

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 ἐνδείξεται, 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 Gratiæ*, 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,’ αἰχουμένην, but that in Heb. vi. 5 is αἰών, the word that is used here, though in the singular number—μέλλουσας αἰῶνας.

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,

quickened all his elect and gathered 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.

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 inculcateth 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 ἑπερχομένοις*, 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, *ὑπερβαλλόντα*, 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 couldest 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 excelling properties of this grace, and the excellencies thereof, which the word *exceeding* hints to me. The word *ὑπερβάλλων*, 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: *ὑπερβάλλων*, 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: *ὑπερβάλλουσιν τῇ γνώσει 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 *ὑπερβάλλον*, 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 *ὑπερβάλλον*, 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*.

SERMON XX.

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.

WHEN I discerned that these words were the conclusion of that large and long continued discourse about man's salvation, first and last, which the Apostle had begun at the 18th verse of the first chapter and continued until now, and that the scope in these words was to hold forth God's great design therein, I concluded with myself thus, that these words must necessarily have the most vast and comprehensive sense, seeing into them all the parts of the foregoing discourse, as so many rivulets, fall and determine, as into a great sea. Now to shew forth the exceeding riches of grace, that that should be God's design is universally acknowledged, and the words themselves do hold it forth. But then this design of God's, to shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace, is said by interpreters to look three several ways.

First, Immediately to God himself, and to hold forth his utmost end, as it relates to himself and his own glory—namely, to set forth the exceeding riches of his grace in man's salvation; and that unlimitedly and generally, only exemplified in his kindness towards these Ephesians; the glory of his grace and riches of his grace to be such as is worthy in all ages to be celebrated: even as in the first chapter the Apostle had made the end and the burden of all in our salvation to be to the praise of his glory, and to the glory of his grace, as you often read it there.

Secondly, This design of God to magnify his grace is said to have a respect to all mankind in future ages, both of Jews and Gentiles, that God having shewn so much mercy, and so much grace, and so much kindness to these Ephesians, in converting them, whenas they lay in that miserable and inextricable condition with the rest of the world, his saving such as these with so great a salvation, is a pattern and an example—as the words *to shew forth* oftentimes signify—what a treasury of rich grace God had to bestow upon after-ages, which then he did begin to break up, and to give example of in these primitive converts.

Thirdly, It is also said that the design of God's shewing forth his grace here in the text doth respect these Ephesians and primitive Christians themselves, to have been added to raise up their expectations by what God had already done for them in themselves, (he had quickened them, when they were dead in sins and trespasses, together with Christ,) and what he had done for them in their head Christ, (he had in him raised them, and set them together in heavenly places, as the words before are;) that so by this their expectations might be raised what an exceeding riches of grace God had yet to be shewn to all eternity; that is, in all ages to come, in the world to come. So that the accomplishment of our salvation in heaven and after the day of judgment,—whereto the words before are but a preparation and a foundation,—is the meaning of these words.

I shall give you, in a word, the differences of all these senses, and compare them one with another.

The first sense makes the design to respect immediately the glory of God, to have a respect to him in all that he hath done about our salvation, to shew forth the riches of his grace.

The second makes the words to be intended for the comfort of future ages, in the mercy shewn to these.

The third, to be intended for the further personal comfort of these believers; by what God had done already, from thence to collect what infinite riches of mercy they were to expect in the world to come.

The first sense makes the words to be a doctrinal conclusion, holding forth God's whole and utmost design and contrivement about man's salvation, worthy to be celebrated in all ages.

The second makes the words to be as it were a note of encouragement, brought in by the way, as an inference, for the comfort of us that were to come and live after, that we may gather from his dealing with these Ephesians. And—

The third doth make them a use of application,—if I may so speak,—and to be a further enlargement upon what he had said of our salvation already, in the words before, of what great things afterwards were to be expected.

I have gone over all the words, and shewn you how that the coherence of the words before, and all the words in the text, will naturally and genuinely give themselves up to every one of these senses: so as indeed these words being the conclusion of the whole, I shall be exceeding loath to exclude any of them, if the one may consist with the other, as knowing by much experience how that the Scriptures have a various and comprehensive meaning.

But if you ask me now, which of all these senses I do in the first place refer to?—

I answer, clearly the first sense of all the rest; namely, that in these words is intended God's design, as it immediately respects the shewing forth or making known—which is all one, as Rollock well observeth—the glory of his grace. And my reasons are these:—

First, Because it is the most unlimited sense, and the most general.

Secondly, Because it is evident his scope is to set forth the final cause of man's salvation, and that in the heart of God. It is therefore to be preferred before the other two; for the second sense doth not make immediately God's glory to be the thing here so much shewn forth, as to be a note of encouragement to after-ages, that God would shew them the like grace. And the third sense doth not make it so much the final cause in the heart of God, as the event, the issue, the upshot, the conclusion of all that God pitched upon, the shewing forth of the riches of his grace. And then again, the two latter are more narrow and limited: the one is limited to the comfort of posterity; the other, to the comfort of these Ephesians, in the accomplishment of their salvation in heaven. But the first, which respects immediately the glory of God's free grace, is general, is universal, it is the whole adequate end of all men's salvation, and of all the parts of it whatsoever.

If you ask me, which of the two latter I prefer?—

I answer, the third. I shewed you, in the first sermon I made upon these words, my reasons that this interpretation was natural and genuine, viz., to interpret it of the manifestation of the riches of God's grace in the

world to come. Now I shall give you my reasons why I prefer that rather than the second, which would make the words to refer only to an encouragement to posterity that God in ages to come would shew the like grace that he had done to these Ephesians. And my reasons are these :—

First, Because if that second sense should be the only or the chief meaning, the words come in but as a parenthesis, or note of inference by the by ; they come in but as a use of encouragement from the former narration of what God had done for these Ephesians. But if the Apostle should go on here still to comfort the Ephesians themselves, and in them all believers, with what great things in heaven they are to expect, the riches of his grace to be manifested there, by what he had shewn already ; so the words come in more directly, they do not come in by the by, but more homogeneal, and in the way of a continued discourse made to the same persons, (so the former words were.) and concerning them also.

