

THE WORD OF GOD'S GRACE

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London,
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"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." Acts 20:32

I do not know a more affecting portion of God's word than that which is contained in **Ac 20:17-38**. There are two verses especially which one of tender feelings can scarcely read without the tears stealing to his eyes: "And they all wept sore, and fell upon Paul's neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more." What tender affection is displayed on both sides! what sincerity shines through the whole address of Paul! what noble simplicity! what zeal for God's glory! what real desires for the spiritual welfare of those with whom he was parting! Surely if crimson shame could ever cover her cheek, Infidelity must be put to the blush, if she could but read this striking portion of God's word, and then deny there is stamped upon it every mark of genuineness, and an indescribable truthfulness and reality, which so conspicuously shine through every line.

But there is something far deeper in Paul's address to the elders of the church at Ephesus than natural pathos, or even the noble disinterestedness which forms in it so prominent a feature, that we should think even a natural man with tender feelings could scarcely read his parting words without some emotion in his heart. Apart from all this, though in itself unspeakably beautiful, when we read it in the light of the Spirit, we see contained in it a fund of spiritual and

experimental truth, and especially in the verses which form my text.

In this way, then, with God's blessing, I shall consider the words before us this evening; not making any formal divisions, but taking them up as they lie before me, and looking up to the Lord that he would be to me mouth and wisdom, and enable me so to speak from them, that God may have the glory, and his people the profit and comfort.

I.—For the space of three years had the apostle Paul laboured at Ephesus: and during that time he had warned the disciples night and day with tears. He thus clearly manifested that their spiritual interests lay very close to his heart: that he was bound to them by the strongest ties of union and affection. Carrying. Then, in his own breast, a deep sense of his weakness and depravity: but at the same time experimentally knowing the rich supplies of God's grace, and how the strength of Christ is made perfect in weakness—while he sorrowed, in seeing beforehand the snares, trials, afflictions, and temptations that lay in their path, yet was he encouraged by knowing the rich provisions of covenant mercy and love.

Arriving therefore at Miletus on his way to Jerusalem, he sends to Ephesus **about thirty miles distant**, and calls the elders of the church, wishing to lay before them the things of God. These elders were the pastors, or ministers, whom "the Holy Ghost had made overseers" **literally, "bishops"** over the flock, "to feed the church of God which he had purchased with his own blood." But Paul looked forward with prophetic eye into the future, and saw that "after his departing grievous wolves would enter in among them, not sparing the flock." He saw the cloud of persecution which was about to burst upon them; he heard the distant howlings of "grievous

wolves," which should soon "enter in among them," those wolves that for a time had been kept back by a divine hand, but were ready to spring upon the flock, and, if God did not interpose, tear them to pieces.

But there was something that lay still closer to his heart. Not merely did he see the **external** dangers awaiting them; his prophetic eye not only descried the dim form of ravening wolves on the distant mountains, but it looked into the very centre, the very body of the church itself. And what a sight there met his eye! He saw that even out of this little body—out of this feeble flock, **most cutting stroke of all!** out "of **their own selves** men would arise speaking perverse things:" and **their object being to set themselves at the head of part** would "draw away disciples after them."

Looking thus at the church of Ephesus, and seeing external and internal dangers drawing near, he knew and felt that nothing but the power of God could keep them. Feeling, then their interest so warm upon his heart, he says. "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." But this feeling, doubtless, was in his mind. 'Of what use are my exhortations? Can you keep them? Are you **able** to watch? Can you preserve yourselves? Can **you** protect the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers? No.' Deeply acquainted with the helplessness of the creature, he turned away as it were from them, and as if despairing of all human strength or wisdom, he took them up in his arms, and laid them down at the feet of God himself. When he had warned them to the utmost of his power: after the tears had flowed in copious streams down his cheeks; after he had

exhausted every topic of exhortation: then, feeling the nullity of all without God's special blessing, he tenderly adds, "Now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

The apostle was well acquainted with the **sinfulness** of the creature. He knew by painful and personal experience the fountain of evil that dwells in a sinner's bosom, and how that evil fountain perpetually sends forth its corrupt streams. He knew, therefore, that this inward stream of evil, but for the grace of God, would break forth and sweep away every dam that could be formed against it in their own strength. And is not this our feeling too, if we have any knowledge of the fountain of wickedness that we carry within? Has it not broken through all resolutions, all tears, all sighs, all vows, all promises? Has not sin been so strong in our carnal mind as effectually to break through every wall that nature could build, and flow over every dam that human arm could set up? Knowing, then, their **sinfulness** as depraved creatures, he lays them down at the footstool of sovereign grace.

