

The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledge of Christ

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham, on Lord's Day Morning, September 16, 1866

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." Ephesians 1:17, 18

Where there is little prayer, there is little grace. Where there is much grace, there is much prayer. I mean, of course, spiritual prayer; for there may be much prayer which is not spiritual. When, therefore, I lay it down as a religious maxim, a spiritual test, that where there is little prayer there is little grace, I cannot similarly adduce the converse of the proposition and say, "Where there is much prayer there is much grace;" for there are heaps upon heaps of prayers made every day throughout this land in which there is not one grain or atom of grace. Of such prayers I take no account. Like "the sacrifice of the wicked," they are "an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 15:8); and God himself has testified of them and of their offerers, "When ye make many prayers I will not hear." (Isa. 1:15.) The Pharisees "for a pretence made long prayers," and they even thought that "they should be heard for their much speaking." Much prayer, therefore, is no index of the grace of God, or of the acceptance of its offerer as a spiritual worshipper. But where there is much of the grace of God, it will much manifest itself in prayer and supplication. If I may use a figure—and you know I am fond of figures—we may call prayer the thermometer of the soul. The heart we may compare to the

bulb, and prayer to the spirit in it which rises and sinks within the tube. Now, when the beams of the Sun of righteousness play round and upon the heart, the spirit of prayer expands and rises upwards in earnest supplication; and the height to which it rises and the length of time during which it continues at a certain height manifest the warmth and the duration of the power of God in the soul. But in nature the sun does not always shine; clouds gather over the sky; chilly nights come on; and there are wintry frosts as well as summer days, the effect of all which is soon seen in the thermometer, for the spirit gradually sinks in the tube, and in very cold and severe weather seems almost to retire out of sight into the bulb, and rises but a few degrees in the scale. So in grace, when the Sun of righteousness withdraws his cheering presence, dark clouds come on, and damp, chilly night often gathers over the soul. The Lord, we read, "has made summer and winter" (Psa. 74:17); and thus even in grace there is a winter as well as a summer season. "He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly. He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoar frost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?" (Psa. 147:15, 16, 17.) "Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word." (Psa. 148:8.) We thus see that in giving snow like wool, and casting forth his ice like morsels, the word of God runneth very swiftly; and that snow and vapours and stormy wind are as much a fulfilling of his word as preparing rain for the earth, and making the grass to grow upon the mountains. Do we not see in all this a lively representation of the dealings of God with the soul as well as of his dealings with the earth? When, then, these wintry seasons come on and succeed the summer days, the Spirit of grace and of supplications seems to sink almost into the bulb of the heart, out of which it is not able to expand itself and rise till some warm ray again shines upon it, and the Beloved says, "Rise

up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." (Song Sol. 2:10, 11, 12.)

But I will not this morning give you a sermon upon prayer, nor indeed should I have dwelt even thus long upon that subject had it not been so closely connected with our text; for you have probably observed that the words of the apostle which I have read, and from which I hope to preach to you contain a part of the prayer of that man of God.

Now, there are several things very noteworthy in this man of God viewed as a praying man, and especially as so continually engaged in prayer and supplication for the churches, which I wish to bring before you.

1. And first, have you ever noticed the striking fact that there is scarcely a single epistle written by him in which the apostle does not make *special mention of his prayers* for the church or the individual to whom he addresses his weighty letters? He was not content, as perhaps some of us are, with praying for himself. His large heart embraced all the family of God, and was almost more fervent on their behalf than on his own. Have you not also found as a matter of gracious experience, that the more you can pray for yourself the more you can pray for the family of God; and that there are times and seasons when you can pray for others almost more fervently than you can pray for yourself? It is good to mingle prayers and supplications for the saints, and for those especially with whom we are personally connected by family ties or church relationship, with prayer and supplication for ourselves.

