

THE RICHES OF GOD'S MERCY

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"And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, 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, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:3-6

There are three subjects, branches we may call them, of divine truth, which seem to have been specially opened up in the experience of the Apostle Paul; and which he therefore, as an inspired writer in the New Testament, opened and enforced with corresponding fulness, clearness, and power. 1. The first branch of divine truth into which he was so deeply led is the Fall of man, with its attendant consequences of sin and death. 2. The second branch of divine truth into which he was so blessedly led is the Person, work, obedience, blood-shedding, death, resurrection and glorification of the Son of God, viewed in relationship to His Church and bride. 3. The third great branch of divine truth in which the eminent Apostle so blessedly shines, is sovereign grace in its justifying, sanctifying, and saving effects upon the Church of God. I do not mean to say that the Apostle lays down these three grand branches of divine truth with all the systematic accuracy of the philosopher; that they are divided and subdivided into so many consecutive clauses, like an Act of Parliament; or proved sentence by sentence, and line by line, like a scientific mathematical treatise. It never was the purpose of God to address the Scripture to man's intellect, but to his heart and conscience. As, then, these divine truths formed part and parcel of the Apostle's experience, and

flowed into his soul out of the bosom of Christ, so they flowed out of his heart, and were written by his pen in the inspired record.

We shall find these three branches of divine truth—the Fall of man; the Person and work of the Son of God; and sovereign grace, with its blessed fruits and effects—if we have eyes to see and hearts to feel them, shining forth in the Words of the text. But I shall, with God's blessing, more especially call your attention to four points that seem to me to spring immediately out of the words before us.

I. First, what we are by nature. "And were by nature children of wrath, even as others."

II. Secondly, the riches of the mercy and the greatness of the love of God. "But God, who is rich in Mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins."

III. Thirdly, salvation by grace, which is the fruit and effect of this rich mercy and unspeakable love. "By grace ye are saved."

IV. Fourthly, the manifestation and operations of this grace in the persons of the saints of God, whereby, in consequence, they are "quickened together with Christ, raised up together with Him, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

I. What a description does the Apostle give, in the early part of this chapter, of the state of man generally through the Fall! Such by nature are the saints of God, who, by being buried in the ruins of the Fall, resemble in all points their fellow-sinners and fellow-mortals. We know that God had

eternal purposes of love and mercy towards them. But that does not interfere with their state and condition as involved in Adam's transgression. Whatever they were viewed eternally in union with the Son of God; whatever they will be in the accomplishment of God's purposes, when they will outshine the stars in glory, they fell in Adam to the same depth as all Adam's posterity that then were in his loins. And therefore the description, however vivid it may be of the state of man generally, applies with equal force to the elect of God; because, viewed in their relationship to Adam, their first parent, they fell as fully and as foully as all the rest. Now, what does the inspired Apostle say of man generally, and of the saints of God, as viewed in their unregenerate condition?

i. His first declaration concerning them is, that they *are dead in trespasses and sins*. No language can go beyond the expression of "dead." A man may be in a swoon, but he is not dead; he may be asleep, but he is not dead; he may be paralysed hand and foot, but he is not dead; he may be dying, but he is not dead. As long as there is the faintest pulsation in the body, as long as there remains the feeblest spark of life, there is some power of motion, some respiration, some evidence of life still in the frame.

But when the stroke of death has taken effect, when body and soul are separated, and the vital current is congealed at the fountain head, how breathless, pulseless, motionless, the body lies! Is there any word, then, that can be used which more aptly describes the total inability of man in his fallen condition to raise up any spiritual movement Godward? No, man before God, as to any spiritual movement, is as helpless as the corpse in the coffin.

But as if that were not sufficient to describe the state of man

before God, the Apostle uses a very emphatic expression, "Dead *in trespasses and sins*." I hardly know how I can convey the thought as it springs up in my mind, but I will endeavour. Some months ago, in the grey dawn of a winter's morning, there was found on Hampstead Heath the body of a miserable suicide—it was lying upon the dry heath. That is one figure. Take another: walking by the sea-side, you come suddenly upon the body of a shipwrecked sailor, washed high and dry upon the sandy beach. In the one case the body was lying on the dry heath, in the other case upon the dry sand. Death is dreadful here, but not necessarily disgusting. But if you were to see a body, not lying upon the dry heath, nor upon the sand of the seashore, but sunk in a deep sewer, where every loathsome reptile and hideous creature swarming in a pool of corruption were crawling in and over it; or if this miserable corpse were buried in the deepest, foulest filth which imagination can conceive; that would be a different spectacle from seeing a corpse upon the heath, or the dead body of a sailor upon the sand. Now, when the Apostle speaks of a sinner being *dead in trespasses and sins*, it seems to me to convey the idea of a dead body immersed in the foulest corruption, with hideous reptiles and myriads of loathsome monsters swarming over it. Such is man by nature and practice; not only *dead*, but *dead in trespasses and sins*; as far as any vital movement to God is concerned dead, but every sin as active, lively, and swarming upon the dead corpse as tadpoles in a pool.