He also knew their complete **helplessness**: not only that they were sinful, deeply sinful: wicked, desperately wicked: but helpless, thoroughly helpless. He knew that he might warn them night and day with tears: that he might spend his breath and life in exhorting them to live to God's glory, and to watch against every inward and outward enemy. But he was well convinced, from personal experience, of the **helplessness** of the creature; and therefore, as the tender mother takes her helpless babe, and puts it into the cradle out of which it cannot fall, so he takes them up in his arms, and lays them in the cradle of mercy, in the ark of the covenant—as safe as the ark of Noah, when "the Lord had shut him in."

He knew also, that they were, for the most part **little acquainted with the deceit of the enemy**; that they had too little experience of the snares that Satan was laying for their feet; too little knowledge of the power and prevalence of besetting sins. Knowing, therefore, by his own experience the perils of the spiritual campaign; not being "ignorant of Satan's devices," he commends them in an especial manner to the eyes and heart of the great Captain of their salvation, putting them as it were into his tent and under his banner.

But, leaving this figurative language, we may enquire, **how** he commends them to God?

1. First, **as to a kind Parent**. Where should the child be taken but to the father's arms? Is not the father its natural guardian, bound to it by the closest, strongest ties? The father's eye, the father's heart, the father's arm, all concur in its protection. The earthly tie of parent and child, with all its tender affectionate love, is but a representation of the heavenly tie between God and his people. He is their Father and their God. And thus the Lord sent to comfort his mourning disciples: "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" **Joh 20:17**.

2. He would commend them also to his **omniscient eye**. We know little of ourselves, and less of one another. We know not our own wants, what is for our good, what snares to avoid, what dangers to shun. Our path is bestrewed with difficulties, beset with temptations, surrounded with foes, encompassed with perils. At every step there is a snare, at every turn an enemy in wait. Pride digs the pit, carelessness bandages the eyes, carnality drugs and intoxicates the senses, the lust of the flesh seduces, the love of the world

allures, unbelief and infidelity paralyse the fighting hand and the praying knee, sin entangles the feet, guilt defiles the conscience, and Satan accuses the soul. Who under these circumstances can come alive out of the battle? Who can "stand every storm, and live at last?" Only he who walks under that all-seeing eye which never slumbers nor sleeps, "the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." "Kept by the mighty power of God." "The Lord is thy keeper." "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

3. He commended them further to his **all-powerful hand**. The eye to watch, the hand to guide and protect. "I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms." "When I said my foot slippeth, thy mercy held me up." "Underneath are the everlasting arms." We cannot stand alone. Not a right step can we take except as held up and guided by almighty power. This made the saints of old cry, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." "Keep me as the apple of thine eye." "Leave not my soul destitute." In commending them therefore to God, he commends them not only to the eye that never slumbers, but to the hand that never droops.

4. But, above all, he would commend them to the **affectionate, loving heart** of God. Thence comes the watchful eye, thence the protecting hand. Love, eternal love, unchangeable love, is the fountain whence all the streams of mercy and grace flow down to the church, and every individual member of it. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." "Love never faileth." Paul might depart, wolves might arise, heresies might prevail, apostates might fall away, thick clouds might cover the church, all might be confusion without and within. But one thing would not fail the elect of God—the love that embraced them from eternity to eternity. In

commending them to God he would commend them therefore to that love which knows neither beginning nor end, increase, decay, or variation.

Thus did Paul commend them to God; and in this should every minister of the gospel imitate him. Every rightly-taught servant of the Lord, when he comes amongst, or leaves a people, never dares for a moment entertain the thought, that anything **he** can say can profit their souls. He comes, if he comes rightly, depending on God for a blessing to follow the word; and he leaves, if he leaves rightly, beseeching the Lord that a blessing may follow what has been spoken in weakness. Thus, no rightly-taught servant of the Lord can dare to go amongst the people of God trusting in his own wisdom or ability: but desires to bear them up in his arms before the Almighty, and look up with an eye of faith that the Lord would bless the word. In his inward thoughts he would "commend" them to God as alone able to work in them that which is well-pleasing in his sight.

