

## Grace in its Fountain and in its Streams

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"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen." Philemon, 25

What a mercy—a mercy beyond all expression, and indeed all conception, it is to have a religion which will take us to heaven; which will not leave us in the agony of death, but will be with us in that solemn hour, carry us in peace through the dark and gloomy valley—dark and gloomy to the flesh, and land us safe in the glorious presence of God. Now no religion either can or will do this but that which is wrought in the soul by the power of God himself. We want two things to take us to heaven; *a title to it*, and *a meetness for it*. Our only title to heaven is the blood and righteousness of the Son of God—that blood which "cleanseth from all sin," and that righteousness which "justifies us from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses." Nothing unclean or defiled can enter heaven. This is God's own testimony: "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Rev. 21:27.) How clearly do we see from this testimony who shall not and who shall enter the holy Jerusalem—that heavenly city which the glory of God ever lightens, and of which the Lamb is the everlasting light. No defiled persons can enter therein; and none but those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life; for these he "has washed from their sins in his own blood, and made them kings and priests unto God and his Father." (Rev. 1:5, 6.) Therefore they are "without fault before the throne of God." (Rev. 14:5.)

But besides this their *title*, there must be also a *meetness* for this heavenly city, according to the words of the apostle: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col. 1:12.) Whilst here below, then, we must learn to sing some notes of that joyous anthem which will issue in full, uninterrupted harmony from the hearts and lips of the redeemed in the realms above, when that glorious company will ever cry, "Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God." O what a voice will that be, "the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." (Rev. 19:1, 6, 7.) If then we are to sit down among those blessed ones who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb, not only must we be "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Rev. 19:8, 9), but we must have had "the kingdom of God, which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17), set up in our hearts. This, then, is what I mean when I speak of a religion which will take us to heaven. It consists, as I have said, in two things: 1, a *title* to heaven; 2, a *meetness* for heaven. Without a title we could not possess it; without a meetness we could not enjoy it. The one is from the work of the Son of God in the flesh; the other from the work of God the Holy Ghost on the heart.

But now view the subject in a somewhat different light, and yet still bearing upon the same grand truth. At the close of what is called "The Sermon on the Mount," the Lord describes two different characters. The one he likens to a wise man who built his house upon a rock, and the other to a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. The man who

built upon a rock built for eternity; so that when "the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house," it fell not. And why? For this simple reason; "It was founded upon a rock." But how different was the case of the foolish man, who built his house upon the sand, upon the quicksand of human merit. When "the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, it fell, and great was the fall of it." The two houses, as long as the weather was fine and fair, might look equally well, and seem to stand equally strong; but the storm tried each by trying the foundation on which each was built. In that storm the one stood as firm as adamant; the other fell into a shapeless ruin, of which the very fragments were swept away by the rushing floods. See then to the foundation of your house, whether you are building upon Christ or upon self; are founding your hopes upon the rock, or are rearing them upon the sand.

Is not this in harmony with the language of our text? "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." To whom are these words addressed? To Philemon. And who was Philemon? We know little of him except what is recorded in that beautiful Epistle which the apostle wrote to him on behalf of his slave Onesimus, who had run away from him, but whom by the grace of God Paul had begotten in his bonds; that is, had been made, when himself a prisoner at Rome, the instrument of his conversion unto God. To this Philemon, who was most probably a minister of Christ at Colosse, and whom the apostle therefore calls "his dearly beloved and fellow labourer," he writes this epistle, closing it with the words of the text: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." It is as if he would thus sum up all that his heart could desire for his beloved Philemon. He does not wish him bodily health, family comforts, worldly prosperity, or any other of the numerous items which are

generally supposed to make up the sum of human happiness. His desires and wishes for the happiness of his friend went far beyond, far above the reach of those earthly blessings which for the most part perish in the using; and as his heart dictated, his pen wrote the expression of this his one desire for his beloved brother, that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ might be with his spirit. And sure I am if we know anything of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and anything of what it is for that grace to be with our spirit, we shall join heart and soul in the apostle's prayer, and desire not only that that grace may ever be with our spirit, but be so particularly on this occasion when we are now met in his blessed name.

In considering these words, we may look at three things which seem to stand out prominently to view in them.

I.—Grace in its *fountain*: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;"

II.—Grace in its *streams*: "Be with your spirit;"

III.—Grace in its *fruits*: which though not exactly expressed in our text, yet, as ever attending grace both in its fountain and in its streams, may well stand in close connection with it.

