. ix. 17, speaking of Pharaoh, saith he, 'For this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee,' might make thee an example, for he is brought in there as an example of all rebels. It is not simply and barely to make him an example of justice, but an example to all ages; for so it follows, 'that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.' And to cut short other places, for I could give you many, as that in 2 Cor. viii. 24, I shall only instance in that famous place which is parallel with it, in 1 Tim. i. 16, where Paul speaks of his conversion, as here he doth of himself and the Jews and these Ephesians. Hav-

* Ἐν τοῖς αἰῶσι τοῖς ἐπιερχομένοις.

ing said the gospel is a faithful saying, he confirms it by this : 'For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering,'—it is the same word that is used here,—'for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.' Every word is emphatical, to shew that Paul was an example. 'To me first,' saith he ; and then, 'shew forth,' as making me an example, the word implies so much ; and then, 'as a pattern.'

And to this end, in the *third* place, the words that follow—in *his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*—do fitly and in a natural way serve this interpretation, for they seem to bear and carry this clear sense, that in this kindness which God had shewn to them, in quickening them when they were dead in sins and trespasses, and in setting them in heavenly places in Christ who represented them, he hath manifested and held forth what he means to do unto others, and what they may expect. The word *kindness* here being taken, as they would have it, both for the manner—that is, by shewing and seeing how liberally, and bountifully, and graciously God had dealt with these Ephesians, in quickening them, and saving them, who were heathens and served idols—and also for the effect ; as oftentimes both in Scripture and in our ordinary phrase it is ; we usually say, I thank you for your kindness,—that is, for the love that you have bestowed. In those benefits fore-mentioned, in the verses before, saith he, he hath held forth a pattern of that exceeding riches of his grace which he meaneth to communicate to others, even as he had done to them.

And then, again, this is confirmed, in the *fourth* place, by this : that it is the manner of God to make the first in any kind examples to others. Thus he made Sodom and Gomorrah, and the old world, as Peter hath it, to be examples, to confirm all his threatenings, and to shew how just a God he would be under the Old Testament, and so under the New too, to them that continue in the same sins against the same means. So now under the New Testament, it being *Regnum Gratie*, he makes these primitive Christians to be patterns and examples of the exceeding abundant riches of his grace, as the other were of his justice, which he meaneth afterwards, under the New Testament, to communicate in all ages to the end.

Lastly, There is this also to confirm it : that God in after ages meant to have a Church catholic in all the world ; and the converts of the primitive Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, being the first-fruits, they should be examples unto us, to confirm that promise both to Jews and Gentiles. And this is exceedingly strengthened by this, that the Apostle, throughout the former part of this epistle, both in the first chapter and also in this second, had still carried equally both Jew and Gentile in his eye. In the first chapter, when he speaks of the benefits we have by Christ, election and the like, and applies them to men whom they belong to : first, he applies them to the Jews, chap. i. 11, 12, 'In whom we have obtained an inheritance, who first trusted in Christ.' 'In whom ye also trusted,' ver. 13 ; that is, ye Gentiles. When he comes to lay open the state of nature, chap. ii. 1, 'Ye were 'dead in trespasses and sins ;' that is, ye Jews. Then, ver. 3, 'Among whom also we had our conversation,'—that is, we Gentiles,—'and were by nature children of wrath, even as others.' And so now, when he comes to speak of their conversion, he tells them that God had quickened them all both together : both ye Gentiles, 'by grace ye are saved ;' and us, he hath 'quickened us.' And he hath herein made us patterns of that mercy and good-will which he means to bestow upon Jews and Gentiles in the ages to come. 'Wherefore,' it follows, ver. 11, 'remember, that ye being in time

past Gentiles in the flesh, ye were then without Christ,' &c. And he would have all posterity remember what their forefathers were.

The only objection against this interpretation, and which I confess is a strong one too, is this : that the Jews were not an example of the like grace to be communicated to their posterity that followed ; for we see that hitherto, in the 'ages to come,' it hath not yet fallen out that any of the Jews are called and converted unto God, but even in the Apostle's time they were broken off.