2. Mark another thing: the union of *thanksgiving* with prayer

in the breast of this man of God. "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." Thanksgiving gives, so to speak, wings to prayer. It is like the incense which the priest carried into the tabernacle that filled the house of the Lord with sweet savour. We therefore read, "They shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord." Praise especially glorifies God,— "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." (Psa. 50:23.) And if we were under the Divine blessing, more to mingle thankfulness for mercies passed with prayers for mercies to come, it might make our petitions more of a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Like the union of the different spices in the incense, it might give additional influence to our prayers, and they might enter more effectually into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

3. But take another feature so visibly stamped upon the prayers of the apostle in the chapter now before us: the *cause* that drew forth thanksgiving and prayer out of his breast. It was "when he heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the saints." No sooner were tidings brought to him that these Ephesian believers were living in the blessed exercise of faith in the Son of God, and abounded in love to all the saints, than it touched the springs of prayer and thanksgiving in his breast, and the water welled forth in a stream of praise and supplication. So it will be with us when we read or hear of those who believe in the Son of God, and manifest their love to the Lord Jesus by loving his people, if we have any of Paul's grace; for such blessed tidings create a sweet union of heart and spirit with them, so that we can bless the Lord for his grace in them, and beg of him to manifest himself more and more both unto them and unto us.

4. Nor must I pass by another feature in this prayer of the

apostle almost more worthy of notice than those which I have mentioned. I mean the *subject matter* of his desires and supplications; for this is a point especially worthy of our consideration that we may examine our prayers in the light of his. The Holy Ghost guided him how to pray for others as well as for himself, and has placed upon permanent record two solemn prayers in this epistle, that they might be, so to speak, patterns of what prayer is, or should be, on behalf of others and ourselves. It would be well, then, if we were to examine the prayers we offer for ourselves and for others by these sacred patterns, and see how far they correspond with them in spirit and in substance, if not in letter and word.

But in order to do this more clearly and effectually, I shall endeavour to bring before you the prayer of the apostle as contained in the latter part of this chapter. And as the subject is too long for me to handle fully in one discourse, I shall take up a portion of his prayer this morning in connection with my text, and reserve the remaining for the afternoon service.

After, then, this long introduction, we will now come to the special subject of this morning's meditation. Observe, with me, three prominent features in it.

I.—*First*, the *titles* by which the apostle calls the God to whom he directs his prayer. He calls him "the *God of our Lord Jesus Christ*," and "the *Father of glory*."

II.—*Secondly*, the special blessing prayed for,—"*the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation*."

III.—*Thirdly*, the *fruits and results* of those blessings when they are so freely given, which we shall find to be these four:—1. They *enlighten the eyes* of the understanding. 2.

They give us a *knowledge of Christ*. 3. A knowledge of the *hope of his calling*. 4. A knowledge of the *riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints*.

As I open up these divine realities, and you follow me with your usual attention, I venture to hope that before I have finished my discourse they may be made clear to your mind, and if the Lord be pleased to seal them with power upon your soul, and give you a testimony of your personal interest in them, you will, I am sure, freely give him all the glory.

I.—I shall first then, call your attention to the *titles* which the apostle gives to God.

You will observe that they are two, and that he speaks of him first as "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ," and secondly as "the Father of glory." I shall endeavour, with God's help and blessing, to open the meaning of both of these titles, and especially to show their connection with our text.

You have, perhaps, observed in other parts of Scripture, the Epistles especially, that certain titles are ascribed to God, and that these titles often stand in close connection with the blessings spoken of or prayed for. Let me open up this point by naming a few examples. In 1 Peter 5:10, we find the apostle thus speaking, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." You will observe that God is there termed by the apostle "the God of all grace," and that this special title stands in close connection with his making the Church of God perfect, stablishing, strengthening, and settling her. Do you not see the connection, and that because he is "the God of all grace" he is able and willing to strengthen and establish the Church through suffering? If

you will examine in the same way Rom. 15, you will find in it various titles ascribed to God, and you will find a connection between the special title given to him and the grace which he communicates or the blessings which he imparts. Thus in verse 5 he is called "the God of patience and consolation," which connects it with the preceding verse, where we read "that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." If then we have patience and comfort, the God of patience and consolation must be the author of all the patience given, and all the consolation felt; and if blessed with this patience and this consolation, we shall be "like minded one toward another according to, or after the example of Christ Jesus;" for nothing more enables us to bear with others than a feeling sense how God has borne with us, and every sip of gospel consolation will strengthen us to walk after the example of Jesus. In the same chapter, 13th verse, God is spoken of as the "God of hope," and the connection is that "the God of hope would fill them with all joy and peace in believing, that they might abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." In the last verse of that chapter he is spoken of as "the God of peace," and the prayer offered in connection with that title is that he "would be with them all," that he might be with them all, viz., to give them that peace which would be felt by his presence with them. In 2 Cor. 1:3, he is spoken of as "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulations," thus connecting what he is as "the God of all comfort" with the communication of it to his afflicted people. We thus see that the titles of God, given to him in the word of truth, are not mere arbitrary descriptions of his grace or of his glory unconnected with the communication of special blessings, but contain not only sweet and general instructions, but such as are suitable to particular circumstances. They are thus meant not only to instruct us into the character of God and give us right views of his divine