II.—But not only did Paul thus "commend" them "to God" he commended them also in an especial manner "to **the word of his grace.**" There is a difference between "grace." and "the word of his grace." Nothing but grace can save the soul: nothing but superabounding grace can blot out and hide from the view of justice our aggravated iniquities. But "the word of his grace" is that word which brings this grace into the heart—which communicates life and power to the soul—which the Spirit by his inward teaching and testimony seals on the conscience—and by which he reveals and sheds abroad that favour of which he testifies. This is what the Lord's people want. It is "the word of grace" that reaches their soul. It is not reading of grace in God's word that brings peace into their hearts; it is "the word of his grace," when he is pleased

to speak that word with a divine power to their souls, that brings salvation with it.

Now, the Lord's people are continually in those trying states and circumstances, out of which nothing can deliver them but "the word of God's grace." If the soul has to pass through severe trials, it is not hearing of grace that can deliver it out of them. If it be beset with powerful temptations, it is not reading about grace that can break them to pieces. But "the word of his grace," when the Lord himself is pleased to speak with his own blessed lips, and apply some promise with his own divine power, supports under trial, delivers from temptation, breaks snares to pieces, makes crooked things straight and rough places plain, brings the prisoner out of the prison-house, and takes off the yoke by reason of the anointing.

Thus, when the apostle had said, "I commend you to God," he does not leave them there; but he takes them on to the spot where they would have some communication of God's grace to their heart, where there would be some manifestation of his favour to their souls, some special dealings with their consciences. It is as though he was not satisfied with laying them at God's feet. He commends them to his "grace," and specially to "the word of his grace" in their souls. If I may use such a figure, we may fancy a mother in distressed circumstances **I condemn the deed, though I use the illustration**, who is not able to sustain her infant: she takes it. therefore, and lays it at a rich man's gate: she watches the door to see it open, and the infant taken in. She has no relief till she sees the servant come and take the babe safely in. As long as the child is lying outside, anxiety fills her bosom; but when the door is opened, and the child safely housed, the object of her maternal solicitude is accomplished. So the apostle takes the church, as the

mother might take her babe, and lays it at the Lord's feet. But "the word of his grace" takes the child up into his house and heart, opens the door of his bosom, and spreads the skirt of love over the infant cast out in the open field in the day that it was born. Ye trembling ones at the footstool of mercy, is not this what your souls are longing after? To be merely brought to the footstool of mercy does not satisfy you. To be merely commended in prayer to God does not ease your anxious heart. But when "a door of hope" is opened in the valley of Achor; when the Lord speaks a word of peace to your soul, applies his gracious promises to your heart; through the word of life communicates grace, and blesses the soul with a taste of his favour and mercy, then your desire is accomplished.

III.—But speaking of this "word of his grace," the apostle says, it is **"able to build you up."** A foundation had been laid in their hearts; they had been brought off the sandy bottom of self; their Babel righteousness had been dashed to pieces, and its brick and slime scattered to the four winds of heaven. Christ had been laid, by the blessed Spirit, as a foundation in their souls. To him they had come as poor wretched sinners: on him they had laid hold; his Person they had viewed by the eye of living faith; his blood they had felt to be exceedingly precious; under his righteousness they had sheltered themselves; a measure of his dying love had been shed abroad in their hearts. This placed them upon a solid foundation—the Rock of Ages! On him therefore they stood, and "out of his fulness received grace for grace."

They were then to be built up upon this. And there was but one thing which could so build them up—"the word of God's grace." Why? Because we really have nothing in our hearts from first to last spiritually good, but what "the word of God's grace" communicates. It is by "the word of God's grace" we

are first brought off the sandy foundation: it is by "the word of God's grace" we are laid upon the Rock of Ages; it is by "the word of God's grace" that every stone is fixed in the spiritual building; and it is by "the word of God's grace" that the headstone is at last brought forth with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it!"

Now, this is a lesson, which usually we have to learn very painfully. We are very eager to put our hands to work. Like Uzzah, we must needs prop up the ark when we see it stumbling; when faith totters, we must come to bear a helping hand. But this is prejudicial to the work of God upon the soul. If the whole is to be a spiritual building; if we are "living stones" built upon a living head, every stone in that spiritual temple must be laid by God the Spirit. And if so, everything of nature, of creature, of self, must be effectually laid low, that Christ may be all—that Christ, and Christ alone may be formed in our heart, the hope of glory. How many trials some of you have passed through! how many sharp and cutting exercises! how many harassing temptations! how many sinkings of heart! how many fiery darts from hell! how many doubts and fears! how much hard bondage! how many galling chains! how often has the very iron entered into your soul! Why? That you may be prevented from adding one stone by your own hands to the spiritual building.