But let me tell you, that in the latter days, in the ages to come, they shall be called ; and although, indeed, they were broken off for many ages, yet in the latter days there shall be the greatest breaking open of the riches of free grace of any other. 'He shewed mercy unto me first,' saith Paul. That same *first*, as many think, is spoken in relation to his own countrymen, the Jews, who should be found injurious, blasphemers, persecutors, as he himself was ; and should also be converted in that manner, namely extraordinary, as he was. And, my brethren, the 'riches of grace' here in the text, serveth to illustrate this exceedingly ; for when is it that the riches of God's grace and his mercy are held forth in the Scripture, but when the calling of Jews and Gentiles is mentioned ? Rom. x. 12, 'There is no difference between the Jew and Greek ; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.' Therefore now, when he speaks of the breaking up of that grace which should continue both to Jew and Gentile in ages to come, whereof these were pawns and pledges and the first-fruits, he calls it the shewing forth of the exceeding riches of his grace. And in Rom. xi. 12, the conversion of the Jews is called 'the riches of the world.' For, my brethren, there were ages indeed between the Apostle's days and this, in which the free grace of God was clouded exceeding much, though in all ages the saints have had recourse to it ; but in the latter days, when the Jews shall be converted and brought in, God will break open those manifestations of it which yet we know not ; for they are the days of free grace.

And so now I have given you the reasons for that first opinion ; and the observations out of it are of infinite moment to us, and infinitely to our comfort : as, That the days of the gospel are the days of grace ; and, That all the grace and mercy that God hath shewn in the ages past, to the apostles themselves, and those primitive Christians, for the quickening of men's souls, and the like, we that live in these sixteen hundred years after may even expect the very same ; and, That God, in his kindness to these Ephesians and to the Jews that were then converted, hath confirmed to the world, both to Jews and Gentiles, that they shall have the like grace that their forefathers had. There are, I say, these and many more observations that are natural to this interpretation ; and the interpretation itself seems to be exceeding natural also.

But I shall not stand upon these now, but go on to the second interpretation, which I shall be more large in because it is laid aside ; and indeed I think it to be as much the scope of the Apostle here, if not more, than this I have now mentioned. And if both cannot stand together, I shall rather cast it to exclude the other, and take this ; but I confess I am in Paul's strait in it, as he saith in another case. For, my brethren, to interpret it of the exceeding riches of his grace to after ages, that they hereby shall have a confirmation that God will shew them as much grace as to these primitive times, is exceeding comfortable to us. But to interpret it of heaven, and of that world to come, and the breaking up of that riches of grace there, as the final close of all ; this, I say, is best of all.

Now, then, for this second interpretation : that *in ages to come* should refer to the other world also, and to the breaking up of those riches of grace there ; that after God hath thus gone on in manifesting his free grace under the gospel, in quickening and gathering his elect together, and that when the time comes, that they shall sit, not only in Christ as now, but with Christ in heavenly places ; that then, as the close of all, he will manifest and shew forth an unknown treasury, a treasury that shall be answerable to the thoughts of the mercy and grace that is in the great God, and answerable to that dignity of being conformed unto Jesus Christ, and made like unto him.

For, to confirm this interpretation to you, I shall lead you along through these several reasons put together. And—

First, I will begin with the phrase, *in the ages to come*; that that, I say, should respect, not only the ages and times of this world, but also respect the world to come, and the ages of eternity. For, my brethren, first, in opposition to this present world, and these ages now, you know the Scripture calls the next the world to come, or eternity to come ; for *αἰών* here, which is translated *ages*, is called the world to come often in the Hebrew, and it is the very same word, ‘ages to come,’ I say, in opposition to this present world, as the Apostle calleth this in Gal. i. 4. You have the very phrase in the first chapter of this epistle, ver. 21, which I shall anon make further use of ; he saith there, that Jesus Christ is set far above all principality and power, ‘not only in this world, but also in that which is to come,’ *ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι*. The word translated there ‘world to come’ is the same that is used here for ‘ages.’ And in Heb. vi. 5, they are said to have tasted of the powers of the ‘world to come ;’ it is the word which is here used for ‘ages.’ It is true, indeed, in Heb. ii. 5, the state of the gospel is called a ‘world to come,’ *αἰκουμένη*, but that in Heb. vi. 5 is *αἰών*, the word that is used here, though in the singular number—*μὲν λοντος αἰῶνος*.

But it will be objected, are *ages* in the plural taken for the times after the day of judgment to eternity, where there is no flux of time ?