Majesty that we may know who and what he is, but also to show how suitable every distinctive character is to our particular and individual wants. Do we want grace to save, grace to sanctify, grace to keep, grace to bless; grace to be with us all through our life, and grace to support and comfort us in the arms of death? He is the God of all the grace that we can ever want or he can ever give. What limit can you put to "all grace?" and if he is "the God of all grace," where else shall we look for it, and who else can bestow it on us? There is not a grace you need, nor a blessing which grace can give which is not contained in the words "all grace," and as the God of all grace, he holds it in his bounteous heart and hands to bestow it freely according to the good pleasure of his will. Do we want patience to bear us up and support us under all our trials and afflictions? He is "the God of patience," and therefore can give us all that is needed in every tribulation. Do we want consolation under heavy afflictions, cutting sorrows, and deep trials? He is "the God of consolation." Nay, "the God of all comfort," so that all the consolation and comfort which we can need or he sees fit to bestow so dwells in him that he has but to communicate it out of his own fulness, and it flows forth as a stream out of a fountain. Do we want hope, that anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast? He is "the God of hope," and therefore can let down that blessed anchor into our breast to hold us up amid every storm. Do we want peace, the peace of God which passeth all understanding, the peace which flows like a river, peace in believing, peace to accompany us through life, and peace to calm and compose us in death? He is the "God of peace," and being the God of peace can at once speak peace to the afflicted soul or wounded conscience, and set up his own blessed kingdom in the heart, which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." We thus see that these titles of God, as used by the inspired writers of the New Testament, are not mere

arbitrary designations used without intention or discrimination, but are intended to unfold to us the diversified character of God, and more especially to instruct and assure us that as being the God of all these blessings as indicated by his titles, he has but to speak, and the blessings come in rich abundance out of his gracious and glorious fulness into our breast.

Now, view the titles ascribed to God in our text in that light. Look at the two titles to which I have called your attention with a special reference to their connection with the blessings prayed for by the apostle. I have already observed that they are 1. "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ" and 2. "the Father of glory." I shall, now then, consider each of them with a view to this connection.

i. As "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." How is God "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ?" Is he the God of our Lord Jesus Christ as regards his Sonship and Deity? Or as regards his humanity? Or as respects his complex person, God-Man, Immanuel, God with us? Let us look at these points in the light of divine truth.

1. God is essentially invisible. He "dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see." How then can we know him? How then can we see him? That we might both know and see him he has been pleased in the depths of his wisdom and mercy to manifest himself in the Person of his dear Son. This is John's blessed testimony: "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The same witness also declares, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life" (1 John 1:1); and that this

essential Word might be manifested, John also testifies, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (John 1:14.) This, then, is our unspeakable mercy, that we have not to go far to find God; for having revealed himself in the Person of his dear Son, when we see Christ we see God. As the Lord answered his unbelieving disciple when he said unto him, "Lord, show us the Father:" "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, show us the Father?" Here, then, is our chief blessedness, that the God in whom we live and move and have our being, the great and glorious self-existent I AM, who fills heaven and earth with his glory, is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. We want a Person to be the object of our faith; for faith needs an object, and especially in the matter of worship or service, a personal object. Do you not feel that you want some personal object to believe in, to hope in, to worship, to adore, to love? The feeling of this want has been the source of idolatry. When men had lost the knowledge of the only true God and could not look forward in faith to the Messiah who was to be revealed, they set up a visible idol that they might have a personal object to worship—a visible representation, as they conceived, of invisible Deity. A personal God, then, is an object with us of prime necessity, for we cannot worship what is unknown or wholly invisible. The invisible God therefore has made himself visible in the Person of his dear Son; and when he is pleased to shine into the heart, he makes himself known there in his personal glory, as the apostle beautifully speaks, "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6.) It is in the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, that God is thus

seen and known; and when the Lord the Spirit takes the veil of unbelief and ignorance off our heart, then is fulfilled that inward transformation into the same glory of which the apostle testifies: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18.)

