

SERMON XIX.

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.

THE words that I have read to you, as I told you in the last discourse, are the conclusion both of God's design of man's salvation, and of all the contrivements of the execution of it; and they are the conclusion also of the longest continued discourse that I know of in the whole book of God; the Apostle having indeed begun at the 18th verse of the first chapter, and not ended till now. And there are of these words three interpretations, whereof I mentioned two in the last discourse: all which, I believe, will be fully comprehended in the intent of the Holy Ghost in them.

The first of them, which I then mentioned not, is general to the other two, and takes in all, and it is this: that here the Apostle propounds the end of God in the salvation of men simply, as it reflects and respecteth his own glory, and especially of his grace. He holds forth here the highest end as it respects the glory of God, which is 'to shew forth in the ages to come the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.' That look now, as in the first chapter he had made this, as it were, the close and the burden of all, 'to the glory of his grace,'—thus, ver. 6, having spoken of election, he saith, 'to the praise of the glory of his grace;' having spoken of the forgiveness of sins, ver. 7, 'according to the riches of his grace;' having spoken of faith, and of the work of faith, ver. 12, 'that we,' who have faith wrought in us, 'should be to the praise of his glory,'—so likewise here; only because that this is the close of all, when he meaneth to part with it, he adds a heightening expression; he riseth in his epithets of it, and he saith here, 'the exceeding riches of his grace.'

Now that which confirms this interpretation, as I told you what proves the other, are these particulars:—

First, That God's glory made known is the supreme end of all, and in God, the glory of his grace; and therefore seeing here he bringeth in a close, a conclusion of all about man's salvation, he should therefore intend this most chiefly and principally; namely, that God's end was to manifest the riches of his grace, and the glory of his grace, as it respecteth his own glory.

And this, secondly, cohereth with the words which go before, and follow after. He had shewn in the words before the causes of our salvation; and he begins thus, 'God, that was rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us.' He mentioneth there riches of mercy in God, as the cause *πρὸς ἡμᾶς*, the inward disposition inclining him in his own heart thereunto. Here now he mentioneth the final cause to be the making known of those riches of grace and mercy laid up in himself unto mankind, and that God being so rich in his nature, and so full of love, hath contrived all to shew forth the riches of his grace to the uttermost.

And then again, in the third place, this being made the final cause of all,—namely, the glorifying the riches of the grace of God,—is mentioned here,

after the description of so great a sinfulness in the persons saved, and after so great a salvation in all the parts of it, described in the verses before, to that end to make this salvation credible. The next words are, 'for by grace ye are saved, and that through faith.' His scope is to make men believe that God indeed had done, and would do, so great things for sinners that had deserved nothing at his hands, yea, the contrary; and therefore gives you the bottom reason that was in God's heart, to take off the wonder; and it is, saith he, merely to shew forth the exceeding riches of his own grace; and to that end it was that he contrived this depth of misery, and this greatness of salvation, to set forth the riches of grace in himself so much the more. My brethren, when men hear of so great a God that hath done so great things for the salvation of his own sinful creatures, either they are apt to think that there is something in themselves for which he should do it, or else indeed and in truth their hearts believe it not. Now therefore the Apostle doth give a plain account of it, to work belief in them, and he discovereth the supreme end, which he inculcath again and again, that all was to manifest the glory of his own grace to the full. So although you see no reason, and God himself did not, why he should thus save them, yet saith he, he saw full reason in his own heart; he had a full, adequate motive in his own breast to do all this, which in itself is so incredible.

And then, fourthly, the words themselves do give up themselves readily to this sense also.

First, The words, *to shew forth*, is the antecedent put for the consequent, as oftentimes in Scripture it is. The meaning is this: he puts that which shall be the occasion of glorifying of him for glorifying of him. The occasion and the way of glorifying of him is shewing forth the riches of his grace: so that indeed the meaning comes to this, that his scope and intent was that men should glorify him by his shewing forth the exceeding riches of his grace; it being known to that end that it might be glorified. And in Rom. ix. 22, these two are made equivalent, 'to shew forth his wrath,' and 'make his power known:': so here, to shew forth the riches of his grace, or to make it known, to that end it may be glorified.

Secondly, The phrase, *ages to come*, implies thus much, take it as it respects simply the glory of God, that it is such riches of grace which God manifesteth in the salvation of men, as deserveth in all times, in this world and in the world to come, to be celebrated, to be magnified, and glorified, even by all creatures, and shall be laid open to the full at the day of judgment by Jesus Christ himself; and deserveth especially to be magnified and glorified and celebrated even to eternity, by the persons themselves who are the subjects of this grace.

