TILL WE MEET AGAIN

NO. 1628

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."
Revelation 22:21

THE first saints could never be long without speaking of their Lord and Savior. He filled their hearts and therefore they must needs speak of Him. How ingeniously they bring Him in! When they commence an epistle, the salutation will be sure to bear His name. When they are in the midst of a letter, they lay down their pen and offer a prayer. And when they begin again it is with a benediction in which His name is prominent, or with a doxology ascribing glory unto Him, with the Father and with the Holy Ghost.

John's Book of Revelation is full of Christ. Its opening verse rings out the precious name, and the closing line which is now before us repeats the heavenly music. Is not the Lord Jesus the sum and substance, the glory of every vision seen in Patmos? May I not say of the Apocalypse, as John said of the New Jerusalem, "the Lamb is the light thereof"? Until He looses the seals and opens the roll, the book of John's prophecy is so folded up that no man shall understand it.

John could not finish his book without mentioning that name which was dearest of all names to him. As he puts aside his pen to write no more, he concludes with an invocation of blessing upon all the saints in every place—and this is the form of it—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

Paul is thought to have claimed the use of this benediction as his particular token—"in every epistle so I write." I am not sure that it is so, for I suspect that the apostle referred to his own large handwriting, and to the signature which he put to his letters. But still, according to many interpreters, Paul used this particular blessing as his private mark—the seal of the authenticity of a letter.

See the end of the epistles to the Corinthians and Thessalonians—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Certainly Paul used the words often, but perhaps, when Paul had been taken up, John deemed it right to adopt Paul's motto, and with it to set, as it were, his stamp and seal upon the last book of Revelation. It was a benediction which could not be engrossed by any one apostle, nor indeed by all the apostles put together. Paul made it his own, but John had equal right to use it. And it is now all the dearer to us because both these mighties employed it.

Brethren, the benediction before us is not only Paul's word and John's word—and the Bible's last word—but it is now the chosen word of all the ministers of Jesus Christ. Is not this the benediction with which we dismiss the faithful—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all"? So shall it remain until the Lord shall come a second time.

It is an expression suitable to the most gracious heart, a prayer wherewith the believer may vent his best wishes and express his most devout desires. Over you all at this time, in my own most humble but sincere manner, I would pronounce the benediction, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

If the Spirit shall help me, I would at this time first say, let us *consider this benediction*. And then, secondly, let us consider *its peculiar position*, for something can be learned therefrom.

I. First, then, let us CONSIDER THIS BENEDICTION. It divides itself into three parts, under these heads—What? How? And, to whom?

1. *What*? What is this which John desires when he says—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all"?

The word is *Charis*. I do not think any better translation could be given than "grace"—it is usually translated grace throughout the New Testament. Those who understand the Greek language thoroughly tell us that it has for its root "joy." There is joy at the bottom of *Charis*, or grace.

It also signifies favor, kindliness, and especially love. And I might, without violating the meaning of the Spirit, read the words thus—"The love of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." But inasmuch as love to unworthy creatures such as we are can only display itself in free favor—that is, grace—and we know that the term used is an accurate expression, we will let it stand as it is, only putting in a drop or two of the sweet honey of the love which lies within it.

John desires that we may have the free favor of Jesus Christ, the love of Jesus Christ, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ Himself is generally mentioned in our benedictions as having grace, and the Father as having love, and our usual benediction begins with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God.

Is that the proper order? Should we not rather say, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? Brethren, the order observed in the benediction is that of our experience—the order in which we learn—the order in which we receive. We first receive the grace and free favor which are in Christ Jesus, and then from these we learn the love of the Father—for no man comes unto the Father but by Jesus Christ. The order is correct to our experience, and in an instructive benediction the Holy Spirit intends this for our learning.

The Father's love is, as it were, the secret, mysterious germ of everything. That same love in Jesus Christ is grace. His is love in its active form, love descending to earth, love wearing human nature, love paying the great ransom price, love ascending, love sitting and waiting, love pleading, love soon to come with power and glory.

The eternal love which, as it were, did lie in the bosom of the Father, rises up and comes into activity, and is then called the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is therefore the grace of a divine person.

We wish you, brethren, as we wish for ourselves, the grace of God Himself—rich, boundless, unfathomable, immutable, divine—no temporary grace such as some speak of, which keeps not its own, but suffers even the sheep of its own pasture to go astray and perish. But the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it is written, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

That grace most potent which said, "None shall pluck them out of my hand." We wish this grace to be with you—the grace which loved you before the earth was made—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." The grace which will be with you when this poor world shall have melted back into the nothingness from which it sprang—infinite, everlasting, unchanging grace—we wish you may have that.