And then again, I prefer this third sense to the second, because his scope is to set out the final aim of God in man's salvation, as the words 'that he may shew' do import, and the greatness of man's salvation in heaven, on which God will expend such riches of grace, being the ultimate issue and crown of all in God's intentions. Therefore, I say, this should be rather intended and held forth.

Thirdly, His scope would seem to be rather to magnify the thing—namely, salvation itself—which he is speaking of, and the greatness thereof, which God had designed us in the world to come, which should hold a proportion with those exceeding riches of grace which we had in this world, whereof God had given assurance in Christ, both at his resurrection and sitting in glory, as the words before shew. And this is rather the meaning than merely to shew by the by that God would shew the like riches of grace to others in time to come. My brethren, methinks when I look upon that interpretation only, it falls too low and too flat, in comparison of the other two, to come in to the end of a discourse which had contained the greatest things that the gospel doth afford about the salvation of man ; it would rather seem, therefore, to heighten the greatness of salvation itself.

Fourthly, That God would shew the like riches of grace unto all believers and others, is sufficiently implied in what he had done to these Ephesians, and it might be supposed. For these Ephesians are made the standard of all mankind for their natural misery and condition, in ver. 1–3, and so for their salvation in these. And therefore, although their example had not been propounded in a set way to confirm this to us, yet it is implied in the thing itself.

I have gone over, I say, all these senses, and I have shewn you that they are all in themselves such as both fully stand with the coherence, and do fully stand with these words which are here in this verse ; and I have interpreted every word in the verse to each of all these senses. For my part, I plainly and truly conceive, to deliver my own opinion of this and many other scriptures, that the Holy Ghost hath a comprehensive meaning, and he hath penned the words on purpose that all these might be taken in. If he had left out these words, 'in ages to come,' the truth is, then the words had plainly referred to the glory of God, simply the shewing forth of the glory of his grace ; but putting in that, and 'in his kindness toward us,' it makes the words to incline and to lean to this meaning, that he intends the comfort of posterity. And how it suiteth also with the perfection of salvation which he means to bestow in heaven, I shewed you in a whole sermon at large. I have weighed everything to the full, and I find nothing in the

one sense that will exclude the other, or in the words, that all these may not stand together. Unto all these three senses I shall now spend this discourse, in giving you observations thereupon, a story of observations. I gave you observations upon the first sense in the last discourse, and I shall now give you such observations as do give themselves up to the other two, which, for my part, I think are but two several degrees of accomplishment of the demonstration of grace: the one here, to millions of elect in after ages, whilst this life lasts; and the other to all his children, to break open a new treasury of grace in the world to come, and the one to succeed the other: even as you shall find many prophecies in the Old Testament, and in the Revelations also, to have several accomplishments.

Now then, to begin with that *second sense*,—namely, that God had pulled these Ephesians and those primitive Christians out of that condition of misery wherein they lay by nature, and had quickened them, and set them in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that they might be examples, holding forth what riches of grace God under the gospel had begun to break up, and would shew to after-ages. The observations that do arise from this sense, as I have opened it to you, are these:—

First, That God doth give examples of his grace and mercy in others, to help our faith. God doth bless the consideration of what mercy he hath shewn to others, for the helping forward, if not the begetting of faith in us. There are promises of grace, and there are examples and patterns of grace; and the examples confirm those promises. That God hath riches of mercy in his own nature, there is one foundation of our faith; that he hath made large promises of mercy and grace to sinners indefinitely, and so put forth those riches out of himself, there is another confirmation and ground of our faith; and, thirdly, that he hath shewn riches of grace to others that have been as bad as we. Look now, as examples use to confirm rules, so do examples of mercy confirm our faith in promises. That he may shew forth, saith he, shew forth as in an example, as I shewed you in opening 1 Tim. i. 15, ‘This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ came into the world to save sinners;’ there is his rule. ‘Of whom I am chief;’ there is his example. ‘And for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me he might shew forth,’ as in a pattern, ‘all long-suffering unto others which should hereafter believe on him to everlasting life.’

Secondly, It affords this observation also: That the primitive Christians were intended as patterns of grace to us. He had shewn this mercy to these Ephesians, that he might shew forth in them the riches of his grace to all posterity afterwards. God did set them up as the great lights which after-ages should not exceed; they were the first-fruits, and after-ages should not exceed them, but be like to them. And therefore, you see, the apostles called upon Christians then to be followers of them; and so those that were first converted, others were the followers of them. In 1 Thess. i. 7, ‘You were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.’ Those first Christians, God poured forth abundantly the riches of his grace upon them, and set them up as lights to all after-ages. And therefore, my brethren, let me exhort you to this. Read the story of the life of religion and Christianity in those primitive saints, read the Epistles of the apostles written to them; and there is nothing more effectual or more powerful to quicken your hearts in holiness than that. Sit down and view their graces, and those sparkles of light and holiness which break forth of their writings and of their examples, for God intended them as patterns unto us. But then—

Thirdly, God did not intend them only barely as examples or patterns,

but as pawns and pledges that he would go on as he had begun, in after-ages, to pour forth the riches of his grace. Paul's conversion was not only an example, but it was a pawn and a pledge, as he hath it in that 1 Tim. i. 16. And so is their conversion made here.