Thirdly, *In his kindness toward us*, doth suit even to this sense also. It hath been questioned by some whether, yea or no, the first moving cause to move God to go forth to save men was the manifesting of his own glory, or his kindness and love to men which he was pleased to take up towards them? I have heard it argued with much appearance of strength, that however God indeed in the way of saving men carries it as becomes God, so as his own glory and grace shall have the pre-eminence; yet that which first moved him, that which did give the occasion to him to go forth in the manifestation of himself, which else he needed not, was rather kindness to us than his own glory: yet so, as if he resolved out of kindness and love to us to manifest himself at all, he would then do it like God, and he would so shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace as that that alone should be magnified. Now the truth is, this text compounds the business, and doth tell us plainly

and truly that the chief end is that God should glorify his own grace, for I assent not to that which I mentioned. It puts the chief and original end upon the shewing forth the exceeding riches of his grace; yet so as he hath tempered and conjoined therewith the greatest kindness, the greatest loving affection, for the way of manifesting of it, so as in the way of carrying it, it shall appear it is not simply to glorify himself, but out of kindness toward us: he puts that in, as that which shall run along with all the manifestation of his own glory. And therefore now he makes, in the 4th verse, mercy and great love to us to be as well the fountain and foundation of our salvation, as the manifestation of the riches of his grace here.

And then likewise those other words, *toward us*, come in here, to shew also thus much, that God, in pitching upon glorifying his free grace, did not do it upon men in the general, as some have conceived the counsels of God first lay,—viz., that he resolved first in himself to glorify his free grace upon some in the general and indefinite, and then he thought of persons; and seeing he had laid that conclusion, it was all one to him, say they, whom he should have chosen; some he must have if he would accomplish that decree, and so he pitched upon those he did. Now, to shew the contrary, that even from the first, that all along when he first pitched upon manifesting the riches of his grace in the salvation of men, he had the persons in his eye whom he would manifest this upon, and that it was not an after-thought, a thought of indifferency, therefore the Apostle here saith, ‘in his kindness *toward us*.’ That general and indefinite way is derogatory from that special love and kindness which he beareth toward us in Jesus Christ, as the Apostle here speaks. He joins, you see, a respect toward us, as having *us* in his eye in particular, together with the utmost end he had in respect to himself, which was the glorifying of his own love. He never had a purpose of glorifying himself, but he had withal a purpose at the same instant to make us the vessels and objects of his love.

Lastly, *In Christ Jesus* is added, for he is adequate to all God’s counsels. God shews not one dram nor casts one beam of favour upon any soul but in Christ. He hath chosen us *in him*, and never considereth us out of him, nor him without us; no, nor his own glory neither, but as involving kindness; he loved us altogether. And so now you have a summary interpretation of these words to that more general meaning, which indeed doth comprehend the other two I gave in the last discourse.

I confess this interpretation I now have given,—that is, that these words should respect the design God had, as aiming at his own glory, the glory of his grace,—it was that which, when I looked upon the words afar off, I thought had been the only meaning of them, and he that runs may read this to be the general scope of them; but when I approached nearer to them, there were two other more narrow (let me say so) interpretations—yet glorious ones too—which did further appear to be of them, which I spake to largely in the last discourse. And—

The first of them is this, I shall repeat it briefly: that besides this general end that God had, as it respects himself simply, he made the salvation of these Ephesians, and of those primitive Christians, to be patterns and examples of what grace and mercy he would shew forth to posterity, in all ages to come, under the times of the gospel. And by shewing that he then converted idolatrous heathens all the world over, he did thereby give a pawn and a pledge of that riches of grace which he had broken up under the times of the gospel, and meant to go on to dispense in after times both to Jews and Gentiles. And to this sense also doth everything in the text,

as I shewed you in the last discourse, give up themselves, to make these primitive Christians patterns of grace to all ages to come.

The word, *to shew forth*, here, is to give proof, it is to give assurance by a pattern; as in 2 Cor. viii. 24, and 1 Tim. vi. 15, and especially in 1 Tim. i. 16, 'He set me up as a pattern,' saith he, 'that in me he might shew forth'—it is the same word—'all long-suffering,' &c. And so now this second sense, as the other is for the glory of God, so this is mightily for our comfort and encouragement, and all our posterity that shall live in after ages, to bring in what mercies, what saving mercies God vouchsafed to these Ephesians and other Christians, as a pattern and pledge of what grace we might expect. And there is no reason to exclude this, and it comes well in under that general I mentioned even now.

