

THE GLORY OF GRACE

NO. 2763

A SERMON

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

ON A THURSDAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1869.

“The glory of His grace.”

Ephesians 1:6.

GOD is essentially glorious; even were there no eyes to behold Him, no lips to hymn His praise, no intelligent creatures to obey Him, He would be infinitely glorious in Himself. Yet, nevertheless, God chooses to exhibit His glory that He may get praise out of the hearts of intelligent beings, who, beholding the varied and wonderful manifestations of the exceeding riches of His grace, may be compelled, with joy and gratitude, to glorify Him. In this sense also, God is glorious; that is, glory is given unto Him—He is admired, He is beloved, He is adored. Every attribute of God has its glory, not only essential, but glory through its exhibition of Himself. God's power is glorious, as we all know, in the works of His hands. His skill, His wisdom, His benevolence—all these are to be seen in those works of nature, as we call them, which meet our eyes every day. God's justice is glorious, and we sometimes tremble to think how awfully glorious it is in the lowest pit of hell. We have, on the present occasion, however, not to talk about other attributes of God, but about this one—“the glory of His grace”; but while we are doing so, I must remark that we shall have to see, incidentally, how this grace, in itself glorious, really brings glory to all the other attributes. When God glorifies His grace, He glorifies His whole character; grace becomes a platform upon which all the perfections of Deity exhibit themselves; grace becomes a light which shines upon all the rest, and they, albeit bright enough in themselves, seem to be doubly bright when they glow in its brilliance.

Where every place is rich, one scarcely needs to strike out a pathway. Let me, however, ask you first to notice *the glory of divine grace as it has been displayed*, and then, secondly, I will give you a few words on *the qualities for which it is distinguished*.

I. In the first place, then, let us meditate on THE GLORY OF DIVINE GRACE AS IT HAS BEEN DISPLAYED.

Grace has been displayed, of old, *in the great council chamber*, where all the attributes of God sat in solemn conclave to devise a way by which God should be glorified. Foreknowledge, as one of the attributes of God, prophesied that man, if made fallible, would sadly fall. Justice, therefore, arose, and thundered forth his word that, if man fell, and transgressed the Creator's command, he must be punished. Grace, however, asked whether it could not be possible that man should be saved, and yet justice should be satisfied. Wisdom, infinite Wisdom, answered the question, and God's own Son was the answer. He promised that, in the fullness of time, He would become a man for us, and, for our redemption, bear the whole weight of Jehovah's justly merited wrath, that the vessels of mercy might be secured. Now, albeit that all the other attributes displayed themselves in the council chamber, when our soul, in holy reverence, dares venture into that once secret, but now revealed counsel of the Most High, we are compelled to admire all the attributes of God, but most of all, His grace. Why, it seems to me that grace presided at this congress, that it was grace that pressed man's suit, it was grace that inspired wisdom, that it was grace that invited wisdom to be its counselor, that it was grace that defended man when justice might have spoken against him; grace was our advocate. Christ Jesus, who was grace itself, of old, as He is now, stood then as the Wonderful, the Counselor; and He devised the plan, pleaded our cause, and promised to work it out. The glory of grace, as it sits with its crown upon its head in the council chamber of eternity, is a subject well worthy of your devout reflection and quiet meditation.

But now the council is over, and grace steps forth to be glorified in another manner. Now *it glorifies itself in its gifts*. See how grace gives to man blessings countless in number, and priceless in value, scattering them along his pathway as if they were but stones, while each is so precious that heaven itself can alone tell its worth. At last, after having given man blessings through long ages, grace comes up to Calvary, and there gives its last—no, its first, its all, its grandest gift. Grace gives up the incarnate Son of God to die. He gives up His own life, and bows His head upon the cross. There may be much of shame and ignominy about the cross—assuredly there is, for there we see sin punished; but how much there is of glory and of majesty! For there we see grace triumphant over itself—grace in the heart of Christ leading Him to save others while Himself He cannot save. We talk of these things, nowadays, as household words, but not thus do the angels speak concerning grace glorified in the person of the dying Son of God. Not thus did we think when, for the first time, we saw Him to be ours in the day of our sore trouble and sorrow. We shall not think so slightingly of grace, as I fear we sometimes do now, when we shall see His face without a veil between, and then shall know what wondrous grace that was which made that glorious face become marred with sorrow, and bowed that glorious head divine to the depths of the grave. Grace, in its highest glory, is to be seen best on Calvary, but I think it is rather to be seen and felt than to be talked of. My feeble tongue declines to bear the burden of a theme so weighty. I cannot stretch the wings of my imagination, and rise to the height of this grand argument. I cannot adequately utter the praises of that grace which is to be seen in the dying Son of God on Calvary.