Now from hence, that it is not only a pattern, but a pawn and a pledge, you may raise these meditations to yourselves, viz.—

First, That the Scriptures of the New Testament are to continue in all ages, to the end of the world, and to be read and minded by Christians. For how shall God's making these Ephesians, and those primitive Christians, examples of his grace, and pawns and pledges of it, be apprehended to the comfort of posterity, unless that the Epistles themselves, and the story of these Christians, should continue, and be read, to the end of the world? It is evident,—I speak it to those that wickedly deny these truths, and make them but as other common writings that we see are lost in the vast gulf of time,—it is evident, I say, that before a word of this New Testament was written Christ meant it should be written; for saith he, in Matt. xxvi. 13, 'Where-soever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her;' and the Evangelists wrote not of a long while after. Saith Paul, in his first Epistle to Timothy, chap. vi. 13, 14, 'I charge thee that this commandment be kept until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.' If the Epistle should not have continued, how could this commandment thus charged, not upon Timothy personally only, but upon all saints, and churches, and ministers to the end of the world, how could this be kept? And so likewise here, how could the conversion of these primitive Christians, yea, of these Ephesians, be intended by God, as the Apostle here writes of them to be, as examples and pledges of his grace to after ages, if that this Epistle was not ordained by God to be continued, and to be read in all ages throughout the Christian world, as indeed it is?

Secondly, It is not only what should be preached in all ages, but the words hold forth a promise that God would do the like. It is not only what we may comfortably ask at God's hands, because he hath shewed the like mercy in those primitive times, but it holds forth what we may confidently expect from him. The conversion of those primitive Christians, they were to God as the waters of Noah, as he himself speaks in the prophet, that he would convert of their posterity, as we see he hath done; for the Christian religion hath generally held its interest, though with much corruption, yet in the fundamentals, throughout the Christian world to this day; and where Jesus Christ did set in a foot for his kingdom, he hath kept that footing even till now. They have had, and might have, those that have and do tyrannise over them, as the Grecian Christians are by the Turks, but they remain Christians still, and even amongst those Grecians the fundamentals of Christianity are still professed. It was not only, I say, what should be preached, but what God would do, which is exceedingly comfortable to us. Therefore those primitive Christians were called the first-fruits, as we read of the 'first-fruits of Achaia;' and in the 1st chapter of this Epistle, ver. 12, there is mention made of 'us who first trusted in Christ.'

Fourthly, Let us consider, as a fourth head of observations out of these words, wherein the primitive Christians are patterns unto us, and that for our comforts.

1. They are patterns to us in respect of their natural condition. The Apostle had said they were dead in sins and trespasses, that they were chil-

dren of wrath, that they were slaves of Satan. So men in after-ages should be, and yet notwithstanding shall be pulled out of that condition, and quickened together with Christ. I was a blasphemer, saith Paul, but the grace of God abounded in me, as a pattern of long-suffering, *πρὸς ὑποσύπασιν*; so the word is in 1 Tim. i. 16. It had not been a pattern of long-suffering if he had not continued in that estate, as many of God's elect do. Here is our comfort. And it may speak likewise a word of encouragement to those that apprehend their natural condition; all these Ephesians are patterns unto thee even in that, and of God's dealing with them. The most in heaven were once as bad as thou art, they needed as much grace to save them as thou dost, and thou needest no more than they; the same sort of Christians that were then are now. Not many wise, but the foolish, and poor of the world, God chose then; so he doth now, he keeps to his pattern.

2. They are patterns of the like grace. Whatever might advance the riches of God's grace, therein they were patterns unto us.

3. They are patterns of the same grace, for sanctification, and pardoning, and all those privileges. We receive like precious faith with all those primitive Christians, yea, with the Apostles themselves; so Peter saith, 2 Peter i. 1. We have the same, or may have and obtain the same fellowship with the Father and with the Son which those primitive Christians and the Apostles themselves likewise had. So you have it in 1 John i. 3, 'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.' In Acts xv. 11, Peter, speaking in reference to them that were saved in former ages, saith, 'We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.' And so likewise we, even in these ages, we believe we shall be saved by the grace of God even as they. It is said even of the Apostles themselves, in Rom. viii. 23, that they 'received the first-fruits of the Spirit.'

Yea, let me add this to it, which is exceeding considerable, and it is the observation of one of the best commentators, Musculus. Wherein, saith he, are these Ephesians and primitive Christians patterns? Why, of the exceeding riches of the grace of God in the matter of salvation: in being quickened, in being converted, in having the same faith wrought in us, in having the same privileges, that we shall be raised up together with Christ, and sit together in heavenly places with him. But he doth not say they are patterns for their gifts in all things. It is for the exceeding riches of grace that concerneth salvation, my brethren, that these Christians are held forth as patterns to us. And the reason is clearly this, because that what concerns salvation is substantial, and all must come to the same union of the faith of the Son of God; as the Apostle saith, Eph. iv. And he hath therefore given pastors and teachers in all ages, and he hath kept his promise, for the pastors and teachers in all ages have kept the saints to the fundamentals of faith generally. But if the promise of the same extraordinary gifts which the Apostles had, as the gift of miracles and the like, which you have reckoned up in 1 Cor. xii., had been to all ages, certainly God would have given men in some age or other faith to have believed it; for God never gave a promise ordinary, that is, a promise that should always continue, but he gave faith ordinary. If therefore he had intended the bestowing of those gifts, and the promise of them for all ages to come, he would have given faith to some or other. Where is this faith of miracles, or who hath it, or who works them by virtue of that faith? Upon whom is the gift of tongues? And where are the signs of apostles as were then? No, my

brethren, it is for graces, it is for the substantial privileges of salvation, herein they are patterns indeed; 'that he might shew forth in ages to come the exceeding riches of his grace,' as the words are. And let me add this notion: that it is evident these extraordinary gifts were given for testimonies to settle the gospel at first. The Apostle, in Heb. ii. 3, clearly saith, that thus in the beginning of the gospel God did confirm it. 'At first,' saith he, 'it began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.' But now thus much common education doth do in the Christian world and in the church of Christ where religion is professed; for miracles then, what did they serve for? Not to beget a true faith, for that was the word, that was the promise. I say they served not to beget a true faith,—that is, a saving and justifying faith,—but to make men to attend to that word and to receive it, as that which might have truth in it. Now, I say, common education serves so far; it stands now instead of what miracles and extraordinary gifts did then.