There is also a second sense I then named, a third sense indeed, and all in the text gives itself up to it likewise; for these words being the conclusion of so long a discourse, the Holy Ghost hath the greatest summing up of all in them concerning man's salvation that is included in any scripture. And that third sense is this: that whereas the Apostle had set out our salvation as begun, 'He hath quickened us together with Christ,' he hath set Christ in heaven, and there he hath given him our portion; that is, he hath put, as into the hands of a feoffee in trust, all the glory we shall have for ever; he hath in him raised us up, and in him set us together in heavenly places; all the glory we shall have in the other world, which we are to possess, is now put, saith he, into the hand of Christ. To what end? 'That he might shew forth in ages to come,' even to eternity, the riches of that grace which he hath intended us in Christ, which he hath already given us in Christ representatively, which Christ hath taken possession of; which, saith he, is so great a glory, as it requires ages to come, an eternity of time, for to spend that treasure which is thus given us in Christ; it requires *ἐν τοῖς αἰῶσι τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις*, as the word is, ages of ages, to spend them and to manifest them; which when those times shall begin, then shall begin the accomplishment of our salvation, and so it shall be complete. And because he would shew how great that salvation is, he describes it to us first by the fountain of it. Look what riches of grace in Christ he hath to bestow upon them he loves in his Son; look what will require an eternity of time for to exhaust so great a glory he hath designed unto them whom he hath placed in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. And this sense I shewed you to be as genuine as any of the other. I will not stand to repeat anything of that, because I mean to spend the rest of the time in observations upon these interpretations.

Only, in a word, I shall first give you an account why I take in all these interpretations. I lay this for a ground,—which I do not know, through so many instances in Scripture, how any man shall beat me from it,—namely, that all those senses that can stand together, especially that are subordinate one to another, and may be included one under another, how to exclude any such senses, but to take them all in. I confess, if I meet with so many senses in Scripture whereof one cannot stand with the other, then of necessity we must take that which is evident to be the principal aim and scope, and exclude the other. But, my brethren, all these three are no way contradictory one to another; the Holy Ghost hath penned the words in so vast and comprehensive a meaning as to involve, and include, and grasp in all the three. For indeed, that God should aim at the manifestation of the riches of his grace, to magnify himself, that that should be the meaning, no man

can deny. And that the other two I mentioned in the last discourse may well come under that, be subordinate thereunto and stand together, is easy to imagine also; because it is but two accomplishments of the demonstration of that grace. He that intended to glorify his rich grace, he hath two accomplishments of it: the one is, from the ascension of Christ until the day of judgment, when he will, in the conversion, through all ages and through all nations, of his elect, more abundantly than under the law shew forth the riches of his grace, the truth of which he hath held forth in the example of these Ephesians and other primitive Christians; and then at the day of judgment, when that execution and manifestation of his free grace shall have an end, at the gathering in of his elect, then he hath a new treasure, as the ultimate design of all, for to break up. Though God had spent so much grace in the conversion and calling in of these, and quickening of them, and giving Jesus Christ as their portion beforehand; yet, saith he, know this, that there is a hidden treasure which will ask an eternity of time for them to spend, and for to exhaust the riches of grace he hath laid up for them in the Lord Jesus.

Now then I shall come to such observations as shall be made out of all these senses, for they may all stand together; and I shall begin with that first sense I delivered in this discourse.

The first observation, which belongs to that first sense given,—namely, that it holds forth the highest end of God, the manifestation of his own glory and grace,—is this:—

Obs. 1.—That God's utmost end in man's salvation is the shewing forth of what is in himself, and the making of it known that it may be glorified, especially to shew forth the riches of his grace. This is the natural coherence of these words. My brethren, God is glorified by being made known, and that was it that moved his will to shew forth what was in him. You have an express place for it in Rom. ix. 22, 'What if God, willing to make known the riches of his glory?' What the nature of God is none can know in itself; therefore it must be set forth in effects. In 1 Tim. vi. 15, the Apostle there shewing us the reason why Jesus Christ shall one day come and appear in glory and in the glory of the Father, as himself tells us, saith it is this: 'Which in his times,' saith he, 'he shall shew,'—speaking in the words before of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,—'who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.' I take the meaning of the words to be this. God, saith he, is in himself a God blessed, infinitely blessed in himself; he is a sovereign, one that may choose whether he will communicate this blessedness to any creature, yea or no; he dwells in light inaccessible, which no eye can see. There must therefore be a shewing forth, some way or other, of this glory of his, if that ever we come to know it, or be partakers of his blessedness. He hath, saith he, sent his Son, and he means to send him principally again at the latter day, to this end, that he that is the blessed God in himself, that is the only potentate, the sovereign Lord, that doth dwell in light no man can see into, that in his Son we may behold him, that he may manifest himself, that he may make known, that he may shew forth and communicate that blessedness which is in himself. Now as this is the reason why Jesus Christ shall appear at the latter day, so this is the reason also why God hath shewn forth anything of his grace or of his goodness

before the latter day unto the sons of men; and because that God cannot manifest himself to the full, he hath therefore invented so many several ways, he hath therefore taken an eternity of ages to do it.

Obs. 2.—A second observation is this: That of all things in God the chief and utmost thing he desireth to shew forth is the riches of his grace. And the reason of it is clearly this, because it is his riches,—that is, it is his excellency. The word here, ὑπερβυλλογία, which we translate ‘exceeding,’ it is attributed to power in the 19th verse of the 1st chapter; ‘the exceeding greatness of his power.’ But when he comes to speak of grace he saith, ‘the exceeding riches of his grace,’ because, I say, it is his excellency.