The apostle tells us, that "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid," even Jesus Christ. He then speaks of those who build "wood, hay, and stubble," as well as of those who used "gold, silver, and precious stones;" and that the "wood, hay, and stubble" must be burned with fire. It is after the Lord has laid a foundation in the sinner's conscience, brought him near to himself, made Jesus precious to his soul, raised up hope and love in his heart, that he is so apt to take materials God never recognises, "wood, hay, stubble," and

rear thereby a flimsy superstructure of his own. But this gives way in the trying hour: it cannot stand one gust of temptation. One spark of the wrath to come, one discovery of God's dread majesty, will burn up this "wood, hay, and stubble," like straw in the oven. The Lord's people, therefore, have to pass through troubles, trials, exercises, and temptations, doubts and fears, and all that harassing path that they usually walk in, that they may be prevented from erecting a superstructure of nature upon the foundation of grace—"wood, hay and stubble" upon the glorious mystery of an incarnate God.

But "the word of God's grace" is "**able**" to build them up. Have you suffered from temptation, and been delivered out of it? It was "the word of God's grace" that built you up. Have you been in severe trial, and the Lord has blessed you in it, and brought you out of it? It was "the word of God's grace" that built you up. Have you been entangled in some error, and the Lord snatched you out of that error by applying some portion of his truth to your soul? It was "the word of God's grace" that built you up. Have you been entangled in the lusts of the flesh, cast down by some snare of the devil, and the Lord has delivered you out of it? It was "the word of his grace" that built you up. We are not built up by fleshly holiness, by creature piety, by long and loud prayers, by the doings and duties of the flesh; no, nor even by sound doctrines floating in our brain; but by "the word of God's grace" applied with a divine power to the heart.

But that very "word of grace" is made suitable to our souls, for the most part, only as we are brought into those circumstances to which it is adapted. Is not grace free favour? and is not "the word of God's grace" the instrument through which this free favour is manifested? Can I then learn the heights, the depths, the superboundings, the

freeness, the sovereignty, the almighty power of grace, except by wading into those circumstances to which it is suitable? Must I not feel a guilty sinner before grace can be sweet? Must I not know the aboundings of internal sin before the superaboundings of God's grace can be precious? Must I not know something of that fountain of evil, which I carry within, and have my breast laid bare with its hidden abominations before I can know the grace that covers, pardons, and heals? And this grace I can only know by "the word of God's grace;" in other words, by the sweet manifestation, unctuous application, and divine revelation of the gospel of the grace of God.

Thus the apostle did not lead them to rest upon their own strength and wisdom, but to live upon the fountain-fulness of the great and glorious risen Mediator. This is the only way to know anything of grace. I may hear of grace all my days, and yet die ignorant of it. I may sit under ministers who preach nothing but grace, and yet be as devoid of it in my heart as Satan himself. But if "the word of God's grace" drop into my heart: if the Lord the Spirit be pleased to send his own precious truth into my soul, and through that word to communicate a sense of his superabounding grace—then, and then only, is it mine. Nor is there any other way of being spiritually built up. Doctrines cannot build you up: corruptions cannot build you up: doubts and fears cannot build you up: trials and exercises cannot build you up: temptations cannot build you up: heavy losses in providence, and cutting afflictions in grace, cannot build you up. They pull down: they lay low: they disperse the "wood, hay, and stubble" to the winds: they leave you in a wild, naked desert, in a waste howling wilderness. But it is "the word of God's grace," communicated to the soul out of Christ's inexhaustible and divine fulness, that alone builds up. All

other building is a baseless fabric, a house of cards, a castle in the air, a mist driven before the wind.

IV.—But there was something still further: **"And to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."**

There is a people, then, that are sanctified, that is,

1. set apart in the covenant, in God's eternal decrees: and
2. sanctified by the work of the blessed Spirit upon their hearts, whereby they are made meet for "the inheritance of the saints in light." By the first they were separated by the original decree and purpose of God. This made them "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." To "sanctify" is to set apart as the special property of God. So God says to Moses, "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn" **Ex 13:2**, which he explains **Ex 13:12** as "a setting apart unto the Lord." So God sanctified the seventh day by setting it apart from the other days of the week as the Sabbath. This is the only original root and spring of holiness. Men do not make themselves holy by an act of their own free choice, and by that holiness recommend themselves to God and obtain heaven. That is popery.