Since then, beloved, you have had to glorify grace in its continued gifts. You have found that He, who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, has with Him also freely given to us all things. What debtors you and I are! As Rutherford would have said, we are drowned debtors; we are head over heels in debt; we are sunken fathoms deep in an ocean of indebtedness to God. How much do you owe my Lord? Take your pen, and sit down quickly, and reckon up the amount. Ah! You may sit down quickly, but you will not rise up speedily, for the full account you never can write. There are no scales in which to weigh those ponderous blessings; earth has no coin by which to represent their value. Talk of millions and of billions—we must get into the inconceivable before we can estimate the infinite, the unutterable value of those gifts which Jesus Christ continually gives to us, which grace pours into our lap from the cornucopia of love.

Now we go a little further. We have had God's grace in the council chamber, we have had His grace in its gifts; and in both these things we may well speak of "the glory of His grace." Now we will speak of *grace in its triumphs*. It is a strange thing that love should be a warrior, and that grace should fight; but when grace came to make us gracious, it found us graceless, and averse to grace. The door was shut when Jesus came, though His hand and heart were open. Jesus Himself burst open the door, and stormed the passage into the heart of man. When mercy comes to bless, it finds us bent to curse. We will not receive the proffered gift; we reject the mercy, and grace must overcome our will. It must lead us captives in silken bonds, or otherwise it cannot bless us. Man, while his will is free, is graceless; it is only when his will is bound by fetters of sovereign grace that he is gracious at all. If there is such a thing as free will, Luther truly hit the mark when he called free will a slave. It is only our will in bonds that is truly free. Our will constrained, ranges at liberty; when grace binds it, then indeed is it free, and only then, when the Son has made it free.

Think, my brethren, of the battles which grace has had with men, and what glory it has gained! For, remember, it has never once been defeated. When grace has come into the heart, there may have been a long struggle, but it has always ended in a victory. In your case and mine, how stern has been the fight! Do you not remember well the day when Jesus met you by the way, and He said to you, "Soul, have you no interest in Me?" Do you recollect how you spat in His face, and passed by Him, and made a jest of the Crucified? Do you remember another time when He sent His black messengers, sickness and sorrow, and you lay upon your bed, and He came to you again, and you uttered words to Him which looked like truth, but, alas! They were but lying, deceptive words; and you turned your face to the wall, and you vowed repentance, but you did not repent, and He went His way? You use no other friend as ill as you have used Him. And do you recollect how you were determined to be lost—how your soul set itself desperately on mischief? But you have not had your way. Grace has overcome you, and here you sit, a captive—

*"A willing captive to your Lord,
To sing the triumphs of His Word."*

Ah! This always delights me when I think about preaching the gospel, that grace must be a conqueror where God sends it forth. We may sing, in the language of one of those good Welsh hymns, which I think, when translated, runs something like this—

*“Ride forth, O Jesus!
Hell trembles at You,
Earth cannot withstand You,
Man’s heart will break before You;
Go forth, and win the day.”*

And when Jesus goes forth, He does win the day; the man may kick and struggle, but if his name is written in the Lamb’s book of life, he will be obliged to yield. If thus the heavenly mandate runs, “Almighty grace, arrest that man,” that man in God’s time shall be arrested by the strong hand of sovereign grace; and he, converted, changed, and made a new man in Christ Jesus, shall be one of grace’s willing captives, a trophy of its omnipotence.

And then, my dear brethren, as we speak of the triumphs of grace, we must not forget the multitudes of triumphs grace has had in each soul. If you could bear in your body a mark for every triumph that grace has had in you, and if every mark were a jewel, would you not be covered from head to foot therewith? And then it is not merely one man in whom grace has worked, but think, of the countless myriads of souls that grace has overcome. It has gone into every land, into every sort of habitation, and it has secured its trophies. Oh! What a glorious day will that day be when Christ, who is grace incarnate and embodied, shall enter into heaven with all His blood-bought saints, and shall cry, “Here am I, Father, and the children whom You have given Me. Here are they whom I have rescued from the jaws of the lion and from the paws of the bear. Not one of them is missing; triumphant have I been over all their foes, and I safely bring them to their promised rest.” “The glory of His grace” is seen, then, in its triumphs.