And, my brethren, because it is the manifestation of the riches of his grace, it argues also that his end of manifesting himself was not wholly for himself, but to communicate unto others. Why? Because grace is wholly communicative; there can be no other interpretation of *shewing riches of grace* but to do good unto others. If he had said that the supreme end had been the manifestation of his power and wisdom, it might have imported something he would have gotten from the creature, not by communicating anything unto them, but manifesting these upon them. He could have shewn his power and wisdom upon them, as he hath done upon men he hath cast into hell, and yet communicated no blessedness to them. No, saith God, my highest and chiefest end is not so much to get anything from you, but to shew forth the riches of my grace towards you. That, look as faith, which is the highest grace in us, is merely a receiving grace from God: so take grace, which is the chief thing God would exalt, what is it from God? A mere bestowing, communicating property and attribute; it imports nothing else but a communication unto us. It is well, therefore, for us that God hath made that to be the highest end of our salvation in himself, when he will aim at himself too, to be that which shall communicate all to us; it is, saith the text, to shew forth the riches of his grace.

And then again, the third observation from this interpretation is this. I told you the Apostle did it to give an account, so as to strengthen all men’s faith in the matter of salvation; he was fain to bring forth the bottom reason in God’s heart. Men would never believe that the great God should ever do so much for men, and sinners too. The observation is this:—

Obs. 3.—That this should be the great strengthener and upholder of our faith, to believe that God hath done, and will do, such things for sinners; namely this, because the supreme end of saving us is the glorifying of the riches of his own grace. It comes in on purpose to take off the wonder of unbelief, after he had told this strange story of God’s love and man’s salvation; and to this end to strengthen our faith, that by grace we are saved, as the words following have it. If God had told us how much he had done for us out of love unto us merely or chiefly, the truth is, we could never have believed it when we are once humbled, for we could never have seen that proportion between us and God in any kind that should have moved him for to have saved us and pardoned us so much as he hath done. But when he shall tell us that the utmost thing that moved him was the manifesting of the riches of his own grace, and that he accounteth the riches of his grace his chiefest riches, and the greatest glory he affects is to be gracious, this lets a man see so far into God’s heart as the soul resteth satisfied, sees a reason why God may save sinners, such a reason as the heart must needs rest and acquiesce in it. And the truth is, tumble up and down from one doctrine to another, there is no other doctrine will satisfy the guilty heart of a sinner in the point of salvation but only this, that God’s utmost

end was to shew forth the riches of his grace. My brethren, this takes off all objections, and the stronger the objections are (give me leave to say it) it gives a man the more hope; he is the apter to believe it when once faith begins by the beams of the Spirit to enlighten him. Why? Because all objections become but matter for God's free grace to shew forth more riches of grace upon him. Therefore you know the Scripture runs upon that altogether: Isa. xliii. 25, 'I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake.' I do it for myself, not for anything in you. And God speaks this not only that his own glory should be advanced, but that our hearts should be settled and satisfied, and see reason why we should be saved, in that God's end, and highest end he could have, runs along with our salvation.

Obs. 4.—The next observation is this: You may see here the greatness and the exceeding riches of his grace. I remember when I handled the 4th verse, I made a reserve when I spoke of riches of mercy in God, to handle and speak further of that riches when I came to this text, 'the exceeding riches of his grace.' I handled it then causally; that is, as riches of mercy were the efficient cause in God: I shall handle it now demonstratively or manifestatively; namely, that God intended to shew forth the riches of his grace to the utmost. You may see, my brethren, how that here the expressions of the Apostle rise. He begins first low: 'God,' saith he, 'that was rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, hath quickened us,' &c. But when he comes to shew forth the utmost end God had in saving of men, his style swells higher: 'exceeding riches of grace.' Let me tell you this, when thou wert first turned to God, and when thou wert quickened, thou didst find him to be rich in mercy unto thee; he pardoned thy sins beyond all that thou couldst imagine, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as Paul saith of his own conversion, was exceeding abundant to thee: why, as the Apostle here, the further he goes on, the more he riseth in his expressions, from 'rich in mercy' to 'exceeding riches of mercy;' so shalt thou find goodness be; the further thou goest on, still the more gracious; and thou wilt still find that all God's contrivements and ways toward thee are but to spend still more riches of grace upon thee, until he hath exceeded. If he shewed rich mercy in converting thee at first, he will shew exceeding riches till he hath done saving of thee, he will spare no cost, no mercy, to procure all sorts or any kind of blessings for thee: whatever riches of grace he hath they shall all serve for the saving of thee, until such time as thou shalt say as the Psalmist doth, 'The Lord hath dealt bountifully with me, he hath indeed dealt exceedingly richly with me.' That grace which sprung at first in thy conversion was a little spring; but the longer it goes on to eternity, the more the banks widen, till it grows into a great sea.