I.—First, then, *Grace in its fountain*.

i. As it is eminently desirable to have clear views upon every subject which we attempt to consider in the momentous things of God, and this from the very outset, that we may make straight paths for our feet, let us first examine the Scriptural meaning of the word "*grace*." I need not tell you how again and again it meets our eye in every page of the New Testament. By "*grace*," then, as a New Testament term,

is meant the *pure favour* of God. This is its distinct and peculiar meaning. In whatever way then that grace may be manifested, through whatever channel it may flow, to whomsoever it may come, whatever effects it may produce, the pure favour of God is intended thereby. It may be thus compared to the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal," seen by John in vision as "proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Rev. 22:1.) It is, therefore, opposed to human merit of every shape and shade, of every form, hue, and colour. Thus it stands in contradistinction to works—in such contradistinction that the one, so to speak, would destroy and annihilate the other. Is not this the apostle's argument, "And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." Nothing can be more plain, according to the apostle's reasoning, than that these two things are so diametrically opposed to each other that if a man were to be saved by works, grace could have no part; and if saved by grace, then works could have no part. If this, at least, be not his meaning words can have no clear or positive signification. We lay this down, then, at the very outset, as a foundation which cannot be moved, that grace signifies the pure favour of God, without any regard to human merit, without any intermixture of anything in the creature, be it little or much, be it good or bad according to human view or intention.

ii. But having defined the meaning of the term, let us now look at grace in its *Fountain*. However far, however high we trace up this, we cannot go higher than God, nor must we go any lower. If there be a stream, there must be a fountain; and such as is the fountain, so is the stream; for, as James speaks, "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?" (James 3:11.)

Thus we find grace attributed in the word of truth to each of the Persons of the glorious Trinity. I need not tell you how often we find the expression, in the opening of well nigh all the epistles, "Grace and peace be to you from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3.) There we find grace attributed to the Father and the Son unitedly. But sometimes we find it attributed to the Father separately. Thus the Father is called "the God of all grace" (1 Pet. 5:10); and so we read of "the grace of God which is given by Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:4); of "the grace of God that bringeth salvation" (Titus 2:11); and of "the grace of God abounding unto many." (Rom. 5:15.) Similarly grace is attributed separately to the Lord Jesus Christ, as in our text, and in that well-known benediction: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost." (2 Cor. 13:14.) We also read of the "Spirit of grace" (Zech. 12:10; Heb. 10:29), from which we gather the grace of the Spirit, and of being all "by one Spirit baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13), which is a baptism by his grace. But besides grace being thus attributed to each Person of the Trinity separately, in a memorable passage in the Revelation John unites all the three Persons of the glorious Trinity as the Fountain of grace: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." (Rev. 1:4, 5.)

This favour then or grace for ever dwelt in the bosom of the Three-in-One God; and as these three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are in essence but one, it dwells equally and unitedly in them all. Thus the grace of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is equal and one, because they are equal and one; for as there is no division in the Essence of

the Godhead, though there is a distinction of the Persons, the grace that dwells in each distinctly dwells in all. When then I speak of the Fountain of grace, I look at it as it is in the bosom of the eternal Three-in-One God.

iii. But it was a part of the eternal purposes of God that this grace should be manifested; for the very nature of grace being pure favour, that favour must flow forth toward particular objects, that it may be, as it were, brought forth. We may compare it, perhaps, by way of illustration, to a mother's love. Every woman has the love of a mother naturally in her breast; but every woman is not a mother, and therefore in such it lies hidden. When, however, she becomes a mother, the love hitherto hidden immediately flows forth toward her infant babe. So grace ever dwelt in the bosom of God; but there was a necessity for the manifestation of that grace toward its objects, that it might be brought down from heaven to earth, and flow out as a stream from its eternal Fountain to water and enrich the sons of God. But as these had sinned and fallen, there was also a necessity that there should be a Mediator in and through whom this grace might be manifested; for though sin destroyed the image of God in which man was created, it did not destroy the grace of God, nor the purposes of his grace, but rather gave occasion for them to shine forth with brighter and clearer lustre. In order then to the manifestation of this grace, the Son of God took our nature into union with his own divine Person, that he might be a Mediator between God and man; that, to use the pathetic language of Job, he might be a daysman betwixt us, to lay his hands upon us both. (Job. 9:33.) Is there not something very beautiful in this expression? Christ, as the daysman, or Mediator, brings the two contending parties together, unites and reconciles them by taking each in either hand. Thus, as God, the blessed Lord lays his hand upon God, and as Man lays his hand upon man,