Holiness does not consist in a certain amount of duties to be performed, prayers to be said, sacraments and ordinances to be attended, alms to be given, passions to be subdued, garb to be worn, tears to be shed. Fruit to be fruit must grow upon a tree, be fed by sap, be ripened by sun, be refreshed with showers, be a living product elaborated by a divine mechanism. Flowers and fruit may be modelled from wax, and so beautifully as to be scarcely distinguishable from genuine. But they want scent, sap, and taste. Such is human holiness—a modelled, painted, artificial imitation of "camphire and spikenard, calamus and cinnamon, and the pleasant fruits" that grow in the Beloved's garden. Christ is

the Holy One of Israel. The head of the church is holy, intrinsically, eternally such; the members are holy because united to that head. A holy head cannot have unholy members. Thus Christ is the church's sanctification, she being holy in his holiness, as well as righteous in his righteousness. This is the root. Thence comes personal, inward sanctification by the regenerating work of the Holy Ghost. He gives the new heart and new spirit: communicates holy desires, affections, breathings, enjoyments, with every gracious fruit, working repentance and godly sorrow for sin, brokenness of heart, and contrition of spirit, tenderness of conscience, faith, hope, and love, meekness, resignation, humility, prayerfulness, watchfulness, departing from evil, cleaving to all good; and all those outward fruits of righteousness, which are to the glory of God. This is gospel holiness, holiness as the especial gift and work of the Holy Spirit, the only true and acceptable holiness, and without which no man shall see the Lord. These that are thus sanctified have an eternal inheritance, being heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. All other holiness is the holiness of the cowl and the cloister, a monkish pharisaism, of which superstition is the root, ignorance the prop, pride the fruit, and the curse of God the end.

How different is that divine work and operation which melts your heart and breaks it, dissolves it, lays it low in adoration at his feet who loved you and gave himself for you. This is "an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." Those who were set apart in God's eternal purpose were chosen unto the enjoyment of this inheritance. These have the first-fruits of the Spirit, which "the word of God's grace" dropping into the heart, communicates. For this brings light, life, liberty, love, conformity to the image of Jesus, a renewal in the spirit of the mind, a separation from the world and all its perishing vanities and charms, and stamps upon the heart a

measure of Christ's blessedness. And all this wholly, solely, by "the word of God's grace." Does not this suit the sinner?

Supposing it were **God forbid it should be so for a moment!** that I must by my own exertions, in the first instance, bring grace into my heart, and thus lay the foundation; and that I, by my own exertions, must carry on the work, and so raise the superstructure; must I not fail, utterly fail? But when grace does all from first to last; when it is grace which wrote the names of God's people in the book of life; when grace gave them to Jesus to redeem; when grace in God's appointed time quickened their souls; when grace manifested the cleansing efficacy of Christ's blood to their conscience: when grace will bring them safely through all their trials and temptations; will perfect that which concerneth them, and must and will reign through righteousness unto eternal life; how suitable, how more than suitable is this to a poor, guilty sinner, who has nothing, and feels he has nothing in himself but rags and ruin! "The word of God's grace," in the hands of the Spirit, lays the foundation. "The word of God's grace" makes Jesus known in the everlasting gospel, and thus raises the superstructure; "the word of God's grace" bears through the arms of death, and thus puts on the coping-stone; and heaven's arches will eternally sound the praise of the glory of that grace which made them "accepted in the Beloved." Every living desire after the Lord; every realising sense of his grace and glory; every melting affection towards his lovely Person; every reception of him into the heart as the Christ of God; every act of faith, hope, or love; every breathing out of the soul into his bosom, is a sign, and more than a sign, an undeniable evidence of the grace of God being in a sinner's breast. And if the grace of God is in a sinner's breast, he is in Christ, one with Christ; and "the word of his grace" will build

him up more and more, and give him deeper draughts of his eternal "inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

There may be here some poor, tried, exercised, tempted children of God to whom this news seems almost too good to be true.