Now it is most necessary for our faith and hope to believe in this glorious gospel which thus makes known the glory of God in the face, or, as the word might be rendered, the Person of Jesus Christ; for we cannot worship or serve God under a sense of his burning displeasure in a broken law. We cannot draw nigh to the Majesty of heaven as a consuming fire, any more than the children of Israel could draw near to Sinai's blazing top. But he has come near to us when we could not come nigh to him. He has come near to us in the face of a Mediator; "for there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Thus he is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and if we believe in his name he is our God also. As our Lord blessedly said by Mary to his disciples, "Go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Why your Father? Because my Father. Why your God? Because my God.

But you will be desirous to hear more clearly and particularly, in what sense the God of all our mercies is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is then, "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ" in various ways.

1. First, he is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ as the eternal Father of the eternal Son. In that sense therefore, as regards his *Deity and Sonship*, he is the God of Our Lord Jesus Christ; the second Person in the sacred Trinity being the

true, proper, and eternal Son of the Father in truth and love; in that highest, truest, noblest sense therefore he is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whilst we firmly hold the essential co-eternity and co-equality of the Son with the Father, we fully accept that peculiar relationship which he bears to him as being his only begotten Son; and though reason cannot understand or explain the nature of this relationship, yet faith receives, and love embraces the divine testimony that he is "the Son of the living God," and as such, God is his God.

2. But in his *human* nature, in what he is as God's servant he bears that peculiar relationship to the Father whereby God is his God. Nor will you fail to observe a peculiar blessedness in this circumstance that in every relation which the Lord Jesus bears to his heavenly Father, God is still his God. The Son of God lost nothing of his Sonship and Deity by taking our nature into union with his divine Person. Though he was God's servant ("Behold my servant whom I uphold," Isai. 42:1) he was still God's Son; and though reduced so low as to say of himself, "I am a worm and no man," yet God was still his God; for in his lowest humiliation, in the hour of his bitterest agony, he could still cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." It is beautiful and blessed thus to trace what our Lord was before he came into the world, and what he was when he was in the world, and to see by the eye of faith, that as he was the brightness of God's glory and the express image of his Person when he was in heaven, so though he humbled himself and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men, he lost not an atom of his eternal glory, but still possessed the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

3. He is also "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ" as the *God-Man Mediator* at the right-hand of the Father. God has

exalted Jesus with his own right-hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins, and in this sense therefore he is his God. Nothing is more strengthening to faith than to view the Son of God in his present glory as the great High Priest over the house of God. This gives us a holy confidence to come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need. We see in a crucified Christ, a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and in a risen, ascended, and glorified Christ, an Intercessor, an Advocate, a Mediator ever presenting to the Father the virtue and validity of his finished work. We are thus encouraged, "to draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." (Heb. 10:22.) This view of Jesus in his mediatorial glory at the right hand of the Father, gathers up our roving thoughts, guides and influences our conceptions of God, and restraining all those vague, wild, and delusive ideas which our natural heart might frame of him, which have ever been the fruitful root of error and false worship, draws up our faith and affections to him as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and teaches us to worship him acceptably in the Son of his love. The connection of this title with the blessings prayed for, I shall have occasion presently to explain.

ii. The second title by which the apostle calls him, is "*The Father of glory*," which may mean, according to a common Hebraism, the glorious Father. But I prefer to take the words in their natural and literal sense, and to understand that by "the Father of glory," is meant, that God is the Author of all glory. As he is the Father of mercies by being the Author of all mercies; so he is the Father of glory by being the Author of all glory. From him all glory comes; to him all glory flows. Hence, heaven itself would not be glorious unless God were

there in his essential glory; earth would not be glorious unless it were the creation of God's fingers and bore upon every object the impress of a divine hand. All glory comes from him who dwells in essential glory, and out of him and without him, glory there is none. Thus, of all the glory that fills heaven and earth, of all the glory that will ever fill the souls of the redeemed to all eternity, God is the Father, as its essential Source and only Fountain; and as giving it forth to the creatures of his hand, that illuminated with its light and possessed of its life, they may show forth that glory here in its beginning, hereafter in its ending, if that may be called ending, which will be the blaze of an eternal day, where neither sun, nor moon, nor stars will be needed, for "the glory of the Lord will lighten that heavenly city and the Lamb will be the light thereof."