reconciling and uniting them together as the Mediator who partakes of each nature, and yet with those two natures is but one Person. The grace then of God cannot and does not flow forth except through the Mediator; for, on account of Adam's sin, grace regards us as fallen, and as needing reconciliation in order to salvation. Sinners, as sinners, can have no claim upon God; they are cut off by sin from any part or lot in a just, holy, and righteous Jehovah. But through a Mediator, through the Son of God having taken our nature into union with his own divine Person, and having in that nature shed his precious blood as an atoning sacrifice for sin, and thus redeemed the Church unto God, grace can flow freely unto us in our low estate, as through a consecrated channel. I do not myself hold what are called "purchased blessings," as if Christ by his blood bought the love of God. Christ bought the Church by his blood; but it was the love of God that sent him to buy her. Christ's coming into the world was not the cause of the love of God; but the love of God was the cause of Christ's coming into the world. (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9, 10.) Yet, without holding bought love or purchased blessings, I hold as firmly as any that there is no blessing but in Christ and through Christ; and that he was set up in the purposes of God as a Mediator that through him who now wears our nature—through him who took the flesh and blood of the children, every mercy, favour, and blessing might flow, as through a consecrated channel, to the Church of God both for time and eternity.

v. But the apostle speaks particularly of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Having seen then the *purity* and clearness of the Fountain, we may now look at it in its *depth* and *fulness* in the Person of Christ.

1. Look first at its amazing *depth*. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ brought him down from heaven to earth; made



him a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; laid upon him the iniquities of us all; took him into the gloomy garden, where he sweat great drops of blood; and nailed him to the cross, to endure all its unparalleled agony and shame. Grace carried him from the cross into the sepulchre, rose with him from the dead, ascended up to the right hand of the Father, and is with him now, in his heart and on his lips; and from him is being continually breathed into, and communicated unto the objects of his eternal choice and love.

But this grace being so deep, is *sovereign* both in its source and in its streams. We cannot explain why it should be so; nor have we any right or reason to pry into those secrets which God has wrapped up in his eternal breast. Our posture is reverently and humbly to submit to God's word; and if he says, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," (Malachi 1:2, 3; Romans 9:13,) our wisdom is not to question and cavil at his words, but rather take the place where Paul stood. "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" (Rom. 9:20.) God gives us no account of his dealings; he tells us what is his sovereign will, and there he leaves the matter unexplained; for indeed it is inexplicable. Yet if our eyes are but enlightened from above, we shall see the sovereignty of grace, not only in the Scriptures, but as a matter of daily observation. Can we not see how grace selects its objects here and there, and some of the most unlikely characters; and how these are, as the Scripture speaks, taken "one of a city, and two of a family," to bring them to Zion. Ask any one whom God has called by his grace what there was in him to deserve his favour? Will not each and all at once disclaim that there was anything in them to draw down the favour of God? and that on the contrary there was everything in them to deserve his indignation and eternal displeasure? Happy are they who

have any testimony that the sovereignty of this grace has reached them, has saved them from the bottomless pit, and given them a name and a place amongst the living family of God. These will never quarrel with God's sovereignty in saving and blessing their souls when they carry the earnest of its sovereign display in their own hearts.

2. But now observe its *fulness*. The first mark of this is, that it is *free*: "Being justified *freely* by his grace." And because it is free it can reach us. To illustrate this take some scriptural emblems. How free is the sun in sending forth its enlightening, warming beams; how free the clouds in discharging their watery treasures; how free the dew in falling from the face of heaven; how free the wind in blowing where it listeth. Now those are scriptural types and representatives of the free grace of God. It shines as freely as the sun; drops as freely as the rain; falls as freely as the dew; and blows as freely as the wind. But not in grace as in nature to all men. I mean not that; but all to whom it comes it comes freely. And whenever it so comes it communicates precious things with it. As the sun lights and warms, as the rain fertilises, as the dew softens, as the wind invigorates, so it is with the grace of God which comes out of the fulness of Christ. It enlightens the understanding, warms the heart, fertilises the soul, softens the spirit, and invigorates the whole new man of grace. And all this grace does freely, without charge or cost, without money or price, wanting nothing, asking nothing from us but a kindly return. The best debt to a benefactor is the debt of gratitude; the best return of kindness is the return of love; the best acknowledgment of a favour is good words and suitable deeds. The best thanks which the earth can give to the sun, rain, dew, and wind of heaven is to be fruitful—to manifest by the goodness of the crops, the goodness of what falls from heaven upon it. So it is in grace: "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." (Psa.