Now, my brethren, give me leave to speak a little to the exceeding riches of grace that are in God, and that in our salvation.

The riches of mercy and grace, in respect of abundance and variety, I shewed you when I shewed you that God was rich in mercy. But I reserved then something to speak to this point; namely, the excellent properties of this grace, and the excellencies thereof, which the word *exceeding* hints to me. The word ὑπερβαλλων, which is here applied unto 'riches,' and which we translate 'exceeding,' rather signifies supereminent, excellent riches of grace. Whenever that word is used, it notes the excellency of that thing in its kind to which it is applied. You have it applied to his power in the 19th verse of the first chapter: ὑπερβαλλων, that is, the supereminent greatness of power that is in him. If it be applied unto glory, as in Scripture it is, it

implies a superexcellent glory: in 2 Cor. iii. 9, 'the glory,' saith he—*περισσεύει*—'that excelleth;' it is a word of affinity with this. And the Apostle, speaking of the love of Christ in the 3d chapter and 19th verse of this epistle, useth the same word: *ὑπερβάλλουσαν τῆς γνώσεως ἀγάπην*, 'a love,' saith he, 'which passeth knowledge,' which excelleth knowledge. I say, this word notes out the excellency of everything in its kind which it is applied unto. Here you see it is applied to riches of grace. Now then let me speak a little to that.

You shall find that the Apostle, in 1 Cor. xii. 31, speaking of the love that man ought to have to man, calls it a more excellent way—*καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ὁδόν*—a word that hath affinity with this in the text, a way of an excellency; and then the 13th chapter, from the 4th verse to the 8th, you have him reckoning up the excellent properties of that love. 'Charity,' saith he, 'suffers long, envies not, behaves not itself unseemly, rejoiceth not in iniquity, beareth all things, believeth all things,' &c. You see when he would set out the excellency of that love, he doth it by these and these qualifications. Now, my brethren, I shall do the like; I shall mention some two or three of the properties and qualifications of excellencies, of supereminent excellencies, that are in the grace of God, which he manifesteth in our salvation, and I will do it briefly; and—

First, They are supereminent riches, in respect of the bounty and liberality of God, both in giving and forgiving. In 2 Cor. viii. 2, they are called 'riches of liberality;' and there are exceeding riches of liberality in God, seen both in forgiving and also in giving, and therein he hath a superexcellent riches of grace. And—

1. For forgiving. I will not insist much upon Micah vii. 18, 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?' and that because 'he delighteth in mercy,'—mercy pleaseth him. In Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7, he is said to be 'The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious;' and what follows? 'Forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.' He heaps up words as lawyers use to do, when they would be sure to take in all things and exclude nothing, that there may be no exception; so doth the Holy Ghost, he is not content with saying, 'forgiving iniquity,' but he adds, 'transgression and sin' also. Yea, God therefore, to shew the superexcellency of his grace in forgiving, hath ordered in his providence that some elect child of his or other shall fall into all sorts of sins; there shall be found among the elect all sorts of sins, of what nature and degree soever, saving that against the Holy Ghost. Every blasphemy, every sin, saith our Saviour Christ, Matt. xii., shall be forgiven; he not only saith it may be forgiven, but he expressly saith it shall be forgiven. But I say, I will not insist upon the riches of his grace in forgiving, for that belongs more properly to mercy.

2. He is as rich, and exceeding rich, in giving. 1 Tim. vi. 17, 'Trust in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.' The truth is, the Apostle speaks there of the common mercies which the elect partake of here in the world, and yet he saith he giveth us all things richly. My brethren, was it not a rich gift to give the sun to enlighten this world? What a mighty gift was it! Was it not a mighty gift to give this earth, which is full of so much riches? Go take the common things, which are pawns to the people of God of what they shall have in heaven, how doth God give all things to them richly! My meaning is, that all those benefits which poor and rich enjoy, how rich are they! The Apostle instanceth in them to help their faith; and know, saith he, this God is the living God, and he hath a