But let me remark, further, that *the glory of divine grace is to be seen more fully by and by*, when the whole plan of grace shall be worked out. I take it that we have none of us a very clear idea of what the full design of divine grace is. We say it is the blessing of the elect; it is, moreover, the indirect blessing of the world through these elect ones; or, as good Elisha Coles has said, and we endorse his saying, “Grace gives some good things to all men, though it gives all good things to some men.” But I take it that we have not, any of us, fully realized the design of God’s grace; we all have some little confusion in our minds. That confusion may be, probably, a better insight of what God is doing than if we were able to put it into an orderly system. I doubt not that, in the millennial days which are yet to come, we shall see that God’s grace will be so wonderfully magnified at the winding up that our little hearts have never thought of how grandly the scene shall end. At present, I see the world continually go on in its wickedness. It seems to me that justice is rather magnified than grace, for multitudes are daily descending into hell. But there are happier days to come, and a brighter season, when Messiah the Prince shall stand a second time among the sons of men. Then shall the earth ring with His praise; then shall myriads of men and women be made to know Him; then shall they come and bow down before Him, and all people shall call Him blessed; and then the enormous multitudes shall swell the roll of those chosen ones to such a marvelous degree that, at the winding up, it shall be fully known and seen that there is a number that no man can number whom Christ has redeemed out of all people, and kindreds, and tongues. And when the multitudes of infants, and all the myriads of these elect ones who shall be brought in, shall be encompassed within the shining walls of heaven, then shall we see that the number of the saved infinitely surpasses the number of the lost; then shall we see that, though the gate was narrow, though the road was strait, yet the number of those who pass along it shall be immeasurably greater than the number of those who shall go in the other road, broad as it is, and wide though its gates may be. I do believe that the songs of heaven shall prevail over all the growls of hell. Satan shall not be triumphant. Christ shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied; and grace, when it counts up its numbers, shall laugh in the face of hell, and cry, “I am triumphant over you, the number of my trophies far exceeds the number of yours; for you, black tyrant, have done little in comparison with what I have accomplished. See, you have here and there a ruined soul; but I have multitudes of blood-bought ones, whom I have raised up to everlasting life and more than perfection, for it is the very perfection of Deity which I have given to them.”

II. Well now, having just run briefly over these things—you may think of them at your leisure more fully—I want to talk about the subject in another way for a little while. “To the praise of the glory of His

grace.” I take it that we may see the glory of this grace, if we notice THE QUALITIES FOR WHICH IT IS DISTINGUISHED.

Grace is glorious if we consider *its antiquity*. Grace is not a piece of new cloth put into an old garment. Grace is not an alteration which God made in His original plan; it is not some addition that He made because some unlooked-for catastrophe occurred. He foresaw the Fall from all eternity, and every iota of the plan of grace was devised of old. Before yon sun was created, long before he had been swaddled in mists; before the stars had known their resting places, and had sent the rays of their light through the thick darkness; long before the mountains knew their places, or the water was poured into its fountains, God had chosen His people, had set His heart of love upon them, had devised His plan, and chosen the objects that should be embraced by it. I love to think of grace in its antiquity. There are certain people who have a reverence for everything that is old—the Puseyite, for instance; he likes a thing because it used to be worn some six, seven, or eight hundred years ago. Now, I have a reverence for that which is old, I confess; but then it must be old enough. If a doctrine or a ceremony is as old as the time of Christ, I am content; but as to doctrinal truth, I can always rejoice if I can see the fact to be old as the everlasting hills. The geologist tells us that some rocks must have been fused myriads of years ago, and we tell him it may be so, but we are certain that the covenant of grace is older than the oldest of these things. They are but born yesterday infants, aged though they seem to be. But grace has hoary age upon its head. Its head and its hair are white like wool, as white as snow. Venerable for age is the grace of God, and the plan of grace is no new chapter of modern compilation, but it is old as God’s own eternity—an everlasting thing. O grace! You are from everlasting to everlasting.