May its divine height, and depth, and length, and breadth be enjoyed by you. May you know the loving grace of Christ which passes knowledge. May you grasp the unsearchable riches of Christ. This is no small treasure—this grace of a divine person.

Yet our Lord Jesus is also human, as truly human as He is divine, and believing in Him, you have the grace of Jesus Christ the man to be with you all. May you feel His tenderness, His brotherliness, His grace. He is your kinsman, and He graciously favors His own kinsfolk. The man is next of kin to us, and as Ruth enjoyed all the love of Boaz, so may you possess all the heart of Jesus.

May He redeem your inheritance for you, and take you to Himself to be His own, in blessed union with Himself forever. May the grace of the Man of Nazareth, the grace of the Son of Mary be with you, as well as the grace of "God over all, blessed for ever," to whom be praise.

The grace of that wondrous person who is God and man in one person, and whom we call Lord, is now solemnly invoked upon you.

Read the text again, and pause a while in the middle to enjoy, "The grace of our *Lord*." Whatever familiarity we have with Him, we call Him Master and Lord, and He says, "Ye do well, for so I am." Let us never forget that. The grace that comes from His majesty, the grace that comes from His headship,

the grace that comes from His divinely human supremacy over His church, which is His body—this is the grace which we desire for you all.

Read the next word, "the grace of our Lord *Jesus*"—may that be with you—that is to say, the grace of our Savior, for that is the meaning of the word, Jesus. All His saving grace, all that which redeems from guilt, from sin, from trouble—all that which saves us with an everlasting salvation—may that be yours to the full.

Then comes the other word, "The grace of our Lord Jesus *Christ* be with you." May He, as the Anointed One, visit you. May the grace of His anointing be with you. May the holy anointing which was poured upon the Head come down upon you, as the sacred nard dropped from Aaron's beard, and perfumed all his robes. May you have that anointing from the Holy One which shall make you know all things.

I am tempted to linger over each one of these words, but I may not, for time would forbid. Yet must we tarry on that word "our." "May the grace of *our* Lord." Catch at that sweet word. It may not perhaps be genuine in this case, for it is not in the Sinaitic manuscript, but whether it is so in this particular instance or not, it is in the Word and stands forever true. Jesus is *our* Lord—*our* Lord Jesus Christ—both yours and ours. May the fullness of His grace be with you and with us.

2. Our next division is *How*? "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." What means this? Our first answer is the wish that the grace of our Lord may rest upon you *as a matter of fact*—that He may love you truly and intensely. Love you, not only as He loves the world, but as He loved His own which were in the world. May you have His redemption, not as a general thing, but according to that Word, "He hath redeemed us from among men out of every kindred."

May you have the special, peculiar love which Christ has to those whom His Father gave Him, whose names are on His breastplate, and for whom He has paid an effectual ransom price, that they thereby might be delivered—may such grace be with you. As a matter of fact, may it rest upon you as the chosen, adopted, called, and sanctified.

Next, *may you believe that grace*, may you trust that grace, may it be with you because your faith has closed in with it, and you are relying upon it. You believe that Jesus loves you. You believe in His grace, and trust yourself to Him, committing your spirit to the keeping of those hands which were pierced and fastened to the cross for you. May His grace be with you in that sense, so that you realize it.

Still further, may His grace be with you *as the object of faith*, so that your belief comes to be full assurance, till you know the love which Christ has towards you, and no more doubt it than you doubt the love of the dearest friend you have on earth. May His love be a present fact, and not a thing to be questioned, a treasure in which you glory in the secret places of your soul, saying, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." May His grace be with you in the sense that you are confidently assured of it.

And may His grace be with you, next, *as to the favors which flow out of it*. May you enjoy all the blessings which the grace of Christ can yield—the grace of a peaceful conscience, the grace of a cleansed walk, the grace of access to God, the grace of fervent love, the grace of holy expectancy, the grace of self-denial, the grace of perfect consecration, and the grace of final perseverance. May the fountain and well-head be with you, so that the sparkling streams may flow at your feet.

And may grace be with us, next, so *as to produce constant communion between us and Christ*, His favor flowing into our heart, and our hearts returning their gratitude. Oh, to carry on blessed commerce with Christ, exchanging weakness for strength, sin for righteousness, and trust for care. Oh to give love for love and heart for heart, till my best Love loves me, and my best love is all His own.