world of riches to shew you in ages to come, which there he speaks of afterwards. It is said in Isa. xxxii. 8, that 'the liberal man deviseth liberal things.' Go, take a man that is of a liberal heart, and his wisdom will be inventing of magnificent works, and he will consult with his power and with his riches what he is able to do, and what he is able to bestow. But, my brethren, when the great God, the liberal God, shall devise liberal things, what great things think you there will then be given? In 1 Chron. xvii. 19, saith David, 'According to thine own heart hast thou done all this greatness, in making known all these great things.' David speaks of the mercies which God vouchsafed to him: 'O Lord, for thy servant's sake,' saith he; so we read it: the Septuagint reads it, 'for thy Word's sake,'—namely, Christ,—and according to thine own heart.' When God means to give, and to shew forth his grace in giving, what doth he consult withal? He consults with his Christ, and he consults with his own heart; and when he gives, he gives like the great God: for so it follows there, ver. 20, 'O Lord, there is none like thee, neither is there any God besides thee.' My brethren, think with yourselves now, when infinite wisdom, that is able to invent and devise what is best and to study liberal things; when that shall meet with a power answerable to do whatsoever it can devise; and both these shall be set in a heart full of all largeness, full of all bounty and generosity, that resolves to be gracious to the utmost of his wisdom and power; what may you expect from such a heart? Thus it is with God, who is God blessed for ever, who is the only potentate that hath a heart to give out of the riches of his grace whatsoever he can think of, who is able to do not only above all that we can ask or think, but he is able to do whatsoever he himself thinketh and conceiveth,—hath a heart to give according to his own thoughts; so saith David, when he viewed with the eye of faith the covenant made with him and with his sons.

The Apostle, you see, in the 19th verse of the first chapter, and in this 7th verse of this second chapter, joins two *exceedings* together, the one of his power, and the other of his mercy: ὑπερβάλλον μέγεθος τῆς δυνάμεως, and τὸν ὑπερβάλλοντα πλοῦτον τῆς χάριτος. Why? Because whatsoever power can procure and do, that his heart, through the exceeding riches of his grace, is willing to bestow. Saith the Psalmist, in Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold.' For certain, God knows all the good things that are, he is inured to blessedness, the height of it; now he plainly tells us that he will not withhold any good thing, or he hath a heart to bestow whatsoever is good, to bestow all the good he can think of. If then there be anything better than other, you will find that God will bestow it. Consider but a little the riches of his grace in giving, for that indeed is proper unto grace.

He hath a Son to give. He deviseth with himself; I will give him, saith he, and I will give him in the best manner to make a gift of him, I will give him crucified, I will give him in all the relations he can bear to you, and I will give him for you besides. Is not here riches of grace? And when you have him, you shall have all freely with him; and there are unsearchable riches given with him, for God's Son must needs bring a great portion. There is one gift.

He hath a Spirit, and he 'poureth him forth richly,' so saith the text in Titus iii. 6, for so the words are in the original. He will not give half kingdoms; no, he will give whole kingdoms or none; and he will not give kingdoms only, but worlds, and he will give them freely.

He hath a heaven to bestow, and he will bestow it; and that heaven

shall be to exhaust, if it were possible, the exceeding riches of grace that are in him to eternity.

Secondly, As the excellency of his grace is shewn thus, both in forgiving and in giving; so also in this, that he giveth freely every way. And you must know that freeness is the superexcellency of grace; the freeness of grace is the riches of grace. Now his grace excels in freeness, and that in these things:—

The fewer motives that there are to move him, the more eminent his grace is in respect of the freeness of it. In 2 Thess. i. 11, all that God doth is said there to be the fulfilling of the good pleasure of his goodness. Oh, it is a good phrase that! All that he doth for his children, it is but the fulfilling of his good pleasure; he doth but act his own heart, he doth but please himself in it, he doth but please his own goodness in it. It is the fulfilling, saith he, of the good pleasure of his goodness. My brethren, let me say this to you: mercy and love may have something to move them in the things loved, or the things pitied. These things in God, I confess, import not anything out of God to move him; but in the nature of the things themselves, as amongst men, they do. But take grace, that always imports such a freedom as is moved with nothing, but it is merely out of the good pleasure of one's own goodness; that is properly grace. For misery now will move to pity, and some good in the creature may move to love; but to move to be gracious and to shew riches of grace, that denotes and imports merely the good pleasure of his own will.

Now then, that there are no motives, that grace is every way free, do but consider these particulars,—

1. There is no worth in any that God respects when he shews mercy, when he pitcheth his favour upon them. In Deut. ix. 4, 5, saith he, 'Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land; but for the wickedness of these nations, the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.' Not for thy righteousness, saith he,—that is, not for any outward righteousness; or for the uprightness of thy heart,—that is, for any inward grace or holiness that is in thyself, any habitual grace; for under those two he comprehends all that is, or may be supposed to be, in man: for neither of both these dost thou go to possess their land. The truth is, saith he, that which moveth me to throw them out of the land—and all this is spoken in a type—is their wickedness; but on the other side, come to thee, and there is nothing of righteousness in thee, nothing of worth to move me. My brethren, that God should be moved to punish and condemn men and throw them into hell, as he hath motives within himself, anger, and wrath, and justice, and hatred of sin; so external motives in the creature, out of himself, to stir up these. But for his grace, there is nothing but what is solely in himself, that grace doth terminate itself upon. Hatred in him hath sin in us to terminate itself upon; but grace hath nothing in the creature, but merely that the creature is, and that is from God, for it was nothing; and when it is, that it is capable of God's favour and of being loved; nothing else in it. Yea—