Then, again, the glory of grace consists not only in its antiquity, but in *its immutability*. The grace of God, old though it is, has never changed. Many a mighty river has been dried up, and now over its dry bed men can walk. The very sea has changed. There are no furrows on its brow, but it has forsaken its channels, and now finds a resting place that is new to it. The very sun alters, everything grows dim with age; but grace flows on as it did at first. Its stream is just as deep, and its current just as mighty. There is no failing in grace, any more than there is any failing in God. And I may remark that it has never failed of its objects. No, grace runs in one direct stream, and it has never been made to wind about. The chosen vessels of mercy have been washed in that stream; it has not passed by a single one, nor has one more been washed by it than those chosen ones of old. Never, never can we permit the idea of the mutability of grace—grace given today, and taken away tomorrow. I repeat what I have often said. If grace could be given to a man temporarily, and then taken away from him, I cannot imagine a more awful malediction than that grace would really be. I would sooner perish as that fallen angel, that great sinner, Satan, than as one whom God had loved, if He did not love me forever; because, to give grace, and then to take it away, would be the most awful method of tantalizing that was ever known. Better for God to send no gospel if He did not send an everlasting one. The Arminian scheme of salvation is worse than nothing. I had rather have no revelation than believe it if, on that hypothesis, I am but tantalized, and tempted to hope that I may be saved, but it ends in blackness and darkness forever, because there is a condition annexed to it which I cannot fulfill, and there is something demanded of me which I cannot give. The grace of God, then, is greatly magnified in its immutability as well as in its antiquity.

And then, to turn to another view of it, grace derives great glory from *its freeness*. The grace of God is as free as the air we breathe. If any man here asks whether he may believe in Christ, my answer to him is—he not only may, but he is commanded to do so. If, as I have often declared to you, it is the command of God that we believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent, you are guilty of sin every moment that you live without faith in Christ. It is commanded of you; therefore you can clearly say you have a right to it; for any man has a right to obey a divine command. If we are commanded, we have a perfect right to come. He who commands us to come to the feast gives us, in that very command, the only permit we need. Oh! I would that men would believe in the freeness of divine grace.

I preach the sovereignty of divine grace, and desire to preach it with reverence before God and with faithfulness to man; but the freeness of grace is not inconsistent with the sovereignty of it. Albeit that none ever drink of that sacred fountain but those whom God sweetly constrains to drink; if men do not drink, the fault lies with them, and their blood will be on their own head forever. For thus cries the gospel, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” The grace of God is free; no preparation is needed before you can receive it, for God gives it even to men who do not ask for it: “I was found of them that

sought not after Me.” There is no preparation needed; I tell you, the preparation that you imagine is necessary would be just that which would disqualify you. Come to Jesus now; you are commanded to come just as you are. Oh, may divine grace, that gives the command, induce you to obey—may it sweetly constrain you to obey! Remember that there is no barrier between you and Christ, except your own depraved heart. If once you have the will, if God gives you the will to go to Christ, there is nothing that can keep you back, and nothing that should intimidate you from coming; for the cry is, “Whosoever will, let him come.” This I think to be one of the glories of divine grace—its freeness; but it is a glory which a great many cannot see. As soon as we touch upon it, some brother says, “Ah! He is not sound upon that point,” though, when we preached upon God’s sovereignty, he liked it well enough. With regard to the matter of soundness, I do not so much consider soundness as sense. I always think, if a thing is in Scripture, it little matters to me if it is not in men’s creed. They can alter their creed as quickly as they like; I shall not alter mine. I will just stand to what I always shall and always have preached, and take God’s Word as it stands, whether I can reconcile it with another part of God’s Word or not. One part of the glory of grace, then, consists in its freeness.

And now let me notice another thing. The glory of free grace will be found in *its benevolence*. What good has grace done? I will put it in another shape—What hurt has grace ever done? There is not a man in the universe who can blame grace for any hurt he has received by it. You know that a great public good is often a private evil; but while grace is often a public good, it is never a private evil. No one was ever injured by it. I love a gospel that hurts nobody. If there are none saved by it, at least they cannot point the finger at the gospel, and say, “That has destroyed me.” Their destruction lies with themselves. Grace scatters mercies, but never anything that is the reverse of good. Its path is that of a conqueror, but its garments are not stained with blood, except its own blood. It is true that it marches over the world, beating down every high look, and leveling every lofty thing. But, then, that is a blessing; for it is better to be leveled by grace than to be exalted by pride. Good, only good are you, O grace! You are a continually gushing fountain of mercy. Your stream is ever clear and unmixed. There is no adulteration here, or anything that is ill to man; but, as Milton says, “’Tis better still, and better still, and better still, in infinite progression.”