Fifthly, Another meditation that ariseth from the interpretation of the words in this sense is this: You see the Apostle makes these Ephesians and other primitive Christians to be patterns to all ages to come. How comfortable is it to see how God hath fulfilled this promise! I confess this, that the reading of the writings of men in all ages hath always filled my heart with this comfort, that not only I see that God in all ages hath kept the fundamentals of Christianity that should save men, but that in all ages he hath still had a handful who have professed his truth and held forth his name, and have cleaved to the doctrine of free grace. We see, my brethren, how this promise hath been fulfilled; and in our age now we see the virtue of this very promise and prophecy which the Apostle here gives, in the preaching of the gospel and shining forth thereof from under the darkness of Popery, which had mingled with the grace of God abundance of corruption, even well-nigh to the overthrowing of it; I mean so to overthrow it as men should not have been saved, but that God did preserve so much truth as might save them, even under those corrupt opinions, whilst not held against light. We that live now in the sixteen hundred years or fifteen hundred years after Christ, as those that first began to preach the gospel with more clearness did, see this very promise and prophecy here fulfilled; God engaged himself that in the ages to come the riches of free grace should be laid open, and so he hath performed it.

And to our comfort we see wherein the main of reformation lies: it lies in opening the doctrine of the substantials of salvation, concerning the estate of man by nature, the work of conversion, the privileges we have in Christ; it lies in clearing the doctrine of free grace, and the way of faith which lays hold upon it. 'By grace ye are saved, through faith,' as it follows afterwards. We see the truth of this prophecy riseth up more and more to the view in the latter ages of the world, and we enjoy the fruit of it more clearly and fully than our forefathers did; and God will never leave till he hath brought his saints and children to that first pattern, to that doctrine of grace, in the purity and perfection of it, which was then taught.

You see likewise wherein the riches of the gospel lies. It lies in the doctrine of free grace, and therefore those that first preached it were called *Evangelici*, Gospellers, and their preaching was called a new gospel; because they did but begin to sever the grace of God from what was in man in point of salvation, which was abused by those blind guides that led the blind in those

former ages. And, my brethren, know this, that by virtue of this prophecy, the doctrine of free grace having begun to be cleared, and shining so abundantly upon us, it shall be cleared every day more and more to the end of the world; and as the Apostle saith, in Rom. xi., if the cutting off of the Jews be the riches of the world, what shall their restoring again be? The doctrine of free grace hath in all ages been opened and still cleared, and cleared more in these latter days than, as we find by the writings of men, it was in former ages. And in the latter days it shall clear up more and more; the nearer we come to the kingdom of glory, the more bright will the kingdom of grace shine. For Antichrist himself shall be destroyed by the brightness of the coming of Christ in the revelation of the gospel of him. God began sparingly in the world, and there was little of free grace taught; it was veiled and under types and ceremonies in the Old Testament, and before Moses; and it was called the law of Moses. That age of the world may rather be said to be under the law of nature, than under the law of grace; and Christ saith the law and the prophets were until John, but now the gospel is taught. God, I say, began sparingly, but he reserved to the ages to come the breaking open of the exceeding riches of his grace. As now he hath multitudes of elect, a catholic church, and saints over the Christian world, and hath had in all ages; so he also breaks up the doctrine of free grace more in their hearts.

Sixthly, Hath God engaged himself thus, when he converted these primitive Christians, to shew like riches of grace, exceeding riches of grace, not to that age only but to all ages to come, and still to the latter ages more than to the former? Then let this help your faith, and that in respect of yourselves. Did God shew grace to thee when he first turned thee to him; did he pardon thee then the sins of thy age past, out of the exceeding riches of his grace? He will continue, fear not, to shew mercy and to continue his grace in pardoning and keeping of thee for the residue of the age thou art to live. Thou seest he hath done it unto ages past, and hath promised to do it unto the ages to come to the end of the world. God is as rich as ever: and as the sun, that hath shined these five thousand years and upwards, hath as much light in it now as ever; so hath God of grace and mercy in him. Can God shew such mercy to the world that is evil and unthankful, to the world that hath persecuted his saints and children in all ages, that he still continueth to shew forth his grace age after age, as he doth, and cannot he shew mercy to thee for thy little span of time, having shewn thee so much mercy already? Certainly he will go on to do it, for he hath exceeding riches of grace for ages to come; so saith the Apostle here.

Lastly, I shall only add this meditation, out of these words interpreted in this second sense. When all these ages to come—that is, to the world's end—shall be run out; O my brethren, at the latter day, what an infinite riches of grace will appear that God had in him, which had saved men in all ages! When all men shall meet together, when all the accounts and reckonings of the world shall be given up, what a great expense will there be found that God hath been at, that in all ages he hath taken in so many and saved them; some as bad as these Ephesians were! And let the consideration of that help thy faith. If thou wert at the day of judgment, and sawest all the saints brought together before God, and all saying, We have committed these and these sins, and God hath pardoned us, and pardoned us all, (for that will be the conclusion of the accounts of the world;) when thou shalt see such riches of grace spent upon the saints in all ages, do but begin now and

by faith think of this, and never stand distrusting of God, as if thy case were worse than all these.

And so much now for that second interpretation, as it respecteth posterity, making the example of these Ephesians instances to posterity of the like grace and mercy.