50:23.) A believing, loving heart, a prayerful, thankful lip, and a holy, godly life are the best returns for grace.

3. But another blessed mark of the fulness of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is, that it is *unchanging and unchangeable*. We read of God that "with him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17.) As he is, so is his grace. He does not love to-day and hate to-morrow; give his grace one moment and take it away the next; hang it upon conditions, suspend it upon human merit, or grant and withhold it according to creature obedience. Whom once he loves, he loves to the end; and where he has begun the good work he carries it on and finishes it to the honour of his name. We have our changes: sometimes we are hot, sometimes cold; believing, unbelieving; hoping, fearing; doubting, rejoicing; soon cast down, easily lifted up. As poor, fickle, changeable creatures, we have our changes, and ever shall have in this time-state. But God "is in one mind and none can turn him." "His purposes shall stand and he will do all his pleasure;" for "he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." (Ephes. 1:11.) Do we not read of Jesus that he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8)? and if he is the same must not his grace yesterday, to-day, and for ever be the same too?

II.—But having looked a little at grace in its *fountain*, we will now look at grace in its *streams*. The fountain is one thing and the stream another; yet without the fountain there could be no stream; and as is the fountain so is the stream also. The prayer of the apostle was: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be with your spirit*." It is when his grace is with our spirit that we have grace in its *communication*: it is the coming of the stream from the fountain into our heart.

i. Now we may look at this communication, this stream of

grace in its various floorings; and to make all plain and clear we will begin with the beginning.

It was then the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ which in the first instance *quickeneth* our souls when dead in sin. We never could have communicated divine life to them ourselves. We were too far gone, too deeply sunk for that. As a dead man cannot raise up his own body, so a dead soul cannot communicate life to itself. It needs a divine power to do both. None but he who raiseth the dead body out of the grave can quicken the dead soul out of sin. Is not this the Scripture testimony? "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. 2:1.) "For as the Father raised up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." (John 5:21.) The first drop, then, so to speak, of this heavenly stream which flows out of the fulness of the Son of God, is the drop of regenerating grace. It is compared in Scripture to wind or breath as in those well-known words of the Lord to Nicodemus: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8.) Similar language we find in that remarkable vision which Ezekiel saw in the valley of dry bones: "Then said he until me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." (Ezekiel 37:9.) Now what was the effect of the prophet's prophesying as God commanded him? "The breath came into them, and they lived;" and that this was a spiritual resurrection is plain from the words: "And ye shall know that I am the Lord when I shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live." (Ezekiel 37:10, 13, 14.) That this quickening breath of the Spirit attends the words of Jesus is manifest from his own language: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh

profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63.) It is then this regenerating breath of the Lord Jesus which makes the soul alive unto himself. Then for the first time "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with our spirit." For you will observe that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is not with our carnal mind: *that* ever remains the same, a body of sin and death, flesh, corrupt flesh, "in which dwelleth no good thing," and therefore not the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. His grace is with our spirit, that "new man" of which we read that "it is after God, [that is, after the image of God] created in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. 4:24.) This is called our "spirit," because it is born of the Spirit, as the Lord himself unfolded the solemn mystery to Nicodemus: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6.) This is no subtle, wire-drawn distinction, but a very important truth; for unless we see the difference between the two natures, the spirit and the flesh (Gal. 5:17); the law in the members and the law of the mind (Rom. 7: 23), we shall always be in bondage, as looking for holiness in the flesh. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ being thus with our spirit, it breathes from time to time upon that spirit, moves and acts in it and upon it; for there is what I may call a gracious or spiritual union between the two. Nay, it is by the possession of this spirit that we have a spiritual union with the Lord himself; for "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (1 Cor. 6:17.) There is therefore something, so to speak, of the same kind and nature for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to act upon. There is in us, so far as we are born of the Spirit, a new and heavenly nature, akin to the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and thus akin to the Spirit of Christ. As then this Spirit acts upon our spirit, it moves toward him who acts upon it.