And now let me say, once more, what I think in my own soul will be one of the greatest glories of divine grace. I think it will be, if ever I shall *see the face of God with acceptance*. I have said, and say it again—

*“Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,
While heaven’s resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace.”*

You remember the story of the three wonders in heaven. The first wonder was, that we should see so many there we did not expect to see there; the second was, that we should miss so many we did expect to see there; but the third wonder would be the greatest wonder of all—to see ourselves there. Oh! When I hear people censuring and condemning their fellow Christians because they are not perfect—because they see some little fault in them—I think, do these people know that they are saved by grace, and that they have nothing which they have not received? I think, surely, if they knew how they received what they have, they would not be quite so hard with those who have not the blessing. When we feel right, my brethren, we always feel ourselves to be veritable beggars. No, the more right we come to be, the less we feel ourselves to be. That big letter I is so large with us all, pride is so interwoven into our nature, that I am afraid we shall never get it, pulled out until we are wrapped in our winding-sheets. But if there is anything that can cure it, I think it is the fact that it is all of grace. Heaven shall show us how gracious God has been to us; but on earth we shall never know the full value of the grace we have received. Let us continually sing—

*“Oh, to grace how great a debtor,
Daily I’m constrained to be!”*

And, then, as a consequence, let us walk humbly with our God. Let us always be giving glory to Christ, waiting for and expecting that happy day when we shall glorify Him with all His saints—when He shall come, in the glory of His Father, and all His holy angels with Him.

Brothers and sisters, will we not sing if we once get across the Jordan? Oh, what leaps for joy! What shoutings! What praise! What thanksgiving! Ah! My hoary-headed brother, you are saying, “Would to

God I were safely there!” And so you shall be before long. Ah, my dear young friend, you are saying, “Oh! What temptations I have to battle with! Would God that I were at rest!” Your rest may be nearer than you think it is; we are none of us sure how near we are to heaven. That trouble you are dreading may never come, that trial may never arrive, for Christ may come before the trial, and we may be caught up to dwell with Christ before it shall come. Let us just antedate the day by an hour or two. Ah! I shall soon be dying; time quickly fades away. Speed on, O Time! Roll on your wheels, and every year fly on apace! The shorter the road, the sooner I shall be with Him. The nearer I am to Jordan, the nearer am I to Canaan. Farewell, manna of the wilderness! Farewell, you fiery serpents and Amalekites! My soul shall cross the Jordan soon. I shall see the face of Him whom, though I have not yet seen, I do unceasingly adore—in whom I have a heaven on earth, and with whom I shall have an everlasting blessedness in that day when He calls me home to Himself.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
*EPHESIANS 4.***

Verse 1. *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called,—*

“You are called to be sons of God, you are called to be one with Christ, you are called to be kings and priests unto God; this is the highest possible vocation that anyone can have, so walk worthy of it.” O beloved, if we walk worthy of this vocation, what holy and noble lives we shall lead! The apostle so much desired godliness and holiness to be the characteristics of those to whom he wrote that he used a very strong term of entreaty: “I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called,—

2. *With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love;—*

“You are not called to bully others, to be lords over God’s heritage; you are called to be Christ-like, to be gentle and tender, ready to bear and to forgive all manner of wrong that may be done to you;”—

3. *Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

Some people seem as if they endeavored to break the unity of the Spirit, and to snap every sacred bond of love and Christian affection; be you not like unto them, but let Christ’s mind be in you; and with lowliness, and meekness, and long-suffering, endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

4-6. *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

If there were two lords, you might be divided into two parties; if there were two faiths, you might split up into two sections; if there were two baptisms, you might be right in having two denominations; if there were two fathers, there might be two families; if there were two indwelling spirits, there would be, and there must be, two sorts of people; but, in the true Church of Jesus Christ, there is “one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

7. *But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*

We have not all the same form of grace, and we cannot all perform the same service for the Savior; we differ very much from each other as to our abilities, and as to the positions which we can occupy; and our Lord intended it to be so.

8-10. *Wherefore He says, “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things).*

Paul could not help giving us this lesson by the way, that He that ascended was also He that first descended; and you may depend upon it that the man who will attain the highest honor in the Church of Christ is the man who descends, who lays aside all ambition, and all desire to be honored, and respected, and who is willing to be nothing. He who thus descends, shall surely ascend.