I come now to the *third interpretation* and sense, which begins to take accomplishment when the other endeth; therefore I said that they are but several accomplishments of the same design. When God shall thus have shewn the exceeding riches of his grace unto his saints in all ages, in pulling them out of their natural condition, in converting them, in quickening them, and they shall all meet at the latter day together, and be gathered unto Jesus Christ; all this is for this end, that to the ages then to come afterwards, he may shew forth a hidden, an unknown treasury of grace, which he will break up in heaven and at the day of judgment, even unto eternity. The reasons for this interpretation are so strong, that if the other I gave last and this could not stand together, for my part I should certainly exclude the other, and embrace this. I gave you my reasons for it when I first opened it. The phrase here, 'in ages to come,' doth most naturally, according to what the Scripture saith, import the time of eternity, the ages of eternity in the world to come. Now the observations that flow from this interpretation I reduce to two heads:—

I. Such as set out to us something about heaven.

II. To shew how great that salvation must needs be, according to the scope of these words.

Concerning the first head, I give you these several particulars:—

First, That all the glory that God bestows upon his saints in the ages and world to come, and after the day of judgment, it is only grace that is the fountain of it. He shews forth therein his grace, yea, the exceeding riches of his grace. It is not only grace, but it is the perfection of grace, it is the richness of grace in the height, and the highest riches of it; it is the highest graciousness of grace, as I may so express it, to bestow heaven upon us. The Papists acknowledge grace in conversion; though they mingle much of man's will with it, yet they acknowledge a preventing grace. But when they come to speak of his going to heaven, there they thrust in merit; they do not make salvation to be of grace so much as conversion itself. But it is grace, and grace to eternity, and the height of grace. Rom. ix. 23, 'That God might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy.' The Apostle, you see, when he speaks of salvation and riches of glory, calls the subjects of it 'vessels of mercy.' And why? The coherence of the text here naturally clears it, and shews you why, when you are in heaven, you are eternally vessels of mercy, and all the riches of glory is therefore converted into the riches of mercy as the cause thereof. Why? Because you were once by nature children of wrath, and considered in yourselves you are ever so. As a man is to look upon himself after he is justified as ungodly in himself,—it is said of Abraham, that he believed on him that justifieth the ungodly,—so he is in himself to eternity. We were dead in sins and trespasses, we were children of wrath by nature, hell was our place. How came we hither then? It is the exceeding riches of his grace that pulls men out of that miserable condition, and sets them upon that height and top of blessedness and happiness in the world to come. It is thy mercy, say they in the Lamentations, that we are not consumed; thy mercies fail not. It is the mercy of God that we are not in hell; and when we are in heaven, it is mercy that hath

brought us thither ; and because we were once thus and thus in ourselves, it is mercy and grace that continues us there for ever.

There are two treasures, to which there are continual additions by men's sinnings. Take wicked men ; they, as it is said in Rom. ii. 5, by abusing the goodness and long-suffering of God, treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath. Take godly men, or elect men rather ; though indeed they, by sinning before conversion, considered as in themselves, did treasure up wrath unto themselves, yet all their sins did but serve to make room for, and a capacity of a treasury of grace the greater, when salvation should come to be revealed to them. And all their sins after conversion still increase this treasury ; they need so much more of the riches of grace to save them. And therefore saith the Apostle here, that you who were dead in sins and trespasses, that you should be quickened and sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, this shews and magnifies the exceeding riches of his grace in all that he will do to you, and for you, in the world to come. If I might compare heaven, and what God doth bestow upon us, and the glory there, with what he doth for us at our conversion ; then certainly, if the one must be acknowledged grace, as the Papists themselves do, the other must needs be much more, or as much every whit. We are as passive in all the glory bestowed upon us as we are in conversion. Our bodies are raised again out of the dust by that power that subdues all things, and they are raised up spiritual, glorious bodies, that we may be fitted for glory. Therefore the resurrection is called in Scripture a regeneration, even as well as conversion itself. And when our souls are filled with blessedness in heaven, they are passive rather in it ; nay, they are more passive, if it may be consisting with a liberty of will, and of a creature rational, and of understanding, than in all the actions of grace that here, when we are converted, are put forth. We say, we being acted by God, we act, and it is true in all the good we do in this life. But the blessedness put upon us in the world to come is rather a thing bestowed upon us, than acted by us ; we glorify God here, we are glorified of God hereafter. Therefore it must needs be grace, and exceeding riches of grace. So Christ saith, 'I have glorified thee upon earth.' He speaks actively, when he speaks of what he did in this world ; but when he comes to speak of the world to come, then saith he, 'Glorify me.' Therefore the Scripture, when it speaks of heaven, it speaks as if we were but passive there ; all that is bestowed upon us therefore is of grace. Mortality is said to be swallowed up of life ; and we are satiated with the river of his pleasure ; we are watered, it is poured upon us, as the word signifies in Ps. xxxvi. The joy that the Holy Ghost works in us, which is the earnest of heaven, we are recipients, if I may so express it, rather than actors in it.

O my brethren, hate Popery ; it is a cursed doctrine, that that wherein the height, the top, the riches, the graciousness of grace most appeareth, they should not only mingle works with it, but mingle them as merits too, as the cause thereof. That he might shew forth, saith the Apostle, the exceeding riches of his grace, in that world to come. There are many Papists that do indeed interpret these words of heaven ; but how do they mince it to salve up their own doctrine of merit ? What do they say ? It is true, God gives glory, say they, for the merits of men, and yet it is grace. Why ? Because that God doth glorify men far beyond their merits. Thank them for nothing ; so men are thrown into hell, and there punished less than they merit and deserve ; and so grace is as much seen in the one as in the other.