Let me point out this quickening, life-giving operation

somewhat more clearly and distinctly in detail.

1. When, then, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ first breathes upon the heart, it comes as a Spirit of *conviction*; for you will bear in mind that though "there are diversities of gifts it is the same Spirit," and though "there are diversities of operations, yet it is the same God who worketh all in all." (1 Cor. 12:4, 5.) When, then, the Spirit first comes it convinces the soul of sin, of its lost, ruined condition. He shows it the majesty and justice of God in a broken law; and that it is by that law justly doomed to die, without either help or hope in self. Now, without laying down any precise or particular standard, we may say that however long, however sharp, however deep, however lasting these convictions may be, they never cease until they bring the sinner to his feet—until the Lord is pleased in some measure to manifest mercy and salvation to his heart.

2. We may add, therefore, when the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with our spirit, it is a *Spirit of light and life*; for in his light do we see light, and in his life do we feel life. Nor can we see, know, or feel anything of the grace revealed in the gospel, or our interest therein, except so far as the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with our spirit; for, through the teaching and operation of this grace, a divine and spiritual light is cast upon the Scripture, upon the way of salvation, upon the Person of Christ, on the evidences, marks, and tokens that are there given for our encouragement. There is thus a deliverance from the power of darkness, and a translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13); a turning from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. (Acts 26:18.)

3. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is therefore with our spirit as a *Spirit of life*. When it comes in the first instance, it communicates what our Lord calls "the light of life." Indeed

there is no true light or life without it; for till it comes with its illuminating beams and quickening breath, we are shut up in darkness and death. It therefore makes us alive unto God; brings us out of our state of death; communicates new powers to the soul, and awakens it out of that long sleep in which it had been cast by the Adam fall. And not only in its first actings, but in all its subsequent operations, it ever comes as a Spirit of life. How low we often sink; how dead our soul gets; how unable even to frame a gracious thought, or lift up a hearty cry. When thus sunk, as helpless as if we had never known any one acting of divine life, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ comes as a Spirit of life to renew the soul, to re-awaken it, to pour fresh life upon it, to draw forth the sleeping graces of the Spirit, and to make his poor, dead, and dying child once more alive unto himself. Is not this according to his own gracious promise: "Because I live ye shall live also?"

4. Again the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ comes as a *Spirit of grace and of supplications*. Whenever the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with the soul, it is in it as a Spirit of prayer; it makes as well as enables us to seek his face, pour out the heart before him, wait at his gracious feet, call upon his holy name, be asking continually for the manifestations of his mercy and love. There is no surer mark of life being in the soul than the Spirit of grace and of supplications. You may have convictions, and they be merely natural; you may have light, and that be only in your head. But if you have spiritual convictions springing out of divine light and life, they are sure to lead you to the throne of grace, for they are always attended with a Spirit of supplication, according to those words: "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." (Jer. 31:9.)

5. But again, whenever the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is

with our spirit, it is there as a spirit of real, unfeigned *humility*. We never are really humble till we have seen something of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, "who, though he was rich, for our sake became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich." (2 Cor. 8:9.) The law can never truly humble us. It may distress and alarm our minds, affright and terrify our conscience; but it cannot communicate that sweet humility of spirit which is so marked a Christian grace. Would we be really humble, be truly possessed of that sweet grace, which the lowlier it makes the soul to be the more it makes it resemble Jesus, we must see by faith who and what the Lord Jesus Christ is in himself, and what he was in the days of his flesh. We must go into the gloomy garden; we must go to the Jewish council, Pilate's judgment hall, see the crown of thorns and the bleeding back; thence go to the cross, see the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, there bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, that we may learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart. This is the death-blow of pride, for pride cannot enter the garden and Calvary. As Hart says,

"For should it dare to enter there,  
'Twould soon be drowned in blood."

6. But again, where the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with our spirit, it is a Spirit of *contrition* to break the heart. The heart is hard by nature; there is no tenderness in it; no real sight or true sense of the evil of sin; no holy mourning, godly sorrow, or self-loathing, no self-abhorrence or detestation; no knowledge of sin as exceedingly sinful; its hateful nature not being discovered except to the awakened soul. But where the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with a man's spirit, it makes it contrite, breaks his heart, gives him to see the evil of sin, and to loathe it and himself for it. It is, therefore, in him a Spirit of godly sorrow, of repentance unto life, of



repentance to salvation not to be repented of—what the apostle calls "being made sorry after a godly manner," [margin "according to God"] that is, according to the will of God, and therefore acceptable to him. No man ever truly repented of his sins except by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ being with his spirit. For was he not "exalted to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins?" And O what a mourning grace is the grace of repentance, as Hart says,

"Repenting saints the Saviour own,  
And grieve for grieving him."