But now take these two titles in their connection with each other, and as bearing upon our personal experience.

As "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ," he draws forth our faith, our hope, and our love; as "the Father of glory" he impresses our mind with a solemn reverence of his great name, and gives us a foretaste also of the glory which shall be revealed. Thus would we worship him in spirit and in truth, would we draw near to his throne with some measure of holy confidence, would we love his name, we do so as viewing him by faith the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. Would we be impressed with a solemn reverence of his dread Majesty, and yet look forward with a good hope through grace to the glory to be revealed, we bow down before him as "the Father of glory." Thus these titles are not mere arbitrary names, but lessons pregnant with most instructive and establishing truth. When you approach the throne of grace, the Lord the Spirit give you a view of him whom you worship as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father

of glory; and you will find that one of these titles will draw forth your faith upon the Son of God, and the other will aid in solemnising and sweetening your earnest petitions for spiritual blessings.

II.—But I now pass on to the special blessing prayed for by the apostle. This was "*the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.*"

Wisdom is bounded by the confines of earth, and never can rise beyond it. Needful for time, it is useless for eternity. It would be foolish to disparage and cast contempt upon human intellect, and what it has achieved not only in matters of pure science, but as providing in various ways for the daily necessities and conveniences of life. What but intellectual science, combined with practical skill, has built and navigates our ships, constructed our railways, devised and made our telegraphs, not to say, raised our crops, furnished our houses, and filled the land with wealth and abundance? Daily to enjoy all its benefits, and yet to cast contempt on human science and wisdom is to abuse the hand which feeds and clothes us, warms our houses, and lights up our streets. Nor would we disparage mental intellect when rightly guided by the blessed Spirit, or human learning when duly sanctified to the glory of God and the good of his people. It is only when it steps out of its place, and claims to understand divine things without divine teaching, that it is to be thrust aside as an intruder. No man by natural wisdom ever knew God. Well, therefore, and wisely does Zophar speak, "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." (Job 11:7, 8, 9.) So high, so deep is the knowledge of God, that it is out of the sight and out of the reach of man's natural understanding; for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him;

neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." There is, then, a wisdom which earth knows not, and of which the only wise God is the Author and Giver. This is the wisdom spoken of in our text.

But you will observe that the blessing prayed for is not wisdom, even heavenly wisdom simply and nakedly, but "the Spirit of wisdom," by which I understand the Holy Ghost, who is the Author and Giver of all spiritual wisdom. But this ascription of the gift of wisdom to the blessed Spirit may seem, at first sight, to clash with what I have just advanced, that God, that is, God the Father, is the Giver of all wisdom. But not so. Each person in the Trinity being alike God, each may be said to be the Author and Giver of all grace and glory. Thus, not only is the Father the Giver of all wisdom, and the Holy Ghost the Author of it by his teaching and inspiration, but our blessed Lord, the Son of the Father in truth and love, is said to be of God "made unto us wisdom," and this is not so much by imputation as by all wisdom dwelling in his fulness, and his giving out of that fulness wisdom to supply all our need and make us wise unto salvation. When our gracious Lord went up on high, he received gifts for men, and especially the gift of the Holy Ghost, as was made manifest on the day of Pentecost, as Peter testified on that memorable occasion, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." (Acts 2:32, 33.) When, then, the apostle prays that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto the Ephesian saints the Spirit of wisdom, it was the expression of his heart's desire that God would fulfil in their experience, the promise which he had given to his dear Son by bestowing upon them the Spirit of wisdom to lead them into all truth.