ii. But the Apostle uses another expression; and of course he selects, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, those figures which convey to our mind the clearest ideas. He speaks of their *walking according to the course of this world*. Now, as a dead body cannot walk, the figure is changed to convey a lively impression. But looking at the figure as it stands, and viewing the dead in sin as walking according to the course of

this world, what a description it is of what the world really is! It seems to me represented under this idea—a river flowing onwards, and every wave of that stream flowing away from God into an abyss of eternal misery and woe. There is not a drop in that river which is flowing to the throne of God; the whole course of that stream is flowing onward to eternal destruction. If such be the course of this world, whether pleasure or amusement, or even occupation and business, according to the same course the saints of God walk while they are in their state of unregeneracy.

iii. But the Apostle has not yet done with describing the state of man by the Fall. He adds another feature to the dark portrait, which seems to go beyond all yet traced by his powerful pen, "*according to the prince of the power of the air*, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." It seems to my mind as if Satan here were represented hovering in the air, there exercising some such dominion over men as the eagle, towering on her lofty eyrie, exercises over the feathered race, pursuing and hunting them to their destruction. He is "the prince and god of this world," and is represented here as an unclean spirit, brooding over the children of disobedience, and working in them his own malignity, rebellion, pride, and obduracy. Now, look for yourself at fallen man as drawn by an inspired pen. Do not think that I exaggerate, misstate, or misrepresent God's solemn truth. I am merely holding up to your view the language of the Holy Spirit, and endeavouring as far as I can to cast a light upon it. Examine these expressions for yourselves; they are not my statements; I merely hold them up that you may look at them; weigh them carefully; weigh them separately; then put them together, and tell me whether I am exaggerating man's natural condition.

iv. I might, if time permitted, dwell on another feature of this

vivid portraiture, the *carrying out into positive practice* the sins thus engendered or infused. "Among whom," says the Apostle, "we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." Some of these desires were the more polluting pleasures of the flesh; others, the higher and more intellectual employment of the mind; but each and all alike alien to the life of God, and issuing in destruction. But I shall not detain you upon this part of our subject beyond just dwelling for a few moments upon what the Apostle in our text more particularly enforces upon our consciences, where he says, "and were *by nature* the children of wrath, even as others."

God's children, the saints of the Most High, never were, as regards their persons, under the penal wrath of God in the same way as those who are finally lost, because He loved them from eternity, and justified and accepted them in the person of His dear Son; as the Apostle says, "made us accepted in the Beloved." The Apostle therefore does not say they were hated of God, or lying under His penal or vindictive wrath; but "by nature," that is, viewed in their natural state and condition, viewed as buried in the ruins of the Fall, and simply with regard to that corrupt, depraved nature which they inherited as sprung from Adam's loins; in this sense, and this sense only, were they "children of wrath, even as others." Their principles, their motives, their practice, their ignorance of God, their unbelief, enmity, and general ungodliness, were as great if not greater than in their fellow sinners, and these therefore exposed them to, and made them deserving of the wrath of God. In fact, the expression "children of wrath" is a Hebrew idiom. We find an almost similar expression (1 Sam. 26:16) where David, speaking to the men who guarded Saul so carelessly, said to them, "As the Lord liveth, ye are worthy to die (margin, "the sons of

death"), because ye have not kept your master, the Lord's anointed." The expression, therefore, "children of wrath," signifies not that they were liable to the penal wrath of God, to His eternal anger and fiery indignation: but that their former conduct and practices, their abominable sins and ungodly ways, were of such a nature as exposed them to, and made them worthy of that flaming displeasure that burns to the lowest hell; and it is this desert of theirs which so enhances the mercy of God that He did not give vent to His holy indignation, but in justly-deserved wrath remembered mercy, for His dear Son's sake. Which brings us to