7. Again, when the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with our spirit, it is there as a Spirit of *confession*. It is his grace acting upon and with it which makes us confess our sins as well as feel their guilt. And is it not good to be able to confess our sins before God? When his holy eye searches the heart and looks into every secret corner, what hideous sins does he see there, and discover also to our shrinking and astonished view? This is setting our sins in the light of his countenance; for it is a spiritual sight and sense of the holiness of God, attended with a Spirit of grace and of supplications which makes a man confess the sins he has committed in thought, word, and deed—sins perhaps long since committed, long forgotten; sins reaching over many years; and especially any particular sins that may lie with great weight and power upon his conscience. Most of God's people have some particular sins, committed either before or after calling, which especially distress their mind, and lie hard and heavy upon their soul. Now as the Lord is pleased to communicate light, life, and power to their spirit, these sins they confess, mourn over, and bewail, with real grief of heart and true penitence of soul.

8. But again, the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ in its sweet

streams from him the fountain of all grace is a *Spirit of revelation*. The apostle therefore prays that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ would give unto the Ephesian saints the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him." (Ephes. 1:17.) By this there is a revelation of Christ to the soul. We can only see the Lord Jesus Christ as he is pleased to discover himself. He discovers himself by manifesting himself in his grace to our spirit; and when he thus reveals himself he makes himself to be "the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." His glorious Person, atoning blood, and justifying righteousness are all seen by the eye of faith when he is pleased to make himself known to the soul; and he does thus make himself known when his grace is with our spirit. "The truth as it is in Jesus," is applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit. We cannot see the beauty of God's truth, and its divine blessedness, or our interest in it, or what it does for the soul, except he himself is pleased to communicate of his grace. But when his grace is with our spirit, it casts a beauteous light over the truth of God, and we can read the Scriptures by the same Spirit that inspired them. Then indeed and of a truth the grace of our Lord Jesus is with our spirit.

9. It is a Spirit of *love* also. And why? Because we can only love him when he is pleased to manifest his love to us. We can only go forth in fond and affectionate response towards his gracious Majesty when he is pleased to communicate of his own love to our soul. Then we love him because he first loved us. When therefore the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with our spirit, it is with our spirit as a spirit of love; for he is all love, as well as all lovely, and love coming from him as the fountain flows to us in its streams, and then flows back from us toward its Source.

10. Again, when the grace of the Lord Jesus is with our spirit,

it is a Spirit of *faith*. This I should have named before, but it did not just at the moment strike my mind. We may in a certain sense believe; but we cannot believe with a spirit of faith, except the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with our spirit. There is a difference between faith and the spirit of faith. Faith always is in a believing heart; but often seems to lie asleep. It wants then animating and rousing up. But when faith is as it were thus divinely animated, then it is the spirit of faith. Thus the apostle says, "We having the same spirit of faith." (2 Cor. 4:13.) When we have then this spirit of faith it is because the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is actively with our spirit. His grace acting and moving in the heart raises up a spirit of faith there. The Spirit of truth reveals the same truth to the soul that God has revealed in his word. When, therefore, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with our spirit as a spirit of faith, the soul looks to the Person of Christ by faith, believes simply and with a child-like sincerity what God has revealed in the word of his grace. Thus as a spirit of faith, faith enters into the truth of God as God has revealed it, embraces it, twines round it, and brings it with sweet savour and power into the heart. It is therefore like the spouse when she said, "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me." (Song of Solomon 3:4.)

11. It is also a Spirit of *hope*, because "it hopes to the end for the grace that is to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ," that is, not only his present revelation, but his second coming. It is, therefore, "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." Like Abraham, "against hope it believes in hope;" yea, hopes against despair itself, and against every gloomy, desponding, discouraging suggestion and foreboding.

12. Lastly, it is a Spirit of *love* to God's people, to his house, his servants, his ordinances, his word. It is therefore wherever it comes, wherever it dwells, a spirit of tender affection; for wherever the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with our spirit, it communicates a spirit of love and union to and with all the saints of God. This indeed is the first scriptural evidence of life: "Hereby we know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." These, then, are some of the streams of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ flowing into our spirit.