Now, what is the first lesson which the Spirit of wisdom as thus given, writes upon our hearts when he is sent to make us wise unto salvation? Is not his first lesson that which teaches us to flee from the wrath to come? Is it not his first gracious work to show us what we are as sinners before a holy God, by planting convictions of sin in our breast? And does he not with those convictions, communicate a secret power whereby there is a fleeing from the wrath thus apprehended? Until the Spirit has given us wisdom to flee from the wrath to come, under that cloud of wrath we must needs be; for the wrath of God abideth on him who believeth not in his dear Son. (John 3:36.) Similarly, until he give us wisdom to flee from the curse of the law to the blessing of the gospel, we are still under the curse and bondage of the law. Until he has given us wisdom to see, and faith to believe in the Son of God so as to embrace him in faith and affection as revealed in the word, we are still under guilt and condemnation. Putting these things therefore together, we may say that the Spirit of wisdom thus given, instructs us mainly in these two important lessons: what we are by nature and what we are by grace; what we have to flee from and what we have to flee unto; what sin is and what salvation is; what is man's misery and what is God's mercy. Let this suffice for the present to show what the Spirit of wisdom is, for I shall have other points to touch upon before I finish my subject.

ii. He is also called in our text, "*the Spirit of revelation.*" There is much divine truth and gracious experience couched in these words. However men may hate and despise the doctrine of inward revelation to the soul now by the power of the Spirit as distinct from the outward revelation in the word of truth by the same Spirit, I am thoroughly satisfied in my own mind, that no man can rightly and savingly know the things of God but by the Spirit of revelation. Nor do I believe

that Christ can be effectually known until revealed unto and in us by the Spirit. Is not this the Lord's own testimony? "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (John 14:21.) Is not Christ manifesting himself the same as Christ revealing himself? And does not Paul speak of God's revealing his Son in him (Gal. 1:16), of Christ being formed in us (Gal. 4:19), and of being in us, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27)? Surely these revealed and inward blessings are something more than the outward revelation of Christ in the written word.

But there is sometimes a misunderstanding of what is meant by the word revelation. Misled by the current meaning of the word, and not exactly knowing or attending to its true signification, whilst most are deriding all idea of inward revelation in these days, some are looking for and expecting something mysterious which God has never promised in the word, and which he rarely or scarcely ever gives; and others by such expectations lay themselves open to the delusions of Satan as an angel of light. We are not to look for dreams, visions, voices, supernatural appearances, sights in the sky, open and outward views of Christ in his glory, or of Christ hanging upon the cross. We are not to expect or even desire any thing that is visible, something which the eye of sense might almost apprehend or the bodily finger almost touch. I cannot, I dare not, limit the power or the wisdom of God: and I doubt not that some, if not many of the Lord's people, have been so powerfully impressed by what they have seen and heard of and from the Lord, that it was to them as if they had actually seen his bodily shape or heard his spoken voice. But we walk by faith, not by sight, and if we seem to see invisible things, we see them only by the eye of faith, or if we hear gracious words, we hear them only by the ear of

faith. God in his word has given no promise to the natural eye or the natural ear; nor are we saved by what our natural eyes see or our natural ears hear. It is by grace we are saved through faith, and not by seeing supernatural sights or hearing audible words. The apostle Paul was indeed caught up to the third heaven, and there heard unspeakable words, and doubtless viewed ravishing sights; but the Holy Ghost has drawn a veil over them, for the apostle says of them, that they were "things not lawful for a man to utter."

But I do not know a better explanation of the word "revelation" than is contained in the signification of the term itself. It means, literally, uncovering, or taking a veil off an object. There are two of those veils which the Spirit of wisdom and revelation takes off. There is a veil by nature upon the heart and a veil upon the word, and revelation is a removing of these two veils, and that at the same time and by the same power. When, then, this double veil is graciously taken off by the Spirit, he becomes a Spirit of revelation. You will find this double veil spoken of in 2 Cor. 3, where the apostle is speaking of the veil which Moses put over his face. When, then, we turn to the Lord by the power of his grace, the veil is taken away both from the heart and from the word. Thus, as we are to believe nothing except what is written in the word; so we can know nothing, vitally, spiritually, savingly, except what is revealed in the heart. God does not speak with a new revelation from heaven, nor give us something with his own voice from above, as though he would furnish us with a new Bible, or reveal to us some fresh truth not contained in it. All truth is in the Scripture; but though truth is in the Scripture, there is a veil over the book of God, so that we can neither understand nor believe it until it is removed. But when the Lord the Spirit is pleased to take the veil of unbelief and ignorance from off the mind, and to remove the veil from off the word of truth, and thus gives