II. Our second point, *The riches of the mercy of God, and the great love wherewith He loved His saints even when they were dead in sins.* I remove the comma which is found in our translation after "us." This we may do without scruple when the sense is improved thereby, for there are no points in the best and most ancient manuscripts. I therefore feel at liberty to remove the comma, and read the whole sentence as one continuous expression of the greatness of God's love. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins." Does not this enhance the love of God that He loved us even when we were dead in sins? This eternal love prompted, so to speak, mercy. Love regarded the persons, mercy regarded the sins of the elect; and the two combined to save them from hell, where sin would have carried them, into heaven where love would have them. But let us examine these two attributes of God separately; and first, *Mercy.*

i. *Mercy* is that peculiar attribute of God which was drawn out by the sin of man; for mercy, as a pure attribute, has respect only to sinners. Before man fell, mercy was an attribute that lay, so to speak, hidden in the bosom of God. Angels fell; mercy poured not out itself from God's bosom to rescue

them. Man fell; then mercy, which had been hidden in the bosom of God, first came forth into visible manifestation. We must ever bear in mind that all God's attributes are what is called "co-ordinate"; in other words, that all the perfections of God—what are commonly called His attributes—are alike infinite. He is, therefore, "rich in mercy," because infinite in mercy. With Him mercy is never exercised, as it may be in our case, at the expense of justice, nor is justice exercised at the expense of mercy. In our case, mercy often bespeaks weakness. The Queen, for instance, might show mercy to a criminal at the expense of justice. But in the instance of the infinite Jehovah, all His attributes being perfectly co-ordinate and perfectly equal, His mercy is as great as His justice, and His justice is as great as His mercy.

But again, in order experimentally to understand the riches of God's mercy, we must have a spiritual sight and sense of our need of that mercy. Men brand us sometimes with the title of "corruption preachers"; and if we speak a little of the depths of the Fall, and of what man is by nature as a sinner, this is termed "gloating over and preaching corruption." But I am bold to say this, that we never can really, truly, and experimentally enter into the riches of God's mercy until we are made deeply acquainted with our need of that mercy. We must go down into the depths, if we are to rise up to the heights. If we are to feel the balm of a Saviour's precious blood healing the festering sores of a guilty conscience, there must be guilt and wounds made in that conscience before the balm is applied, or its benefits realised. Slightly wounded, slightly healed; know little of man's corruption, know little of God's mercy; sink little into the depths of nature's ruin, rise little into the heights of grace's recovery; because he loves most who has most forgiven. Would we, therefore, enter, by living faith, into the riches of God's mercy, we must know deeply, painfully, and experimentally the depths of the Fall;

and be it called corruption or not, it is the only way whereby a door is opened for the reception of God's salvation into our heart. The more we know of our own misery, the more we shall prize God's mercy; and the more we feel ourselves, from the workings of sin and guilt, miserable creatures, and unworthy of the least notice from God, the more we shall prize His smile, the more we shall value His blessing, the more we shall extol His name, and the higher He will rise in our affections, when He manifests the riches of His mercy to our heart. It is easy enough to use a nick-name. This is the ready weapon of every ragged street boy. There may be those here who, themselves ignorant of soul trouble, throw scorn and contempt on the tried and tempted, the distressed and exercised saints of God; but their great Advocate will plead their cause; and you may have a reckoning at the last day to make for these things that you at present but little dream of. It is a grievous thing to rub salt into the wounds of a bleeding conscience; to strike the dying dead; to add grief and sorrow to those who are sinking already under apprehensions of eternal wrath.

ii. Not only, however, is God "rich in mercy," but *great in love*; for, indeed, who can tell the heights, depths, lengths, and breadths of the love of God? But to enter, in some measure, into the love of God, we must see when, where, and how that love was manifested. Here I see the beauty of that passage, when we read it, as I have pointed out, as one sentence, "For His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." I was speaking of man's natural condition as imaged by the figure of a loathsome corpse lying in a sewer, all surrounded with corruption and filth. Now, is there anything in such an object to draw forth love? Must it not, viewed in itself, ever be a loathsome spectacle? Could you love such an object? Would not your eyes instinctively turn away with deep loathing, and