Oh, to come to this pass, that our Well-beloved is with us, and we enjoy sweet mutual communion—this is to have the love, or grace, of Jesus with us. May our Lord Jesus Christ in His grace be with us, and *may He work for us all that He can work*. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, brethren, when you desire to pray—then may the great High Priest intercede for you.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, so that when you are downcast He may say, "Let not your heart be troubled." May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you to check you when

you are likely to start aside, to guide you when you know not your way, to inspirit you when you are ready to be cast down; to confirm you when you have almost slipped with your feet.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you when heart and flesh are failing you, when the last hour has come, and you are about to appear before God. God grant you to know always all that Christ can do in you, and for you, and with you, and by you. What better benediction could John himself utter?

3. But now, the third part of our discourse comes under the head of "*to whom*." "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you *all*." Surely if we were to take this in the widest possible sense, and say—may it be with you all—it could not be wrong to wish that all should have the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ with them. Yet I know some sound brethren are very jealous of anything that looks like a wide expression—an expression which would wish good to all.

For my own part, I do not understand the nature of the orthodoxy which would limit benevolent desires. I should like to be more and more heterodox in the direction of desiring good to all that come in my way. Would to God that the best that could happen to all men did happen to them.

I would without the slightest hypocrisy breathe this desire over all mankind, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Still, there is no doubt that the context in which it stands, and also certain versions of it, do confine this benediction to the saints, and practically it must always be confined to them, for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is only known and enjoyed by those who have given their hearts to Jesus, and are living by Him, in Him, and to Him.

Let us wish the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to all the saints, at any rate. Some of the saints will hardly own us, but may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with them. They would not let us preach in their pulpits, but may grace be with them. They would not partake of the communion with us, but may grace be with them.

They call us sectarians and schismatics, but may "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with them all. Amen," with every one of them, whoever they may be. If they are in Jesus Christ, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with them.

Every now and then you come across a book written by one who is a long way off from understanding all the truth—yet He knows Jesus Christ—and as you read the sweet words that come from his pen concerning the Master, you feel your heart knit to him. Your soul feels that it is a pity that the writer was a High Churchman, but if he loves the Lord Jesus Christ, we forget his errors, and are delighted with the life of Jesus which we see in him.

If a man knows Christ, he knows the most important of matters, and is possessed of a secret quite as precious as any in our own keeping—for what do we know more than Christ—and what hope have we but in Christ? If you love Christ, give me your hand, my friend, notwithstanding your blunders. If Christ be all your trust, and all your confidence, I am sorry for your eyes that you cannot see a great deal more. I am sorry for your head that you cannot think more straight—but your heart is in the right place resting on Jesus, reposing on Him—and who am I that I should judge you?

There is a life in Christ which a thousand errors cannot kill. There is a life which is the same in all that have it, however diverse they may happen to be upon opinion or outward ceremony. There is a life eternal, and that life is Christ Jesus. And to all that have that life we do with intensity of heart say, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

I notice Paul says this in one of his epistles to a church that misbehaved itself dreadfully. It was one of the churches that would not have any minister—a church where they all spoke as they pleased—to whom Paul said, "God is not the author of confusion." They were so depraved a church that they allowed an incestuous person to be present at the communion, but still, after the apostle had rebuked them, he said, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

Even so must we say to those who err ignorantly, as the Corinthians did. If we differ from brethren, if we have to rebuke them, if sometimes they also rebuke us, and show temper over it, yet may this be the finale of it all, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

Should we not wish the highest degree of grace to all who are in the body of Christ? Let us not utter this benediction merely because we ought to say it, but because we delight to say it. Let us not only wish well to the saints because we are bound to wish them well, but because our hearts cannot do otherwise.

II. So now, not to detain you much longer, I ask your earnest attention for a few minutes to THE POSITION OF THIS BENEDICTION.

First, I draw what I have to say from the fact that *it is the last word of Scripture*. I regard it, therefore, as being the apostle's last and highest wish. We are glad to find that, while the Old Testament finishes with a curse—"Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse"—the New Testament concludes with a blessing, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all," as if to show that the very life and spirit of a Christian should be blessing. And this should be to us our last and highest wish for men—that they may receive and retain the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I wish this blessing to you all, my dear brothers and sisters. Whatever you may miss, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with you. In whatsoever points you, or any of us may fail, may we never come short of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What if the preacher should preach to others and himself be a castaway! Pray that it be not so. What if a deacon or elder should lead the flock of Christ, and yet the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ should not be with him! He would become another Judas or Demas. That would be dreadful.