2. The freedom of grace, and so the excellency of it in that particular, is shewn in this, that there is not only no worthiness, but nothing but unworthiness. You may read so in that of Deut. ix. 6. When he had not only stripped them of all worth in themselves, he adds, 'Thou art a stiff-necked people.' Mercy, my brethren, respects misery properly; but it is grace only that respects stiff-neckedness, obstinacy. Why? For what will

mercy say? I pity one in misery, but as for this man, he is wilfully miserable, and the fault lies in himself, and all that I can do will not help him. But now what saith grace? Grace comes with a sovereignty, and saith, 'Though he be stiff-necked, though he be obstinate, yet, as you have it in Isa. lvii. 18, 'I have seen his ways, and I will heal him.' I see he will never be better, I must mend him myself. This is the language of grace, which shews the freedom, and so the excellency of it. Yea—

3. The excellency of grace appears in this, that it doth subdue, and it shews favour, notwithstanding all abuses of favour and of mercy whatsoever. As God is said to be kind unto the evil and unthankful, so he is said to be gracious even unto them that abuse his grace: and herein lies the superexcellency of his grace. In 2 Sam. xii. 8, when David had run into those great sins of murder and adultery, what saith God to him? 'I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and I gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord?' Why hast thou despised my favour, and abused the mercy and grace I have shewn thee? And yet for all this, ver. 13, 'The Lord hath put away thy sin.' Here is exceeding riches of grace, that even pardoneth turning of grace itself into wantonness. When God's heart is wounded, broken with unkindness, yet he healeth such a soul; this is a superexcellency in grace. If you will take it in the importance of it, it is a strain beyond mercy, it is grace, it is the exceeding riches of grace. Again—

4. The excellency of his grace lies not only in forgiving and in giving, and in the freeness of both, but in a condescending also to the nearest and most intimate relations, and unions, and fellowship with those whom he hath set himself to love. Were not this supereminent grace in a king, that not only forgives murder and treason, yea obstinacy, abuses of pardon and grace itself, and not only gives gifts to the half, to the whole of his kingdom, but more than all this takes up him whom he thus favours into the most intimate familiarity and friendship, into his bosom, into all sorts of relation? God doth so. And this favour, my brethren, is more than all he giveth, or than all he forgiveth, that he is pleased over and above all to become a father, and a husband, and a friend, and a brother, and infinitely more transcendently than these relations are found to be amongst men. This is riches of grace indeed. When Saul had advanced David to be his son-in-law, to have that near relation to him, David accounted it more than all the rest of the favours shewn him. Now, we have fellowship and communion with God under all relations whatsoever. 'Our fellowship,' saith the Apostle, 'is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ,' 1 John i. 3; and therefore, saith he, chap. iii. 1, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!' to have so near a relation to him. This is exceeding riches of grace, this is more than heaven itself, my brethren.

Lastly, The grace of God is so eminent and superexcellent, that it contents not itself in giving and in forgiving, in entering into all these relations, and to do all these freely too; but it will be at the cost, at an extraordinary cost, to purchase all that which it means to give, and which it might give without that purchase. This is a strain, and the highest strain that can be thought of supereminent and superexcellent grace; merely because he would shew forth the supereminent and superexcellent grace. When Araunah did offer unto David oxen and sheep to sacrifice, in 2 Sam. xxiv.

24, saith David, 'Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing.' He spake this because he knew that would be more accepted by God to make it a free-will offering, not to offer that which was given him, but which he must pay for. So it is with God: saith God with himself, I could have saved these men and brought them to heaven; I could have entered into all these relations; I could have given them my Son to become a Redeemer, and a head for them, and so I might have become their Father; I could have given them my Spirit, and have given them grace and glory; I could have done all this immediately without any cost. No, saith he, I will be at a price, I will not shew favour unto these men out of that which shall cost me nothing. He would needs give his Son to death to purchase all that which grace itself could have bestowed, and bestowed without the death of his Son. And this he did merely that he might shew forth the more grace. Why? Because it is his own proper cost and charges he doth it at; and he triumpheth more that the grace he bestoweth cost him thus much, than in the gifts themselves which he casteth out of favour upon the creature. God did think it too little to give these things immediately. As when he would humble the creature, to have the creatures humbled simply as creatures, in that consideration, in the disproportion between them and him; the creature was not low enough, he would permit them to be sinners also, he would have them laid as low as hell, put their mouths in the dust: so when he would advance grace, to shew grace and favour immediately, and to give so out of grace as that it should cost him nothing, this was not to shew grace enough. No, his grace must be supereminent grace, it must needs have a deep dye, a higher strain. It was a small matter for him to give grace and glory to us as unto the angels; he must be at cost to purchase it, and purchase it at the highest rate, by that which is dearest unto him, even his Son. He is not only contented that he bestows on us all things for nothing, but he will not do it simply for nothing in himself, he will have his Son's blood for it. The death of Jesus Christ is so far from derogating from grace, or that God hath received a price, that because it is his own price, and he himself set the price, and he would be at the cost, and he would have his Son die in obedience to him, that here comes the *ὑπερβαλλων*, the exceeding riches of it. It is grace dyed in grain, if I may so express it, grace dyed in the blood of Christ. And the truth is, if I should speak of it never so largely, I could say no more to commend the supereminent riches, the *ὑπερβαλλων*, the exceeding riches of this his grace, than to take it in the superexcellency of it, as considered as grace. I may truly say of it, even as David saith, when he stands admiring at the grace of God towards him, in that place of Samuel I quoted even now, 'What can thy servant say more?' Indeed there is but this more to be said, that there is an eternity of time, and the riches of his grace doth require that eternity of time to exhaust these riches of grace laid up in him, and to spend them in.