For that, my brethren, the Scripture often expresseth in the plural also. You read of the phrase ‘for ever and ever,’ you have it in the Revelation again and again. ‘We shall reign with Christ for ever and ever ;’ it is ‘for ages and ages,’ if you will, or for evers, for eternities ; you have the same in Rom. xvi. 27. If you will but look into the third chapter of this epistle, ver. 21, you shall find that it is in the plural as well as here. ‘Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.’ He means not only this world, but the world that is to come too ; and why ? Because that to come is the age of ages, it is the *secula seculorum*, it hath all ages within the circumference of it. The days of darkness, they are many ; and the days of glory, they are many too. And God hath so much riches of grace to shew forth, which is the conclusion of all, as it requires an eternity to do it in, therefore he hath taken time enough to do it in. ‘In the ages to come,’ saith he, ‘to shew forth the riches of his grace.’

And then, *ἐπερχομένων* is not only ages succeeding one another, but to come upon ; and yet if so, why should there not be succession in the world to come ? There is not a variation distinguished as ours is, by births and deaths of men, as we make ages. But it is no more but this, the ages that shall come upon us ; for time of duration is extrinsical, it is an external thing to us : as the phrase in Dan. iv. 16 imports, ‘Let seven times pass over him.’ So that time of eternity doth pass over us, come upon us, it is an eternal flux of time. And although there be not a variation such as ours, yet there is a succession of duration : and though there be no sun, or moon,

or years, and we shall not there measure time by the same glass or by the same clock as here; yet it is a continued flux of time, an eternal succession, that must needs accompany creatures; for it is God only that gathers all time in one moment, and in his vast being encircles it, and contracts all to one centre and moment. It is a foolish dispute the school-men have, that there shall be no such succession in eternity; the wisest of them, Scotus, and the holiest of them, Bonaventure, are of another mind. Indeed in Rev. x. 6 it is said, 'time shall be no longer;' but that is meant of the time of the persecution of the church of God.

The phrase then not being averse to this sense, let me now shew you the strength of this interpretation, for indeed nothing will greaten heaven to us more than this. I shall argue all sorts of ways.

First, I shall argue this sense and meaning, and in arguing open the words, and see how all give up themselves with parallel scriptures to this interpretation.

In the first place, do but consider that here is God's ultimate and highest end that he hath in the salvation of man held forth. All in a manner acknowledge this. He that is rich in mercy in his own being, as ver. 4 here, the final cause that moved him, or which he aimed at, is, that he might manifest to the utmost those riches of mercy. And as it is the final cause, so the utmost of his design concerning man's salvation is held forth; he mentions it therefore in the close of all, in the language of a final event, 'that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace.' Now then consider but these two things; it is evident that the Apostle had in this chapter two things in his eye. He had, first, the magnifying and setting forth the kindness of God towards these Ephesians and other the elect of God; and this grace set forth in their salvation, in all the parts of salvation. And by shewing the greatness of this salvation in all the parts of it, he comes to magnify the greatness of this grace, as well as by the depth of misery that men were taken out of. The sum of all is clear to be this, to magnify grace, and to magnify salvation, as the utmost perfection of what God meant to bring men to. This, I say, is clearly his scope. If then his scope be to magnify the riches of grace in the height of it,—and therefore he useth the highest expression; he speaks, you see, the highest thing of it, 'the exceeding riches of his grace,' because it contains the utmost of his ends moving him, or issue of his design intended,—that must needs rest in nothing but in the utmost manifestation of that grace; and where is that? In heaven; nowhere else. The gospel revealeth infinite grace to us, but the exceeding riches of grace shall be broken up in the world to come; there is a reserve of it for eternity such as we cannot now comprehend. Therefore now here is intended the actual enjoyment that those saints whom God hath now quickened and set in heaven in Christ, shall have in the ages to come, of those exceeding riches of grace which Christ hath taken possession of for them in heaven. The utmost of God's designs in man's salvation, namely, to shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace, is not attained till heaven come: therefore these words, 'That in the ages to come he might shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace,' shew the actual enjoyment of that which Christ hath now taken the possession of for us.