fainting, staggering sickness, from such a sight? Now carry that thought, as the Apostle here describes it, into the love of God. That He should love a *saint* is nothing so marvellous; but that He should love a *sinner!*—there is the mystery. When we view the perfections of God, His infinite purity, spotless holiness, inflexible justice, tremendous majesty, eternal hatred against sin, and have some spiritual sight also of the natural loathsomeness of a sinner in His holy and pure eyes—then to see the love of God extending itself towards him as he lies dead in sin, we stand amazed how the love of God, a Being so pure, a Being so infinitely and beyond all conception holy, should flow forth to objects so polluted. A knowledge, therefore, of sin, and of our death therein, a sight, sense, and feeling of our corruption, let men say what they may, is essential to our reception of the love of God. For if the love of God is shown to us when we are dead in sin, how can we understand that love? how rightly apprehend it? how enter into its lengths, breadths, depths, and heights, unless we have seen and felt ourselves to be objects naturally of God's detestation; and yet, to our joy and astonishment, found ourselves, on the contrary, the objects of this eternal love? It is only as we have our eyes opened, and our hearts touched to see and feel "the depths of sin that we wade and grope in," that we can enter into the riches of God's mercy, and admire with holy wonder that eternal love which could break forth through everything which is hateful to the pure nature of God, and fix itself in unalterable delight upon chosen sinners.

III. But I pass on to the next point which I proposed to bring before you; and that is so expressed as if the Apostle's heart were so full of it that he threw it in by way of overflowing parenthesis, "*By grace are ye saved.*" O the volumes of blessed truth that are couched in these few words, thrown in out of the Apostle's full heart as if to give a moment's vent to

his love of salvation by grace! Mercy, love, and grace are all in the bosom of God toward His saints; and yet they differ from each other. But how? *Mercy* regards the criminal; *love* regards the object; *grace*, perhaps, is a blending of the two—the union of mercy and love. God loves the holy unfallen angels; *there* is an object of love in which there is no mixture of mercy; for having never sinned, mercy they do not need. Again. God showed no mercy to the fallen angels; there we have justice and wrath, without mercy; but in the case of the saints of God, the election of grace, we have not only mercy and love, but we have the conjoint attribute that, uniting mercy and love in one stream, flows onward to the Church, as the river of the water of life—the pure crystal river of grace. Grace means, as you well know, the pure favour of God, and, as such, is sovereign, distinguishing, free, and superabounding. Every attribute of Jehovah is distinct, and yet so blended that the whole shine forth in one glorious effulgence. The rays of the sun united form one complete body of pure bright light; but the prism, or the rainbow, separates these rays into distinct colours. So the attributes of God are not confused though blended, and all shine forth in one pure bright glory. But this is the peculiar character of *grace*, that any intermixture of worth or worthiness in the object would destroy it. We have heard much, far too much lately, of a poison called strychnine—that deadly drug of which so small a portion as a grain is fatal to the human system. To use a comparison, here is a glass of pure sparkling wine, which, to a person exhausted or fainting, would be a refreshing cordial; but suppose some deadly poisoner were to introduce into that wine one grain of this fearful drug—which it were well for the human race had it never been discovered—the infusion of that one grain, or half a grain, would convert a healing cordial into a deadly draught. So the grace of God, which you may compare to pure sparkling wine—"the wine that cheereth God and man,"

infuse into the grace of God one grain of human merit, and you convert the cordial of a fainting sinner's heart into a deadly poison. For if the gospel require merit, we are damned by it as inevitably as by the law. This Luther felt when, racked and torn by the words, "the righteousness of God without the law is manifested," he cried out in the agony of his soul, "What, am I damned not only by the law, but damned by the gospel also!"

This pure, free, unadulterated grace is the joy of every soul that is able to receive it; for it comes as a blessed cordial when sinking and swooning under a sight and sense of the deserved wrath of God. When, then, the pure gospel of the grace of God comes as a cordial from the Most High, it lifts up his drooping head, revives his sinking soul, and pours oil and wine into his bleeding wounds. By this grace we are justified, pardoned, accepted, sanctified, and saved with an everlasting salvation. O glad tidings to perishing sinners! O blessed news to those who are sinking under a sense of guilt and misery, in whom the law of God is discharging its awful curse! When we get a view by faith, and a sweet taste of the pure grace of God, what a balm, what a cordial, what a sweet reviving draught it is. It is this which makes us prize so highly, and exalt so gladly, the free grace of God; because it is so pure, so free, and so superabounding over all the aboundings of sin, guilt, filth, and folly. It never can be laid down too clearly, it never can be too much insisted on, that "by grace," and grace alone, "ye are saved." If free grace has reached your soul, it has saved your soul; if free grace has come into your heart, it has blessed you with an everlasting salvation, and you will live to prove it when your happy soul joins the throng of the blessed. If anything can lift up a drooping sinner, restore a backslider, break a hard or soften a stony heart; draw forth songs of praise and tears of contrition; produce repentance and godly sorrow for sin; a

humble mind, and a tender conscience; it is a sweet experience of the superabounding grace of God. Can we then exalt it too much? Can we prize it too highly? Can we cleave to it too closely? No; in proportion as we feel our ruin and misery, we shall cleave to it with every desire of our soul; for it is all our salvation, as it is all our desire.