us power to receive and believe what God has there written, this is a revelation, or an uncovering of the word without, and the heart within; and the Spirit who works this, is a Spirit of revelation; for it is the Lord the Spirit who takes the veil away, as the apostle declares: "Now the Lord is that Spirit." (2 Cor. 3:17.) It is thus that Christ is revealed in the heart, as he is revealed in the word. Do we see by faith his Deity? It is because in the word he is revealed in the Scriptures as God, and the Son of God. Do we see by faith his humanity? It is because he is spoken of in the word as the Son of man. Do we see his complex Person as the God-Man? It is because he is revealed there as Immanuel, God with us. Many of the dear saints of God, when they hear or read of a revelation of Christ, are tempted to look for some supernatural sight or mysterious manifestation which God has never promised to give. He will reveal his dear Son in them and make him known unto them; but it will be in his way, not in theirs, in harmony with his word, and not with the fancies or expectations of their own mind.

III.—Having thus far, then, spoken of the blessing prayed for by the apostle, I shall now endeavour to bring before you, as I proposed, what he knew would be the *fruits* and *results* of this divine gift of wisdom and revelation. I mentioned that they were four.

i. The first of these fruits is to *enlighten the eyes of our understanding*.

Our understanding was darkened by the fall; so darkened that no ray of light remains in it of that knowledge of God which Adam possessed when made in his likeness and after his image. Unless, therefore, God is pleased to cast a ray of light into the soul to remove this native darkness, it still remains in the very shadow of death. Now, one of the first

fruits and effects of the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, is to enlighten the eyes of the understanding. You will recollect that I was speaking just now of the veil of ignorance and unbelief which is spread by nature both over our heart and over the word of truth, and that this double veil was taken away by the Spirit of revelation. As, then, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation takes off this veil, he at the same time and by the same act of divine power, enlightens the eyes of our understanding. The blessed Lord, we read, after the resurrection, opened the understanding of his disciples that they might understand the Scriptures. When Paul was called by grace, and Ananias came unto him as sent by the Lord, that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost, there fell from his eyes as it were scales. It is true that his natural eyes had been blinded by the brightness of the light which shone into them at Damascus' gate; but we may view this point also as a representation of the enlightening of the eyes of his understanding. The scales of ignorance and unbelief which before had sealed his eyes in blindness, dropped from them when he received the Holy Ghost. Then he saw light in God's light. So you, so I, though not called so powerfully or so miraculously as he, like him, once had our eyes sealed with the thick scales of darkness, ignorance, and unbelief. We read the word, but understood it not; we might even have heard the word preached, but we knew nothing of the truths sounded in our ears. There was a veil of ignorance over our heart, over the Scripture, and over the truth preached from the Scripture. We did not, could not understand what was addressed to our conscience in the clearest, plainest manner; nor did we care to understand it. But there was a memorable time when the Lord was pleased to shine with a ray of light into our dark benighted mind; and life and power attending that heavenly ray, there was communicated thereby a measure of spiritual understanding of divine truth. It might have been a word of conviction or a

word of sharp rebuke and reproof. God does not limit himself nor tie his hands to work in the same way upon the hearts of all his people. He speaks, and that with power to each and all of them through his word; and when he thus speaks with power his divine voice, as in creation, says, "Let there be light, and there was light." The apostle, therefore, runs a parallel between the light given in creation and the light given in grace. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6.) We cannot indeed tell *how* it was done, though we may know in some measure *when* it was done. Does not our Lord say of regeneration? "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.) But the effects of the wind are seen, though not the wind itself; and it is the effects which make manifest the cause. So we can, I hope, some of us, look back to the time when the eyes of our understanding were sensibly enlightened; when a mysterious light was cast into our souls, for we saw things as we never saw them before, understood them as we never understood them before, believed them as we never believed them before, felt them as we had never felt them before. It was then, for the first time, we began to apprehend the things of God as personal matters, as divine realities which concerned our own soul and our own salvation; and eternal matters were then laid upon our mind, which before we had neither thought of nor cared about. Now, I believe I may say, that until this be done, nothing is done. Until the eyes of the understanding are enlightened, no truth can reach the heart with any power; for it is clogged and obscured by a darkened understanding. The heart is like a piece of thick, opaque, or darkened glass, through which no light can enter, and it thus offers an effectual obstruction to the entrance of God's word.