And then let me also argue from this. Observe his order in discoursing of our salvation, which is the second thing that he sets himself here to set out to us, and the exceeding riches of the grace of God therein. He sets out salvation in all the gradual accomplishments of it, till it is made fully perfect and complete. As his scope, in shewing our misery, was to shew it in the

utmost extent of it, in all the degrees of it; so in laying open our salvation also he takes the same course. First, he shews what is begun upon our own persons in quickening of us. He tells us, secondly, how heaven and resurrection is made sure to us, though we do not yet enjoy it: ver. 6, 'He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ.' Now then here in the 7th verse, as the close of all, to perfect that salvation and to fill up what Jesus Christ hath taken possession of, he shews how that God will spend to eternity the exceeding, the utmost riches of that grace; there he will shew it, and then he will bring it forth. God's utmost end is not attained till you come to this; and our salvation, as I may so speak, though it is made sure in Christ, is yet uncomplete; but in those ages of eternity, in the world to come, he will bring forth all his rich treasure, and then shall salvation be complete, and there shall be the utmost demonstration of it. So that the Apostle, take but his scope, doth clearly hold forth both God's utmost design, of magnifying free grace, which is not till in heaven we have had all the riches of it broken open and spent upon us there; it is not only by quickening of us and setting us in heaven in Christ, which is done already, but it is by spending an eternity in heaven with God, and sitting with Christ for evermore. And now then, saith he, though you Ephesians see a world of grace in what God hath done for you already,—he hath quickened you through his grace, he hath set you in heaven together in Christ,—he hath yet a further and a greater thing for you, which is the end and issue of all whereof these are the preparative, and that is, that he may in ages to come, which quickening and all tendeth unto, shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace; the real performance cometh then, which these went before to make way for.

And so now having argued from the general scope of what is in this chapter, I shall proceed in opening every part of the verse, and every word therein, and shew you that they all do give up themselves to this interpretation.

In the first place, do but take the coherence with the words immediately before. He tells us that God hath 'set us in heavenly places in Christ, that in the ages to come he might shew forth,' &c. The meaning is to me clearly and plainly this, as if the Apostle had said, Our Lord and Saviour Christ hath taken up your rooms for you in heaven; there he sits, and that degree of glory which you shall have at the resurrection and for ever there he hath taken it up for you; but know withal that he hath taken up so much at once—for he perfects everything he doth, as done in him for us, at once—as it requires an eternity of time for you to receive that which Christ hath received for you. Jesus Christ, my brethren, in Heb. x. is said to perfect our salvation at once, and so he hath received perfectly all the glory we shall have at once: but as what he did at once purchase by his death he hath ages to come for to accomplish, so, saith the Apostle, his having taken possession for you in heaven, it requires ages to come for God to give forth what Christ hath now taken possession of, and for what he sitteth in heaven representing you, to that end that one day you may have it. In those imperfect notes of Mr Baines printed, which I believe in a great part are his, I observe he hath this expression: 'God,' saith he, 'did draw the lineaments which he would be perfecting of for ever;' that is, in Jesus Christ he hath laid out your line in heaven, the place and compass of glory you shall have, and there you have possession of it in Christ, there is a model of it in him, that even to eternity and in ages to come God might build upon this, and might spend the exceeding riches of his grace in bestowing that which Jesus

Christ hath now taken up for us. This, I say, is a natural and full coherence, which holds forth a sense of a great deal of glory. So I proceed.

It answers to the parallel that the Apostle did intend to make between Christ and us in the first chapter of this epistle. He tells us there that the same power works in us who wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places: and here you see in the 6th verse, the verse just before the text, he brings in the parallel. He hath 'quickened us,' saith he, 'and hath raised us up, and made us sit in heaven, in him.' Now mark it, what is it that is said of Christ sitting in heaven? That he sits there, 'far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, not only in this world, but also,' saith he, 'in that which is to come.' To make up this reddition now on our parts, he shews us in this chapter that Christ not only sits in heaven for us and in our stead, but as he hath a world to come in which he shall reign and sit for ever, so, saith he, have you; you have worlds to come—for it is the same word, only one is the plural and the other is the singular—for to sit with Christ, and you shall have all the riches of God's grace bringing in joys and happiness to you to feast you with unto eternity. And so by adding this now, the Apostle hath made the reddition full; this world is to come here on our parts; sitting with Christ in heaven answers to that sitting of Christ for ever over principalities and powers in his world to come, with this difference, that he sitteth at God's right hand, which we are not said to do.