IV. But I pass on to our fourth and last point, which is, *the effects and fruits* of this grace, as they are brought forth into living manifestation.

The Apostle speaks of three things that spring out of the sovereign grace of God. 1. That God hath "quickened us together with Christ." 2. "Raised us up together." 3. "And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Observe the union with the Son of God. Is the soul quickened? It is "quickened together with Christ." Is the soul raised up? It is "raised up together with Christ." Does it sit in heavenly places? It sits there in and with Christ; He being the Head, from whom the body, the members, derive all their vital influence. Let us trace out these three blessings.

i. The first thing said here is, "hath *quickened* us together with Christ." To understand this we must take a view of the Lord Jesus Christ as He lay in the sepulchre. View Him, then, lying dead there; see His holy body preserved from the least taint of corruption, but still a dead body. Now carry your thoughts onward to the operations of the Holy Spirit (for He was "quickened by the Spirit") and His own divine operations, because He raised up His own body. What is the first? It is the quickening, the entrance of life into the body, previous to its resurrection. With this quickening came virtually the quickening of all the elect of God; for they, being members of Christ's body, were virtually quickened by that quickening act, and at the same moment. It is true they were not all

vitally quickened; we ourselves, for instance, were unborn. Eighteen hundred years have rolled away since the body of Christ was quickened in the sepulchre; but the virtual effect of that quickening reached all the election of grace, and will stretch down to the remotest period of time. Now, by virtue of this quickening, when the Holy Spirit comes forward for the execution of His purpose life enters into the soul. "You hath He quickened who were dead." With quickening comes living sensations, such as conviction of sin, guilt of conscience, the fear of God, the heart broken, the spirit of prayer, repentance unto life, in a word, all the first work of grace in the soul. As in the body of Christ, when quickened by the Holy Ghost, there were vital movements before that body left the sepulchre, so there are vital movements in the soul of a child of God under the quickening operations of God the Holy Ghost, before raised up and brought forth. He is quickened into life, and under that quickening sees, feels, trembles, cries, groans, begs, and sues for mercy; every faculty of his renewed mind is alive and open to the things of God. Never do we pray, read, hear, feel so much the power of eternal things as when the Lord by His Spirit and grace is first pleased to quicken us into this spiritual life. But no *resurrection* yet; the quickening precedes.

ii. But as, when the breath of the Holy Ghost, so to speak, quickened the body of Christ as it lay in the sepulchre, it was but a preparation for the raising of that dead body from the tomb, so the quickening operations of God the Holy Ghost in the heart of a child of God are but preparatory to his being raised up together with Christ. Christ's body did not lie in the tomb, though it was alive in the tomb; so those whom God has quickened and who are still lying in the tomb of sin, misery, and wretchedness, but are sighing, suing, and begging for mercy at His hands, will certainly be brought out. Christ's body was not left there when it was quickened,

neither will any of you that are quickened be left in your sin and misery, in your condemnation and guilt. The same divine operation that quickened you into spiritual life will bring you out of this state of concern and anxiety into the resurrection life of Christ, as was done in the case of His body when He rose out of the tomb.

Now, when the power of God is put forth in the soul; when mercy reaches the heart; when Christ is revealed, His word applied, and it comes forth out of the dark tomb in which it has lain, like Lazarus, bound with napkins, and yet alive; when the door of hope thus is set open, and the soul is raised up to believe, hope and love, then it is "raised up together with Christ." The resurrection of Christ was not merely the grand testimony that God put upon Him as His dear Son, for He was declared to be "The Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead," but He was "raised also for our justification;" and we rose in Him if we believe on His name. All the elect of God rose with Him; for they are "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." When He died they died; when He rose again they rose again; and as they rose virtually in the person of the Son of God when He rose triumphant from the tomb, so, when the Holy Ghost applies to the heart and conscience the benefits and blessings of His death and resurrection, He raises them up and brings them out of the dark sepulchre into the open light of a glorious gospel day. And this is being "raised up together with Christ."

iii. And now we come to a third blessing of which the Apostle speaks, in connection with the resurrection of Christ. Jesus did not tarry upon the earth; He ascended up where He was before, and took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But when He ascended up on high, all the election of grace ascended with Him. He did not leave His members

behind upon earth, but He took them all virtually into heaven. And this is a pledge that they will one day be with Him in the realms of eternal bliss because they have already ascended with Him, as the members of His mystical body.