What if you should teach the little ones in the school, and yet not learn yourselves! It would be a sad thing to have come to the Lord's Supper, and yet never to have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood—to be immersed in water, but never to have known the baptism of the Holy Spirit—nor to have been baptized into Christ with the spiritual baptism.

What a thing it will be, if, after all our professions, and all our labors, and all our teachings, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ should not be with us. I pray, brethren, whatever other prayer may not be granted, that this may be, concerning every member of this church, and every member of every church of Jesus Christ, that at any rate the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with us. We cannot do with less than this, and we do not want more than this. If we get grace from Jesus, we shall have glory with Jesus, but without it we are without hope.

Standing at *the end of the Book of Revelation* as this does, I next regard its position as indicating what we shall want till the end comes—that is, from now till the descent of our Lord in His second advent. This is the one thing we require, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

May it be with us daily, hourly! May it be with us, instructing us as to our behavior in each generation! May it be with us cleansing us from all sin, enabling us to walk in the light as He is in the light! May it be with us, strengthening us to carry our daily burdens, and to bear our witness for His name under the varying circumstances of the ages.

May it be with us counseling us when the trials of life distract us! With us transfiguring us from glory to glory, till we shall bear the image of Jesus Christ. May it be with us all-sufficiently! Has He not said, "My grace is sufficient for you"? May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all in every way in which you shall require it till He comes!

He can furnish you with the whole armor of God. He can equip you with all the necessities of the pilgrim life. For our labor as Gospel-fishermen He supplies all the nets that we shall require. For our work in His vineyard He gives us every tool. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us, and we shall be swift of foot as a young roe, and sure of foot as the hart on the mountainside, that slips not, however slippery the crags may be.

Only let Christ be with us and we are complete in Him—perfect in Christ Jesus. All the equipment that men shall want between earth and heaven to fight against hell, and to trample on the world, and to enter into eternal perfection, is found in Christ. May His grace be with you all. Amen.

Placed as this blessing is, at the end of the book, there is but this one more thought—this is what we shall wish for when the end comes. We shall come to the end of life, as we come to the end of our Bibles. And oh, aged friend, may your failing eyes be cheered with the sight of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ on the last page of life, as you will find it on the last page of your well-thumbed Bible.

Peradventure some of you may come to the last page of life before you get grace—I pray that there you may find it. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Or suppose we should not die—suppose the Lord should suddenly come in His temple. Oh! then may we have grace to meet Him.

I am so glad that a benediction closes the Apocalypse, for as you stand in the book of Revelation, you hear the thunders roll, peal after peal. You see the vials poured forth, darkening the air, and sun and moon turned into blackness and blood! Earth reels beneath your feet, and stars fall like fig leaves from the tree!

You are full of confusion and dismay until you hear this holy whisper, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." Let every star of the firmament fall where it will—the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with us. Rock and reel, you mountains, and be dissolved, O earth, and pass away. If the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us, we fear not the end.

We can serenely look upon the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds. Let the last august tribunal sit, and men summoned to stand before it, to receive their final doom—we shall without trembling advance before that great white throne, and stand there, if the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us.

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
While through His blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

Oh! happy they, shrouded, and sheltered, and hidden, in Christ their Savior, to whom His grace shall be like the white robes of Mount Tabor's transfiguration, for they shall be accepted in the Beloved, glorified in the glory of their Master. These are they to whom the text shall be fulfilled—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

Finally, brethren, farewell, and as you go out I would like just to take my place at the doorway, to offer my hand of friendship, and say to each one, "Farewell for a little while. This is my best wish for you—The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." Will you start back and say, "Sir, I know nothing of this grace"? Then would I ask you to stay a moment while I breathe the prayer, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

May be there is only a tear of penitence in your eye, no light of faith is there as yet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, poor broken-hearted penitent! May be you do not know Jesus yet, and you are only seeking Him. His grace be with you now—may He manifest Himself to you!

And you, backslider, do you feel as if you cannot receive a blessing? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be especially with you, to raise you up, and set you on your feet again, as He did fallen Peter. I would like, if I could, to say to the stranger within our gates tonight, who does not often attend the house of God—it is our heart's desire for you that you may know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in truth.

To the boys and girls here, the pastor says, "God bless you." Little Mary, or Jane, or John, or Willie, or whatever your name may be, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you," for He says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not."

As for you, grey-headed friends, you who will soon be home, I wish you this parting blessing, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." Till I see you again, "God bless you." Till the day break, and the shadows flee away, may the Lord Jesus never be absent from you. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
1 THESSALONIANS 5

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—951, 1028, 1053

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.