Then again, the phrase *shew forth* will exceedingly fit this interpretation also, and comes in clearly to this sense, (I shall shew you by and by that this word doth not only import to hold forth in an example, but to hold forth gloriously,) for these Ephesians' hearts might think thus, and they might say, You tell us of a great deal that God hath done for us, he hath set us yonder in heaven, and raised us up together in Christ, but when shall this be accomplished? When shall it be performed to us? We see none of this, it is yet hidden to us. Why, saith the Apostle, you sit now in Christ; but God hath placed you there but to this end, that in a world to come he might there shew forth to you, and upon you, sitting together with Christ, that glory which now is hid; as the word *shewing forth* imports. It hath relation to what is now hid, what they saw not. For we do not see now otherwise than by faith the glory of Christ; much less do we see otherwise than by faith that he hath taken up heaven for us, nor do we see that riches of glory which he hath taken possession of in our stead. But, saith he, after the resurrection, when the world to come shall come, and in those ages and *evers* to come, he will shew forth, he will make an open demonstration of those riches which Jesus Christ hath taken possession of. And so it is a parallel place with that in Col. iii. 3, 4, where he had said, ver. 1, that we are risen with Christ, even as he here saith that we are raised in Christ, and sit in Christ in heaven, and he addeth, 'Your life is hid with Christ in God; but when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.' So because that these riches of glory which Jesus Christ hath taken possession of are now hidden, therefore he doth purposely use the very word here; he will shew forth what is now hidden, he will break open that hidden treasure which shall last even to eternity.

And, my brethren, to shew forth in an example is not the only force of this word, it doth not always import that alone, but sometimes to shew forth in a notorious, in a manifest and glorious way, to the view of all. I shall give you a place for it: it is in Rom. ix. 22, where the same word that is here used for *shewing*; it is not there to shew as in a way of example to

others to come, for it is spoken of shewing his wrath upon all the reprobates of the world and that shall be found at the day of judgment; and it is there used only for this, to make known. Mark the words: 'What if God, willing to shew his wrath,'—it is the same word,—'and make his power known.' So that now, 'that he might shew in the ages to come,' or 'in the world to come,' is but this, what follows afterward, in that Rom. ix. 23, 'that he might make known the riches of his grace,' which there he calls 'the riches of his glory.' And the truth is, this Rom. ix. 23 is as clear a parallel to this in the text as 1 Tim. i. 16 is a parallel to it in the other sense before mentioned. I could give you other texts wherein the word here used is not only to shew by way of example that God will do the same to others, but that God will do it openly and gloriously, as in 2 Thess. ii. 4, and in Heb. vi. 11; but I will not stand to quote and heap up places.

This word likewise, *exceeding riches*, agrees excellently well with this sense. For what is the manner of a great treasure? It useth to be hid. Isa. xlv. 3, 'I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places.' So because these treasures which God means in the ages to come to bring to light are now hidden, he puts these two together, that he might shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace. Where, my brethren, doth he use the addition of the 'exceeding riches of his grace?' Nowhere that I know of but here; and why? Because he speaks of the utmost manifestation, demonstration, and accomplishment of the height of the riches of his grace, which shall not have their accomplishment till then.

And then there is another confirmation also of this interpretation, and that is this: I told you at first that the Apostle had continued a discourse begun at the 18th verse of the 1st chapter. It is the longest continued discourse that is in all the Scripture. Now how begins that 18th verse of that 1st chapter? He prays there that they might 'know what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,' and so he goes on, and it is a continued discourse to this very verse, which is the conclusion of it, and the only conclusion, and he was not come to a period till now. And then here he comes, and with that he concludes all, and saith, there is a world to come which is the design and end of all, wherein God will shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace to come. And so now you have the beginning of the Apostle's sentence and the end of it meeting in one circle of glory, as I may so express it. 'Riches of glory' he began with, and the expense of the riches of grace to procure that glory and to work that glory is his conclusion. And such a glorious circle, that involves summarily all things concerning our salvation, even heaven and all, I know not in the whole book of God. He begins his sentence with 'riches of glory,' and ends with the 'riches of grace' to be shewn forth in the world to come, as the accomplishment of our perfection and of God's design. The Holy Ghost did stretch the Apostle's mind to the utmost expanse to enclose in this discourse of his all the great and glorious things that concern our salvation.