But whence proceed, what is the main subject of their trials and exercises? Is it not this? The evil heart that they carry in their bosom. Is it not the pride, unbelief, infidelity, darkness, temptations, doubts and fears, sins and iniquities, and the many burdens and difficulties which they have to encounter at every step? Hampered and burdened with so many inward and outward trials, they seem unable to realise either the grace that is in them, or the glory that awaits them. Their hands hang down, and their knees totter. But how suitable to such is "the word of God's grace"! Is not grace the very thing for them? Is there not a fountain-fulness of grace in the bosom of the Redeemer everflowing and overflowing? And does not this flow fully and freely through "the word of his grace," which they have in their hearts and hands? How else should it come to them but freely? Have they no grace but what they work for? And is grace dealt out cautiously, niggardly, stingily, like money from a miser's purse? No; God "giveth liberally, and upbraideth not: the grace of God, and the gift by grace, hath abounded unto many."

Jesus gives, as a King, "of his royal bounty," as Solomon to the Queen of Sheba. Be honest to yourselves; be honest to what God has given you. Have you never felt Jesus precious? Have you never poured out your heart at his feet? Have you never had a glimpse by faith of his lovely Person? Have you never felt anything of the efficacy of his atoning blood? never seen his suitability? never felt him near and dear to your soul? never tasted that spiritual-mindedness which is life and

peace? If you have, you have an "inheritance among all them which are sanctified." For how are we "sanctified"? Is it not by the word of truth? as the Lord said, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." And have you not at times felt the word of truth to produce holy, heavenly sensations and emotions in your heart? Is not this sanctification?

But you say, 'I cannot deny that I have experienced this;' but "if so, why am I thus? why so dark for weeks and months together? why so cold in my affections? why so dead in my frame? why so often shut up in bondage? why so harassed by Satan? why so plagued by an army of doubts and fears? why is the Lord so absent? why sin so present? why does he shut out my prayer? why does he leave me to stumble in darkness like those that long for the morning?" To these complaints may we not too often reply, "Hast thou not procured this to thyself? The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save. nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear: but our iniquities separate between us and God, and our sins make him hide his face from us." Are there no Achans in the camp? no golden wedge, nor Babylonish garment under the tent? no secret sin indulged, no idol set up in the heart? But if matters are straight here. it may be to shew you your weakness: to burn up your "wood, hay, and stubble?" to bring you more needy and naked to his feet: to cut up your self righteousness and carnal wisdom: and break to pieces the right arm of creature strength.

Those very exercises, doubts, fears, temptations, difficulties, and burdens that your soul is so harassed by, are to empty, that God may fill; to strip, that he may clothe; to bring down, that he may raise up; to make you nothing, that Christ may be all in all. Have you never had something in your soul that felt like this—that the lower you sank in self, the more

suitable and precious the Saviour appeared? Have there been no moments when, amidst your exercises, there was that coming in of light and life, liberty and love, that you were able to clasp Jesus in the arms of a living faith, and felt that you could die in peace under such feelings? You have had the inheritance. What is this but the inheritance—the very kingdom of God in the soul, which "is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost?" And what brought it to you? Your promises, vows, resolutions, exertions, doings, duties? No; it was "the word of God's grace:" some sweet promise just suitable to your case; some portion of scripture opened up to your heart; something which you almost put away, because you felt how undeserved it was for God even to look upon such a wretch as you. Yet this "word of God's grace" it was that brought this foretaste, this pledge of the inheritance above into your soul below.

If, then, you can find in your soul's experience any of these divine marks, these "white stones," love tokens, betrothment pledges, it is well with you for life and death, time and eternity! Let me hold up again these tokens of espousal, these bridal rings, and compare them with your experience. If, then, Jesus was ever precious to you; if you ever felt the efficacy of his atoning blood in your conscience: if ever your soul was melted down in sweet affection at his feet; if ever he blessed you with one word of grace from his own lips, he has given you "an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." If you have had heaven here, you will have heaven hereafter. If you have ever seen Jesus by the eye of faith below, you will see Jesus hereafter by the eye of sight above.

With what better words can I, then, leave you at the close of my present visit than what the apostle used upon an almost

similar occasion'? Not that I dare for a moment compare myself with him: or indeed you with them: yet, in our feeble way, with what better words can I take my leave of you than to "commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified"? And may this be our increasing experience—to hang more simply, more fervently on the God of all grace, and to receive from time to time sweet communications of "the word of his grace" into our heart. And then, as we have met here around the throne of grace, we shall meet hereafter around the throne of glory; as we have rejoiced in "the word of his grace" here, and felt a measure of the "inheritance of the saints" below, it is a prelude, an earnest, a foretaste of the eternal weight of glory above. There may the Lord bring us for his own glorious and precious Name's sake.