11. *And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*

Not all alike, not all apostles or prophets; and not all equals, for pastors may not be equal in rank with apostles. They are not all to do the same work, for all teachers cannot prophesy, neither does a prophet always pastorize, and watch over a flock. Jesus Christ gave different gifts—

12, 13. *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:*

Then, whatever spiritual gifts we have, they are not our own to use as we please; they are only entrusted to us that we may employ them to help our fellow Christians. Beloved brethren and sisters, we are one with Christ, and we are one with each other; and, therefore, we must not look every man upon his own things, but also upon the things of others; and it should be a question of the first importance to every Christian, "How can I best utilize myself for the benefit of the rest of the members of the Church?" Do not ask, "How can I benefit myself?" but let your inquiry be, "How can I be most profitable to my fellow Christians?" I have heard some professors say of a sermon that they could not feed under it; the discourse was very likely to be useful to the unconverted, but they could not bear it because they could not feed under it. Their idea seems to be that preaching must always be a spoon used for feeding them; but it is not so. The Word of God contains much spiritual nutriment especially suitable for the lambs of the flock. These men, who are strong, want meat, so they say that they do not enjoy what they hear, it is of no use to them. But are the babies in Christ's family never to be fed? Does not humanity itself teach us that, first of all, the weakest and feeblest should be cared for? Oh, for grace to be unselfish! There is such a thing as Christian selfishness; and, of all evil things in the world, it is the most unchristian. When the first and last concern of a man is his own salvation, his own comfort, his own advancement, his own edification, and nothing besides, he needs to be saved from such a selfish spirit as that.

14-16. *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

Every part of the body has its own special function; there are some secret vessels of which as yet the physiologists know very little. What may be the particular use of them has not yet been ascertained; but depend upon it, God has created no part of our body in vain; and, in like manner, in the mystical body of Christ, every Christian has his own office, his own work, something that he can do that nobody else can do; and our great objective should be to find out what that work is, and to give our whole strength to it, for the nourishing of the entire body of Christ.

17-19. *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling—*

That is a terrible expression: "past feeling"—

19-25. *Have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ; if indeed you have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that you put on the new man, which God created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying,—*

As a rotten, worn-out garment that you could not bear to wear,—

26. *Speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.*

Then, why should we lie one to another? Should one hand try to deceive the other hand? Should the eye mislead the foot? Surely, the union of one member with all the other members should ensure its truthfulness.

26. *Be you angry, and sin not:*

If you must be angry, (and you must, sometimes), take care that you do not sin when you are angry. It is rather a difficult thing to be angry, and not to sin; yet, if a man were to see sin, and not to be angry with it, he would sin through not being angry. If we are only angry, in a right spirit, with a wrong thing, we shall manage to obey the injunction of the apostle: "Be you angry, and sin not:"

26. *Let not the sun go down upon your wrath:*

Never let it out live the day, but forgive before the sun goes down.

27. *Neither give place to the devil.*

A man who harbors malice in his heart, invites the devil to come in, and keeps a place ready for him.

28. *Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor,—*

For laziness is generally the cause of theft. If a man would work for what he wanted, he would not be tempted to steal it. Paul carries his argument very far, “let him labor,”—

28. *Working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs.*

What a rise there is here—from a thief up to a giver to him that needs! This is what the grace of God does. Here is a man, who used to take his neighbor’s goods if he could; but, when grace transforms him, he actually gives a share of his own goods to his poor neighbor; that is a marvelous change.

29. *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth,—*

I have heard unthinking people say, “Well, if it is in your heart, you may as well speak it; it is better out than in.” I do not agree with them! If you had a barrel of whiskey in your house, that would certainly be a bad thing to be in your possession; but it would not do any hurt so long as you kept it unopened, so that nobody could get at it, for the mischief arises when people begin to drink it. Undoubtedly, it is an evil thing for you to have anything that is corrupt in your heart, but it will not be mischievous to other people until it begins to come out; so, “let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth,”—

29. *But—*

Since some communication is sure to come out of your mouth, let it be a good one,—

29-31. *That which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*

Especially take heed of that “evil speaking” against which the apostle warns you, for there are many people who cannot live without speaking; they must talk a great deal, and they often say that which is false; they invent evil, they twist an honest action, and impute wrong motives to the doer of it. A few such persons in a community can cause much of heartache and distress; they little know what servants of Satan they may become. God help us to put away all evil speaking, and all malice!

32. *And be you kind, one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you.*

That is, very freely, very often, very abundantly, very thoroughly, very heartily: “even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you,” so also do you.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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