But you will say, Why doth he use the expression, 'riches of his grace,' if he intends the bestowing of glory in the world to come, and the accomplishment of our salvation? why doth he not use the phrase 'riches of glory,' as he had done, chap. i. 18, and Rom. ix. 23?

The answer is ready, and it confirms my interpretation. For in the first place his scope here is to shew the fountain, which he would magnify, of those riches of glory spoken of, chap. i. 18. His scope is here to magnify God, as rich in mercy, and as having in his eye to shew, before he had done, the exceeding, the abundant, all the riches of his mercy and of his goodness.

Now then, riches of grace being the cause and fountain of all the glory we have in heaven, therefore when he comes to magnify and glorify it, that being all his scope, he speaks here in the language of the cause. He doth not say, God will shew forth the riches of glory, but the 'exceeding riches of his grace.' How? In bestowing so much glory as a God that is rich in mercy, and hath nothing but love in him to his saints, and sets himself to love them, can bestow; that look, what riches of glory in God, such riches of grace in him, can procure, you shall have them all. It is the greatest argument to shew the greatness of glory in heaven that could be imagined. My brethren, grace is at all the cost, it is purser of all his expenses, there is the mine of all: therefore he would have us now gather and collect what a riches of glory must needs be there, when God shall begin to shew forth such a treasure as the gospel is almost mute about it, tells us of it, but cannot speak a word of it, but shall then be shewn forth, and requires an eternity of time to manifest it in.

But it will be further said, If it be meant of the shewing forth of his grace in the accomplishment of our salvation in heaven, why doth he add, *in his kindness toward us?*

Those words, you shall find that they will suit as much and as fully God's dispensation in heaven, as they will suit the other sense of making the Ephesians the example of his grace to the ages to come. I shall make this plain and manifest to you, and thereby I shall fully open every word of this text. And—

First, It is not 'in his kindness' in the original, for the word *his* is not there, but is inserted by our translators, as leaning to the other sense. Now there are two reasons why these words are added, to shew the riches of his grace; still keeping this interpretation, that it is meant of the accomplishment of our salvation in heaven.

1. That reason which Grotius gives, who indeed carries it in this sense we are now upon. He adds, saith he, this word, 'in his kindness,' unto grace, because he knows not how to use words enough. And it is the manner of the Scriptures, when they would magnify anything, to inculcate with variety of words the same thing again and again, and especially in magnifying of grace and gifts thereof: the blessed apostles, and other writers, the prophets, have done so. There is that famous instance in Isa. lxiii. 7, where, speaking to magnify the love of God in all the benefits he bestows upon us, see how he multiplies phrases: 'I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord,'—that is, the benefits which proceed from his loving-kindness,—'and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses.' You see here how he heaps up loving-kindnesses to mercy, and great goodness to loving-kindness, and multitude of loving-kindness to great goodness; he can scarcely fill it up with words enough: the holy prophets did so abound, and truly so doth the Apostle here. To magnify the greatness of the grace of God, he contents not himself to say, 'the exceeding riches of his grace,' but he adds, 'in his kindness towards us.'

There is a second matter contained in this 'kindness' in the reddition, if it be referred to heaven. For the word kindness superaddeth to grace. I told you in opening, the difference of mercy, and love, and grace; that there is a difference in all these three, something expressed by the one which the other did not. My brethren, here is kindness, which the Apostle puts

in, and puts in in a very good place, when he comes to speak of grace bestowing heaven upon us. It is the fullest word that can be: it doth not only import grace and free favour, it doth not only import mercy, but it is a sweet word, it imports sweetness of disposition, it imports friendliness in it; it is a familiar word, a condescending word; it is an overplus to love, and to mercy, and to grace and all. For grace imports a sovereignty in God to shew favour, that he doth it freely like a lord, and the great king of the world; for great persons are properly said to be gracious. And mercy, that is a good word too, but it is a disposition to shew pity and to relieve one in misery; but *χρηστότης*, the word here, implies all sweetness, and all candidness, and all friendliness, and all heartiness, and all goodness, and goodness of nature. And he superaddeth this, to manifest thereby both the root of, and also the way of God's shewing love to his people; and the meaning is, that God doth not now dispense heaven and glory and happiness merely out of grace, and out of his prerogative, merely to shew forth his own glory and riches, as the first importeth; and it is well for us he doth so, for that argues it to be the greater happiness; but further, saith the Apostle, he doth it with the greatest kindness that can be, with a benignity, with a rejoicing, with a heartiness. My brethren, all these sweet words that are put for goodness and sweetness and the like, the Septuagint uses this very word for them all throughout the whole Old Testament. To give you one instance; it is in 1 Pet. ii. 3, that you may taste how good the Lord is; it is the same word that is here; how sweet he is. All dispositions of sweetness and friendliness are implied in this word 'kindness.' 'How great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!' The Septuagint reads it, 'How great is thy kindness!' It is distinct from mercy, and superaddeth to mercy: Eph. iv. 32, 'Be ye kind one to another, and tender-hearted,' &c. It is distinguished from long-suffering in 2 Cor. vi. 6. It is made the root of mercy and all in God, in Tit. iii. 4. Saith he, we are thus and thus; 'but after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared,' then so and so. Kindness there, as one well observeth, is the root, his native sweetness of disposition which inclineth him to love, which as the effect thereof follows. Therefore the Apostle goes to the bottom of God's heart when he adds this, 'his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.'