A *second* observation is this : That in the world to come, there are ages,

and many ages to come, in eternity. Unto the scriptures I gave you then, I shall only add that in 1 Tim. vi. 17, and compare it but with those other scriptures I gave you then. The Apostle, when he speaks of this world there, saith, 'Charge them that are rich in this world;' so we translate it: it is, 'in this age,' in this *now* world. He expresseth it in the singular number, and he speaks it plainly in opposition to the world to come, which, in ver. 19, we translate 'the time to come,' but in the original it is 'ages to come;' if he calls the one an age, he calls the other an age of ages. In Rom. xvi. 27, we translate it 'for ever,' but it is indeed 'for ages,' and so you have it in Eph. iii. 21. My brethren, the time of heaven, the eternity there, it is so vast that it is reckoned by ages, and by ages of ages. In this life here, time is reckoned by days and by years. 'The days of man,' they are so and so; and, 'Teach us to number our days;' and, 'The years of man are threescore and ten,' &c. They are easily numbered; for so the school-men use to distinguish the time that now is from that to come. The time that now is, is a duration that may be numbered, and that by days and months and years, because they are so few; few are the days of man, and fewer are the years of man, and therefore may be easily numbered. But the time of heaven is reckoned by ages, and by ages of ages, not by days and by years; and it passeth away so that, though it be ages, it is not numbered by ages of years, as our ages are, they are numbered in the lump rather; 'ages of ages.'

There is also this difference between God's eternity and ours. In this both of them agree, that as the essence of God is the same in all ages to eternity, so the substance of our souls and bodies will be still the same without alteration. But yet there is this difference betwixt his eternity and ours: his eternity is not divided into ages, as ours is. Why? Because, as Anselm well saith, speaking unto God, 'Thy eternity, O God, is always present to thee.' He possesseth the joys of all time in one instant continual; for all things, past, present, and to come, are present unto him. And as his immense being encompasseth all beings, so his immense duration doth all time, and there is but one *now* of eternity to him. But it is not so with us. *Nos habemus de nostra eternitate quod semper est futurum.* We have of our eternity that is still to come, for we can take in but, as creatures, one thing after another; and that is the reason why God hath appointed ages, eternity itself, to manifest the riches of his grace to us, for less will not serve the turn.

Thirdly, Another observation from this interpretation is this: That all our time spent in heaven shall be but passed away eternally in kindness. 'To shew forth,' saith he, 'in the ages to come, the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness.' It is not 'in *his* kindness,' but 'in kindness,' to set an emphasis on it, wholly in a way of kindness; it is *his* kindness too, for it is that makes heaven. I gave you an account of the addition, and the meaning of those words, when I opened them to this sense, that God doth not only shew his prerogative of grace for his own glory in heaven, but he doth all, bestows all, with the greatest heartiness, with the greatest kindness, with the greatest sweetness,—for the word implies all this,—with the greatest communicativeness of himself (rejoicing over us to do us good) that can be. As a king now is gracious to his subjects, but if he be of a loving disposition, he is kind to his wife, and all the grace he shews her is in kindness; so it is between God and his saints. All the converse we have with God in heaven, and all that God bestows upon us there, is with infinite familiarity and kindness and sweetness, and is so carried on; and therein doth lie, as to us, the height of blessedness. In Prov. xxvii. 9, Solomon call it 'the sweetness of

a man's friend,' for such the kindness of a friend is. You shall observe therefore, when heaven is spoken of, it is still spoken of in terms and words of kindness. Our Saviour Christ compares himself to a wooer, and that great day to be his marriage-day, and the church to be his bride, and he to be the bridegroom; and all that he doth there afterwards for ever is in the kindness of a bridegroom, in the heat, in the highest affection of love. He acts the part of a fresh wooer all along. When the new Jerusalem comes down from heaven, the bride is said to be made ready, and he, as a bridegroom, rejoiceth over his bride for ever, as the prophet speaks in Isa. lxii. 5, which indeed is a promise of the calling of the Jews, when God will take that people again into his marriage bed, yet so as in heaven it holds much more.

He continually acts the part of a bridegroom: saith he, 'I go to prepare a place for you;' as wooers do for their brides, to bring them home to their father's house: it is spoken in the language of kindness. And then he takes them, and brings them to his Father's house. 'In my Father's house are many mansions,' and there I will entertain you, saith he; all speaks kindness. In John xx. 17, when Mary would have come, and familiarly have embraced him, whether his feet or otherwise, saith he, 'Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended.' It is not a reproof, so much as a staying her from the present enjoyment, with the hint of a time wherein kindness was to be shewn yet to come; and is as if he had said, There is time enough, we shall be familiar in heaven; but now thou art to go about thy business, now tell my disciples that I am risen. This I take to be the best meaning of that place. In Ps. xxxvi. 7, 'How excellent,' or precious, 'is thy loving-kindness, O God!' He speaks of the loving-kindness which he shews to them that trust in him here, having compared this with that ordinary favour which he shews to man and beast in the words before, and shewing how it excels. But his shewing kindness indeed is yet to come, whereof this here is but the love-token; for what follows? 'They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink'—it is a passive word, as I said before—'of the river of thy pleasures.' He speaks in the language of kindness shewn us, entertainment. Jesus Christ brings them to his Father's house, and there the best things he hath he brings forth; there they shall have a banquet, yea, the choicest banquet, that which God himself liveth upon. 'Thy pleasures,' saith he, he brings them all forth, because he spends the time in kindness. 'Henceforth,' saith Christ, 'I will not drink any more of the fruit of the vine, till I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.' This is all the language of kindness and of entertainment.