The fifth observation that I make out of this first interpretation is this:—

Obs. 5.—That all the good that God bestows and bears us, though he aimeth at the glory of his own grace, yet it is in kindness towards us. My brethren, mark what I shall say unto you. The Lord requires that you should love him in a proportionable way, as he hath loved you, and loved himself in loving you: therefore do but see the reason how just it is that you should set up God above all; for mark the analogy, when God requires you should love him, and love him above yourselves, yet he so orders it

that you have the greatest self-love that you can bear to yourselves, whilst you do love him, and love him above yourselves. You could never be happy if that your happiness lay not in this, to love God, and so to delight in his happiness more than your own. Now, though God requires that you should love him above yourselves, yet he doth allow you in the uttermost latitude to love yourselves also. And all the motives, all the ends the Scripture runs upon, they run upon self-love. He would have you so in your hearts advance the riches of his grace as still to be kind to yourselves. So now, when God did seek his own glory, what doth he do? It is true as he would have your love above yourselves, so he did aim at himself above your salvation. The chief thing here is to shew forth the riches of his grace, but yet so as it is in kindness towards you; 'to shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace,' saith he, 'in his kindness toward us. And look, as he alloweth us to love ourselves in a subordination to loving of himself; so he, in plotting our salvation, had a subordinate proportionable love unto us concurring in his heart with aiming at his own glory.' 'To shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us,' saith the text.

The sixth observation I make out of this interpretation is this :—

Obs. 6.—That the shewing forth the riches of his grace unto any soul is so glorious a thing, as it deserves to be remembered to all ages by the parties themselves and others. 'That he might shew forth the riches of his grace,' saith he, 'in the ages to come.' The Lord, saith the Psalmist, in Ps. cxi. 4, 'hath made his wonderful works to be remembered,' especially his works of grace; for so it follows in the next words, 'The Lord is gracious and full of compassion.' Wherefore, 'Remember, and forget not,' saith Moses, having spoken of the grace of God, in Deut. ix. 7. If God had saved but one man, to praise him for that grace and riches of grace shewn in that one man's salvation, it had been worthy to have taken up the tongues of men and angels to eternity. 'That he might shew forth the riches of his grace in the ages to come.' And because that the ages to come of this world are not sufficient to magnify his grace unto men, therefore Jesus Christ will come on purpose, when he will break up and tell the story of free grace, as he will at the latter day. And as he will come to convince all that are ungodly of their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodlily committed, as Jude saith; so he will come, as to tell the story of your sinfulness, so to lay open the riches of his grace in pardoning. It is the great work which Christ will do then; and all the grace which God shews men here is, that in those ages to come there may be matter laid up to magnify that grace when our Lord shall come. When God did cast off Pharaoh, the text saith in Rom. ix. 17, that it was 'that his name might be declared throughout all the earth.' So now, God saved those primitive Christians, Paul and the rest of them, that all ages might ring of the exceeding riches of his grace towards them. Grace deserveth to be so much celebrated there. The whole earth, saith he, shall be filled with his glory, speaking of the kingdom of Christ, and the conversion of the Gentiles to it, in Ps. lxxii. 19.

Lastly, Here is *in Christ Jesus* added, for all God's kindness, and all his grace towards us, is *in Christ*. It is an infinite magnifying of the Lord Jesus, that he alone, being in heaven, is able enough and worthy enough to take into his possession all the glory and all the grace that ever God means to bestow upon his children. He hath done it, my brethren. Had not he been a person answerably glorious, we could not have been said to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, or that the riches of his grace should be shewn in his kindness toward us in him. But so great a person is Jesus Christ,

God and man, that look as the sun, if there were ten hundred thousand stars more to be created, and the heavens to be filled with them all, there is light enough in the sun to enlighten them all; so there is in Christ. And therefore, my brethren, never think to set up without this Lord Jesus Christ. Do not think that he only serveth to bring you unto God, and there to leave you. No, he will never leave you to eternity. All the kindness that God shews you to eternity is *in Christ Jesus*.