III.—Now let us look at grace in its *fruits*; for if these streams flow out of the fulness of Christ to our spirit, they will produce certain *effects*.

1. One of the first fruits is a *severance from the world*. Grace finds us in the world, wrapped up in it; indeed we have no heart or affection for anything else. Now the first effect of grace is, to separate us from the world, to show unto us what the world is, lying "in the wicked one." "Come out from among them and be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing." (2 Cor. 6:17.) That is God's word, God's express command; and what God commands he enables the soul to obey. As then Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans, and as Moses forsook the land of Egypt, so when grace calls we obey; and having once left the world, we never go back to it. I insist strongly upon this point, for I am well convinced that if a man is not separated from the world, he gives no present testimony that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with his spirit.

2. Again, wherever the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with our spirit, it makes us *know and love God's truth*. Many persons profess to be the children of God, and to know

something about God, when they are mortal enemies to the truth of God. But the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ with a man's spirit always leads him into the truth of God, for it silences sooner or later all the objections that nature and reason may raise up against it. It cuts the very root of all that infidelity and unbelief of which the carnal mind is so full, and makes us willing in the day of God's power to receive his truth into a believing heart. If a man has no grace, he is always cavilling against the sovereignty of God—is always trying to set up human merit in some shape or form. But when the grace of the Lord Jesus is with our spirit as a spirit of conviction, it cuts to pieces human merit; and when this grace comes as a spirit of consolation, it gives us a love for and a submission unto the truth of God, however unpalatable to the flesh. Unless, then, a man is brought to see and receive the truth of God, we have no reason to believe the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with his spirit. A man cannot be a friend of God and an enemy of God's truth. A man cannot be a friend of Christ and an enemy of sovereign grace. A man cannot be Christ's free man unless he knows the truth, for it is the truth which alone makes free. (John 8:32.)

3. But again, whenever the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with a man's spirit, to separate him from the world, and make him love the truth of God, it will make him *bold and decided in his profession*. Until we are under some divine influence, we are always afraid of the opinion of men; afraid of our worldly prospects being endangered: afraid we shall lose this kind friend, offend that rich relation, or lose that opening in life which seems just before us. We are thus always endeavouring to steer, as it were, our course in such a way as to please everybody and offend nobody, and, above all things, to say and do nothing which may injure our dear selves. Now perhaps whilst in this miserable state, we may

embrace enough of truth to satisfy our conscience and enough of the world to satisfy our flesh. But when the truth of God is made precious to our soul by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ received into our spirit, we say, "Come what will, come what may, I will serve the Lord. Let all go: my soul is at stake. Let men do what they may; let me be stripped to the last penny, I will not give up what my conscience believes to be true. I will, as far as God enables me, stick to his truth, for I know that nothing but his truth can save my soul." Thus we are made bold, honest, and decided in our profession of God's truth. When that takes place, it raises up thousands of enemies; but in the strength of the Lord we can go through them all.

4. Again, whenever the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with our spirit, it will produce the effects of *practical obedience*. It will make us live the truth as well as know the truth and love the truth. Men who live in all manner of ungodliness make it manifest they know not the grace of God in truth. The eye of God being upon him night and day, will make a man more or less walk in the fear of God and keep God's precepts. It will bring forth in him those fruits of righteousness which are to the praise and honour and glory of God; make him live, as far as he can, to the praise of him who has bought him with his precious blood.

5. Again, it will *unite him to the family of God*. It will give him to see who are the taught of God—who they are that are under divine influence; for he feels that they are under the same heavenly teaching with himself: and this gives him a spirit of love towards them. He feels there is a family whom God loves and whom he enables by his grace to love him. He sees there is a people with whom he can spiritually sympathise and who can sympathise with him; who have the same exercises, doubts, fears, and are at times blessed with

the same spiritual and heavenly blessings. He understands what they mean when they speak of the dealings of God with their souls; and this brings about sweet communion with them; for he loves their company and feels an interest in them as members of the same blessed family.

6. It will also make him practically obedient to God's word, in all the various *duties of life*. It will make its possessor to be a good husband or a good wife; a good father or a good mother; a good son or a good daughter. The grace of the Lord Jesus with a man's spirit will act upon him so as to make him carry out in the spirit of the gospel all these practical duties.