And this, my brethren, is it which makes the entertainment so sweet in heaven, all the cost and glory there so sweet; it is the kindness, the sweetness of a friend, and of God a father, and of Jesus Christ a bridegroom, that rejoiceth over us to do us good. In Prov. xv. 17, a dinner of herbs with love, how sweet is it! How much more to be at a continual feast, with the river of God's pleasures to drink thereof, and to be fed with the fatness of his house, and all this out of infinite loving-kindness! This is better than life, it is better than the glory and happiness itself, simply considered, for it is this which makes it to be blessedness. When you were first turned to God, how kind perhaps was God to you then, or have you found him in some passages of your lives! and you think, If God should be always thus kind to me, how would it ravish my heart! Thou shalt have enough of it in heaven. God is angry sometimes here, and seems to take things unkindly at our hands, but in heaven nothing but kindness. It is an

excellent place, and it is the meaning of it, in Ps. xxx. 5, 'His anger endureth but for a moment, but in his favour is life.' Life is there opposed to a moment; it is life for ever, eternal life. You have the like in Isa. liv. 8.

My brethren, in heaven there are no affections but love and kindness on both sides, on God's part, and ours. In us there is no affection else stirring. There is no sorrow for sin, though that be sweet, for all tears are wiped away from our eyes; there is no fear, for perfect love casteth out fear; there is no desire, for there is continual satisfaction.

There is nothing but these three things in a man,—the knowledge and sight of God, the love of God, and joy in God; there is this trinity, if I may so speak, of dispositions in the soul. On the other side, in God, though there be power, and justice, and all attributes in him, yet they all have a tincture of loving-kindness. Therefore God is not said so much to be wisdom, in respect of us, as love; where have you him called justice or power? But he is called love. And though God is all in all, and all in him is ours, yet it is all in loving-kindness. He shews forth the riches of his grace, in kindness towards us, in those ages to come, in Christ Jesus.

I might add this, in *Christ Jesus*; for though God be all in all in heaven, yet it is God's love in Christ to us that doth make the union everlasting, and is the foundation of it. The creature could not stand under that love of God, if it were not conveyed to us in Christ; it would be too weighty for it. God chose us in Christ at first, when he ordained us this glory in heaven, and therefore he continues to shew kindness towards us in heaven, and that in Christ, to everlasting.

The second head of observations I make out of these words, upon that third interpretation, is this: to shew you from hence how great a glory heaven is. I shall do it exceeding briefly.

First, You see it is called *riches*. When the Scripture speaks of heaven, it still speaks of the glory there under the notion of riches, under the notion of a treasury. 1 Tim. vi. 19, 'Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation for the time to come.' When our Lord and Saviour Christ speaks of heaven, still he expresseth it under the notion of treasure and riches. Matt. vi. 20, 'Thou shalt have treasures in heaven;' and Matt. xix. 21, Luke xii. 33, Mark x. 21, and Luke xviii. 22. It is the familiar language of Christ, and still he calls them treasures, in the plural number.

Secondly, They are called *exceeding riches of his grace*, to be shewn forth then, in comparison of what God hath done for us here; for, in the clear natural coherence of these words with the former, the scope is this. God, saith he, hath pulled you out of that natural condition you were in; he hath quickened you together with Christ already; he hath in Christ representatively raised you, and set you together in heaven, Christ having taken possession of that for you which for ever you shall enjoy. This, saith he, is but a foundation, it is all but a preparation that he may shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace in the ages to come. He had said. God was rich in mercy, in quickening them. 'God,' saith he, 'who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ,' ver. 4, 5. And in chap. i. 7, that our sins are forgiven, he saith, it is 'according to the riches of his grace.' But what doth all this tend to that is done here in this life? It is but a foundation, it is but a preparation that he may shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace. He puts that in, when he comes to speak of heaven, that although God hath done much for us already, yet he hath hidden riches to shew forth then. Do but then consider with yourselves, my brethren, by what

God hath done for us here, and by what he had bestowed and expended upon these Ephesians, what a world of riches of grace, what a treasure that is that must be then broken up and shewn forth. Did it cost God nothing to pardon your sins? What expenses do you put him to every day? What riches of grace is there in pouring forth of his Spirit, in justification, in sanctification, in adoption?

And yet what are all these? What is pardon of sin to heaven? It is but so many riches buried in the foundation. What is the Spirit's pouring forth here? It is but the earnest of that riches which is to come. All that he hath done here, it is but that he might shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace on us, in ages to come, in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. All that is done for us here, it is but like a lighter metal; as always in mines you shall have a lighter metal before you come to the mine itself. All the riches of grace expended upon us here, they are but that lighter metal to that great mine that is then to be broken up. 'That he might make known,' saith the Apostle, Rom. ix. 23, 'the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared unto glory.' All that is done here, it is but a preparation to those riches of glory that are to be made known on the vessels of mercy. As the sorrows of this life are unto the wicked but the beginning of sorrows, so all that God doth for his saints in this life is but the beginning and the sprinklings of those riches he will expend to eternity, and which he hath laid up for them in heaven, as the Apostle phraseth it in Col. i. 5. Saith the Psalmist, Ps. xxiii. 6, speaking of this love, Mercy and loving-kindness shall follow me all my days. Take any of the elect children of God, what a world of mercy and loving-kindness doth follow him, and pursue him? Even as we are bid to follow after peace and to pursue it, so doth God pursue thee with loving-kindnesses, one after another; but when thou comest to 'ages to come,' loving-kindness shall overwhelm thee, swallow thee up.

My brethren, if God have done so great things in the bringing us to glory, as the preparation to it,—he did let us fall into sin, delivered us out of it, sent his Son to die for us,—if these be but the preparations, what will the riches be? And yet all this is but preparation, that he might shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace, in the ages to come, in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

Thirdly, What is it that God will expend upon us in heaven? He will expend upon us the *exceeding riches of his grace*.