It implies this, that God is glad of all the glory he bestows upon us, that he rejoiceth over us, as the phrase is in Jer. xxxii. 41, 'I will rejoice over them to do them good,' saith he; so God will rejoice over you in glorifying of you. It imports that he will not do it merely to shew his riches, as Ahasuerus made a feast and invited all his nobles, to shew the riches of his glorious kingdom. God indeed will bring us to heaven, and shew the exceeding riches of his grace; and that is the chiefest end he aims at. But now Ahasuerus, he did not do this in kindness; it was more to shew his riches and glory than his kindness; but God, as he will there shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace, for the glorifying of it, so he will do it in all the sweetness and kindness that your souls can desire or expect.

My brethren, it is well for us that the proportion of glorifying us will be answerable to the exceeding riches of his own grace and the glory that he shall have from thence; and that that shall be the measure of our happiness. But to add this to it, for the manner of it, that he will do it with all affection, with his whole heart, and in all kindness; this infinitely sweetens it to us. It is therefore, I say, a good word indeed, and comes in well, 'in kindness to us,' the word *his* not being in the Greek. The phrase fitly

serves to shew the manner of his dispensing to be thus in a bountiful way, and in a benign, kind, and willing way ; and so interpreters carry it : *Quam liberaliter, quam magnificè, &c.*

And then 'in kindness' may be added. He will then 'shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us ;' that is, in the same kindness wherewith he hath begun to quicken us. You may see how kind he will be in heaven by finding how kind he is now ; by the very same kindness he will dispense all glory to you in the world to come. And so much now, why that 'in his kindness' is added to the manifestation of the riches of his grace.

The next thing is, *toward us*. You know the former interpretation carries it thus, that he made these Ephesians instances of the grace he will then shew forth in the ages to come. But if you refer it to heaven, there is more in it ; for when the Apostle tells them that God would make them patterns of his grace to others, the comfort will be to others, not so much to themselves ; but when he saith, God will shew forth towards them all glory in the world to come, this falleth personally upon themselves and comforts them immediately. And, my brethren, this could not but mightily raise their hearts indeed. For when we shall hear that God intends in heaven to lay forth the riches of his grace, that may be supposed to be meant indefinitely as the common condition of all the saints ; but when he shall add, 'in his kindness toward you,' you are the men that shall be the objects of all this kindness and of all this grace, how wonderfully will this affect our souls ! And to this purpose, to comfort and raise their hearts, doth the Apostle here bring in this, 'in his kindness toward us.' And in that they are examples to all believers that follow ; for the *us* here is not the Ephesians alone, but all the saints and elect ; even as when he shewed that we were 'dead in sins and trespasses,' he speaks in the person of the Ephesians, but he would have all mankind to apply it to themselves. So that indeed they need not be examples in this, but it being the common condition of all believers, it is carried fully enough in them. And the meaning, in a word, is this, that God will not only shew forth riches of glory in heaven indefinitely, but he hath chosen out you ; you, out of a special kindness which he hath borne towards you, out of which he will glorify you ; and you are the vessels of that mercy upon which he will shew forth the riches of his grace. Therefore now he brings in 'toward us' again, though he had mentioned it before, to affect their hearts the more.

But why is this word, *in Christ Jesus*, added, which he had used so often before, again and again ?