7. It will also influence his spirit both in *public and in private*, in the Church and in the world; will subdue his sins, smooth his temper; give him meekness, gentleness, and quietness; make him hate strife, and lead him far away from the noisy, the brawling, and the contentious; for such company grieves his spirit and distresses his soul. Thus it will so act upon him as to make him walk not only in all humility and sincerity before God, but it will make him live before men so as to avoid bringing reproach upon the honour and glory of God. And it must be a poor religion call it what you will, be it high or low, Church or Chapel, Arminian or Calvinist, that cannot do this. A religion which brings forth no fruit to God or man, affords no visible evidence that God is its divine author. If God be the author of a man's religion, it will bring grace into his heart and lips, and fruits into his life, that shall make it manifest whence his religion came. It will evidence him to be a partaker of the same Spirit that was in Jesus Christ, and is and ever has been in the Church of Christ, and will show that what he professes to believe and know he has received by a divine power.

And yet with all this, we shall daily feel ourselves to be of sinners chief, and of saints less than the least. Yet as the Lord is pleased to open our eyes, we shall see more what grace is—how pure, how free, and how it all flows simply out of a Three-one God. We shall see our sins so great, that nothing but free grace can pardon them; our backslidings so aggravated, that nothing but free grace can heal them; our hearts so hard that nothing but free grace can soften them; our path so rough that nothing but free grace can help us over it; and at last death so terrible, that nothing but the grace of God can take away its sting, and make us shout, "Victory" even in its very arms. We shall find nothing but grace can make us holy or happy either for time or eternity. Left to ourselves, we only prove more and more the vileness of our base original. Would we be watchful, prayerful, tender, humble, broken, simple, and sincere; would we have blessed views of the Lord Jesus Christ, feel his love, taste his favour, know the efficacy of his atoning blood, and be saved in him with an everlasting salvation it must be by the free communication of his grace to our souls. Thus we can no more live without the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ than the earth can live without the sun. He must shine, or we have no light; he must revive, or we have no warmth; and he must fertilise, or we bring forth no fruit. Thence time after time there is an outgoing of the single desire of the soul to the Lord Jesus Christ that his grace would be with our spirit; that this grace may be ever flowing forth into us, so as to make us new creatures, dispel all doubt and fear, break to pieces all bonds and fetters, fill us with love and humility, conform us to his suffering image, produce in us every fruit that shall redound to his praise, be with us in life and death, and land us safe in eternity.

This the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ can and will do. It brought him down from heaven to earth to do all this for his



dear people; and now that he is risen from the dead and gone up on high, all grace is stored up in him in inconceivable fulness that it may be communicated to poor, needy sinners, who feel the want of it. They are all waiting upon him and looking up to him; and from time to time he drops down his grace to be with their spirit. He sees this poor child in heaviness and trouble, and drops a love drop into his heart to cheer him on his rough and thorny track. He sees another unable to communicate life and feeling to his own soul; he sends down his grace, and the lame takes the prey and goes forth praising and blessing his holy name. He sees another in grievous distress through the hidings of his face, and doubting whether there ever was a work begun or a spark of grace in his soul; and as he smiles upon him, his doubts and fears give way, and he praises and blesses him for his manifested mercy. Thus, just as the sun rises in the east and gradually mounts up into the meridian sky, diffusing with every ray, light, warmth, and gladness; so this blessed Lord Jesus, as the Sun of righteousness, is ever dispersing the beams of his grace and the rays of his favour; and wherever those beams come, and those rays fall, there is light and life, and everything to make the soul holy and happy. Now a man would act very foolishly if, wishing to have light in his room when the sun was shining at noon-day, he should shut all the shutters, and strike a match to give him a little light for a few moments. Let us not then be so foolish as to look for happiness or comfort in our own performances when the glorious Sun of righteousness is at the right hand of God, and shining thence upon believing hearts. But when the veil is over the heart, it is like shutters in a room: there is no light to show who, what, or where Jesus is. And then need we wonder that men strike a light and make a fire, that they may "walk in the sparks of their own kindling?" But what is God's word against all such? "This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow."

(Isai. 50:11.)

But O may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ ever be with our spirit, whom he has taught and brought to believe in his name, and then we shall see and know more and more what his grace is, and what it can and will do for us, both now and for evermore. Amen and Amen.