My brethren, the exceeding riches of God's grace must be laid out in something which shall be proportionable to it. If a king should say, Go take all the riches in my kingdom, and expend it upon such an entertainment; if the maker of the entertainment be faithful and wise, the entertainment shall be suitable to those exceeding riches that are laid forth and expended. If we say that such or such a thing doth cost a man so much, we reckon it folly in him that is the purchaser or procurer of it at such a rate, if it do not hold some proportion to the cost. Now then, if God will shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace, that happiness and glory that must hold a proportion to this, and come up to it and be worthy of it, that entertainment which God himself is the maker of, and therefore he will not cast away any whit of his grace, but his saints shall have it out in glory, how great must that glory be! And it is to make a show, on purpose to shew forth. Saith God, I will shew how great a God I am, how gracious I am, how well I can love creatures, and how kind he will be when he meaneth to be kind. If Ahasuerus, being a great king, will make a

feast to shew the riches of his glorious kingdom, how great, how magnificent shall the feast be! If God will make creatures happy, and undertakes to do it, to shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace, and this before all ages, all men, when all the world is gathered together, how great must this glory be! And I beseech you consider who are the stewards of all these riches that are in God. Here is grace and loving-kindness; we are therefore like to be well entertained. You see grace is at the cost, and gives commission to loving-kindness to spare for nothing. If it be to shew forth the riches of grace, grace will be sure to provide for its own glory, to shew itself to the utmost; and when kindness towards us shall have the command of grace's purse, that will be sure to think nothing too good for us. If a prince should employ one to make entertainment that is of a profuse and prodigal spirit, and a deep observer and favourer of the persons to be entertained, he will be sure to lay on cost enough. Especially if the prince set open his coffers, and bid him take out whatever he will for that entertainment; what an entertainment will you expect shall be made by this man! Saith God to loving-kindness, Here is all my riches, take whatever you please. And, my brethren, to be sure that is profuse enough.

And then again, it is made God's ultimate design here of all he hath done for us; it was the first thing in his intention and thoughts, which he had in his eye as the end and conclusion of all. Therefore he did let us fall into sin, 'dead in sins and trespasses,' 'children of wrath;' therefore he sent Jesus Christ, therefore he quickened us in him, therefore he set us in heavenly places in him. What is the design, the ultimate end in God's heart of all this? That he might shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace in the ages to come. The truth is, this God that is rich in mercy, had so much riches by him that he thought of all profuse and expensive ways to lay it out; as if one should have so much riches by him that he knew not how to expend them. God might have brought us to heaven immediately, but he let us fall into sin, to draw out infinite riches in pardoning, and yet this is but by the way; what then is the goodness of God that is laid up for the sons of men for eternity!

Fourthly, It is so much riches of grace that God hath designed to bestow upon us in that world as requires ages to come to exhaust it. It is a notion of the highest comfort to us that God hath taken up so much love, the first moment he loved us, as requires eternity to manage it. Here you have a scripture for it: 'that he might shew forth,' even to eternity, 'the exceeding riches of his grace.' It was so much riches as required an eternity to manifest and to expend; so much riches as, though we shall ever be spending, they shall never be spent.

We say of hell, that the demerit of sin is such that therefore hell is to eternity, because that the creature cannot in a short time undergo all that wrath that is due to him for his sin, and therefore there is an eternity of time for him to suffer in. So it is here; we may truly say of heaven, of the riches of God's grace which he hath laid up for us, to spend upon us, it is so infinite a treasure that the creature being not able to take it in at once, must have ages to come to take it in.

My brethren, this is one of the highest exaggerations of the glory of heaven to us, that it is not only to eternity simply, but that it requires eternity to expend that which God hath designed to us. When thou comest to heaven, thou mayest, and thou mayest now by faith, say, Soul, take thy rest, thou hast goods laid up for many years, thou hast riches of grace laid up for ages of ages; which cannot be spent, spend as fast as thou canst.

In Ps. xxxvi. 9, speaking of heaven and of drinking of the river of God's pleasures, he calls God there the fountain of life; and why the fountain of life? Because the fountain is continually bubbling up new fresh water; it is ever doing of it. God himself hath infinite goodness in him which the creatures cannot take in at once; they are taking of it in eternally. All that God doth for us for ever is but the fulfilling of his good pleasure, as you have it in 2 Thess. i. 11. It is but filling up that good pleasure of his which he hath conceived towards us.

There are two things in God, simplicity of being, and infiniteness of being. Now although, by reason of the simplicity of his being, we see God at once every moment, and as his essence is simple, so that beatifical vision is one simple act; yet by reason of the infiniteness of his being, it is like sailing over an eternal sea, where you see nothing but sea, and yet you are to eternity sailing it over; you have a new horizon every hour's sail you sail. So is it here; therefore they are called rivers of pleasure, because in God and from God, by reason of his infiniteness, they are continually fresh. The Papists say that the saints in heaven see all things here below in God. What do our divines say to that? No, say they, it cannot be; though they see God, in whom all things are, and in whom all things may be seen, yet they do not see all things in God at once. The saints—even as Aquinas himself speaks, and reason acknowledgeth it too—see in God still things fresh, which they saw not in the beginning of their blessedness. The angels that see God's face in heaven, yet they stretch out their necks to learn continually even of the churches below the mysteries of Christ; much more in heaven.

My brethren, it is for *ages to come*; the infiniteness of this being of God holds us seeing, and knowing, and viewing over afresh even to eternity, and yet it is not, it cannot be comprehended by us; therefore ages to come are appointed.

Fifthly, It is in kindness towards *us*. My brethren, when God shall have shut out all the world, shut up all wicked men in hell, when he and his children shall be alone, and all the world besides excluded, and none else there but his children, and they all together with him, then will he break up the exceeding riches of his grace, and he hath reserved it unto that time.

Lastly, It is in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus, loving us with the same love wherewith he loved Christ Jesus. Look what glory he hath bestowed upon our head, the same he will bestow upon us, and with the same kindness, and how great must that needs be? Do but read the description of that glory, which the Apostle on purpose made of Christ, in the first chapter; out of the same kindness he will bestow the same glory upon us.

And so much now for observations upon that last sense and interpretation; and so I have done with this verse.