But this, in experimental manifestation, is the lifting up of the affections, the raising up of the soul to sit together with Christ in heavenly places. Sin, death, hell, and Satan, with all the misery and wretchedness we have brought upon ourselves—to have them all under our feet, as Christ now reigns, having put all enemies under His feet—to enjoy this is to sit with Christ in heavenly places. One of the last acts that God usually does for the soul is the lifting it up thus to sit with Christ in the anticipation of eternal glory. To see death dethroned, hell destroyed, sin abolished, and a glorious immortality reserved for the saints of God; to enjoy this in the sweet anticipation and blessed foretastes, so as to be in heaven before we get there—this is to sit down with Christ in heavenly places, by virtue of His sitting down there "at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Now, see what benefits and blessings spring out of a union with the Son of God. Why did God quicken your soul? Because you tried to make yourself better? Because you were sick of sin and the world, and wanted to be a good man or a good woman? Away with such paltry ideas of the grace of God! Oh! to introduce such petty peddling into the gospel of Jesus Christ is to cast contempt on the Majesty of heaven and on the grand truths revealed in the Scripture, as with a ray of light. Why did He quicken you? Because you were a member of Christ. Why were you raised up to "a good hope through grace"? Why did mercy, peace, and pardon flow into your soul? Why were you brought out of misery and death into the light of God's countenance, and had a precious Christ revealed to your heart? Because in the day when the Son of

God rose triumphant from the tomb, you, as a member of His mystical body, rose there and then with Him. Why are you sometimes privileged to have your affections on things above, attain any victory over sin, death, hell and the grave, find your enemies put under your feet, and look forward at times with a sweet anticipation of eternal joys? Because, as a member of Christ's mystical body, you have already ascended, and are already sitting at the right hand of God with Christ, who is sitting as the head of His body there.

Oh! what beauty and blessedness shine forth in the gospel when we view it connected with the Person and work of the Son of God! Take the doctrines of grace isolated from the Person of Christ: they are scattered limbs; there is no beauty in them; but view the truths of the gospel, in connection with the Person and work of the Son of God—what a heavenly light, what a divine glory, is cast upon every truth connected with His sacred Person, atoning blood, finished work, and dying love! This is the way to receive the gospel: not as a thing of shreds and patches, a mere collection or scheme of certain doctrines floating up and down God's Word, as waifs and strays from a stranded ship; but as one harmonious gospel, full of grace, mercy, and truth, impregnated with divine blessedness, and all connected with, all springing out of, the Person of the God-man. How it seems to lift us up for a time, while the feeling lasts, above sin, misery, and wretchedness, to view our completeness in Christ, to see our interest in His finished work, to behold ourselves members of His mystical body—to triumph in His holy triumphs—to rejoice in His victories, and to ascend with Him above the din and stir of this dim spot that men call earth. As one might rise out of a London fog into a pure atmosphere, and bask on some mountain-top in the bright beams of the sun, so the dear saint of God, when he is privileged to read his title clear, see his name in the book of life, feel the love of God in

his heart, and rejoice in Christ, is lifted up above the fog and smoke of this dim spot, and sitting with Christ in heavenly places, he feels a sweet victory over every foe, internal, external, and infernal. And there is no other way whereby we can get out of it. Like a man in the London fog, struggling on with fog in the east, west, north, south, fog and smoke all around; so it is whilst we are struggling onward with sin and self; north, south, east, and west, there is nothing but fog, fog, deep and dense. We must be raised out of it to the mountain-top, and this only can be by being lifted up by a sweet testimony of interest in the blood and love of the Son of God. This lifts up, this lifts out; this gives strength, and this alone will give victory; and so far as we fall short of realizing these precious things, we grope for the wall like the blind, and stumble in desolate places like dead men. It is true that for the most part the saints of God only have a little of these blessed things from time to time, just brought in and taken away, but sufficient to taste their sweetness, to know their beauty, to see their glory, and therefore sufficient, whilst they last, to help them onward in their course, and keep them struggling on, till they reach that eternal glory.