Not only because he would have us never to leave Jesus Christ out. I do not know who can set up without Christ, or continue without Christ, for I am sure the Apostle never leaves him out ; no, not in election and adoption, nor in anything, so not now, when he comes to heaven ; but still whatsoever he speaks of, Christ cometh in. But I say, this is not all ; his meaning is this likewise, that all the glory that the saints shall have from the exceeding riches of his grace in heaven shall all be in Christ. He had told them, chap. i. 3, 4, that God had blessed them with all heavenly blessings in Christ. If as heavenly, and all such that then we have upon earth, we have them all in Christ, much more then ; the more heavenly, they are more in Christ. Indeed, out of Christ God could not love any creature, nor would love any creature, much less would suffer any creature to be so near him, but that he hath blessed them and will continue kind to them in Christ.

But then, in the second place, it comes in to a greater, I mean to a more

emphatical purpose,—for a greater cannot be than this mentioned,—and that is, to shew that all that God will bestow upon us in heaven, it shall be out of the same kindness which he beareth to Jesus Christ himself. He will use you kindly when you come thither. Do but think how kindly he used his Son, how welcome he made him when he came to heaven, when he said, Sit thou here, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. Why, the same kindness he bears to Christ he bears to us; and out of that kindness he bears to Christ he will entertain us there for evermore, and heartily and freely spend his utmost riches upon us; for he will glorify the head and members with the same glory. Therefore the Apostle shewed, in the first chapter, that he set up Jesus Christ as the head, and that the same power that wrought in him, and raised him up, and set him in heaven, works in us and shall accomplish it in us. Here he shews that it is the same kindness; the same kindness wherewith he embraced Jesus Christ as the head, he embraceth the whole body also, and out of that kindness will entertain them everlastingly, as he hath done Jesus Christ. As we and Christ make but one body, so God's love to Christ and us is but one love. There is one Father, one Spirit, and one love, and indeed one Christ; for both body and head make one Christ. I need not stand upon this, you have it in John xvii. 23, 'Thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me;' and, ver. 22, 'The glory which thou gavest me I have given them.' And what can be said more to shew us what great glory that in heaven will be, whenas Jesus Christ is not only a pattern and example of it, but when it proceeds out of the same kindness that God's heart is set upon towards Jesus Christ himself?

And thus, my brethren, I have opened to you this text, and indeed every word in it, and that to two senses of as great moment as can be found in any place; so great, and so comprehensive, that they are well worthy to be the conclusion of so glorious a discourse as the Apostle had prosecuted, even himself out of breath, if we may so speak, from the 18th verse of the first chapter, until now; the words that follow, 'by grace ye are saved,' are but a resuming of one particular which he had scattered by a parenthesis in this grand discourse, which he explaineth a little further, but otherwise here is the close.

I need not tell you which of the senses I lean to. The truth is, if they will both stand together, I can hardly tell which to take; but I incline to the latter, as that which is most worthy to be the conclusion of so magnificent and glorious a discourse as the Apostle had made.

I have gone by this rule ever since I began to open this Epistle to you—that is, to take in all the senses in any scripture that will consist and stand together; and I think the excellency and glory of a scripture, as of all sayings of weight and moment of wise men, lies in this. Take a wise saying of a wise man, and the more depth of senses can be fetched out of it, the more aspects of meanings it hath, the more several ways it looks, the deeper is the sentence, and the fuller of wisdom, as in sayings of wit also; and so it is in the sayings of the Holy Ghost. Now oftentimes there are senses cannot stand together, but I hope it will prove that both these may, and then the sum of it is but thus. The Apostle's intent is to hold forth God's great design, whereof he had given these Ephesians instances and examples, and of his grace to them in their salvation; and saith he, he hath intended, and doth confirm to all the world by what he hath done to you, that for all the ages to come, to the end of the world, he will shew forth the like grace, to call in a world of his elect, whereof you are the first-fruits and forerunners. And when he hath thus, by shewing forth that exceeding riches of grace,

quicken'd all his elect and gather'd them to Jesus Christ, then begins another world in ages to come, in which he will break open the riches of his grace, which is the utmost accomplishment of our salvation, and the utmost design of free grace, and where he will shew so much glory as to hold proportion with the exceeding riches of the grace of the great God, and of his loving-kindness. And this I take to be the meaning of the words, which doth comprehend both the senses and interpretations.