But God makes his own way for his own truth; "The entrance of thy words giveth light." When God then speaks by his word, light enters with it, and this light shining into the dark recesses of the breast penetrates into those remote corners which hold the very roots of sin, those dens and caves in which every unclean reptile crawls and breeds.

Now, all the way through our journey heavenward, we shall find our continual need of this enlightening of the eyes of our understanding. Many persons, and amongst them, even some ministers who profess to know and preach the truth, cannot distinguish between the gracious enlightening of the eyes of the understanding and what is called head knowledge; and therefore, sillily and almost stupidly put down as carnal and worthless that divine gift which they cannot understand. But, in judgment, it is a great blessing to have a clear, enlightened understanding in the precious things of God. It is a great blessing to be able to read the word of God with an understanding eye; for an understanding eye ever goes hand in hand with a believing heart. Can I believe God's truth if I understand not God's truth? Can I believe a promise if I understand not the meaning of a promise? Can I obey a precept if I understand not the meaning of a precept? Can I believe in the Son of God unless I have some gracious understanding of his Deity, humanity, and finished work, atoning blood and justifying righteousness? I must have an enlightened understanding that I may apprehend God's truth as God has revealed it, or else how can I believe, experience and realise it? This enlightened understanding dwells in a regenerate soul. It is "the light of life," which the Lord has promised to give, that we should not abide in darkness; and was a part of the work given to Paul as an instrument, for he was sent to the Gentiles "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light."

ii. The next blessing is a *knowledge of Christ*, for the apostle prays that God would give them "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him."

We cannot know Christ except by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. But the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation communicated to the soul as a divine blessing, is given for the express purpose of leading us into a gracious, spiritual knowledge of the Son of God. You perhaps are mourning and sighing under a sense of your darkness and ignorance, and take that as a very bad mark against you, especially when you hear how grace enlightens the eyes of the understanding. Most of God's people have to lament and sigh under the burden of a darkened mind and an understanding not illuminated to the degree that they would desire. But this very sense of your ignorance shows that you have some light to see it, and the complaint you make is a proof that you have some life to feel it. The eyes of our understanding are for the most part only partially enlightened; the knowledge we have of Christ is but faint and feeble, scanty and imperfect. We only get glimpses, glances, and passing rays of his gracious Majesty. The Sun of righteousness has not risen in its full orb; it is not yet his day. The morning may have dawned, and the day-star may have risen; beams and rays may have shot athwart the air, and given us some knowledge of the Son of God; yet we may have much to complain and mourn over in our weak understanding, in our narrow minds, in our unbelieving hearts, and the difficulty and perplexity which often beset us through want of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. If the Ephesians had all the wisdom and all the revelation that they could have had, why should the apostle offer up this prayer for them? If the eyes of their understanding were so enlightened that they needed no further teaching, why should he pour his soul out before God on their behalf, that he would give them the Spirit of

wisdom and revelation, and enlighten the eyes of their understanding? It is because we sensibly feel our deficiency in these matters that we beg of God to give us the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation; as so desirous to know the Son of God for ourselves, and yet knowing so little of his Person and work, beauty and blessedness, grace and glory. It is because we feel so much of the old veil of ignorance upon the word and upon our heart, that we desire to see light in God's light, and that he himself would enlighten our darkness that we sleep not the sleep of death. It is because we know so little of the darling Son of God, and feel the scantiness and imperfection of our knowledge, that we long for a clearer, brighter, and more blessed revelation of him to our soul. Write not therefore bitter things against yourself because your understanding is so weak and your knowledge of Christ so feeble, and you have not attained to that degree of faith and hope and love you desire. Who in this life sees but through a glass darkly? Who in this life has those clear and bright views of the Son of God with which he would desire to be favoured? And yet we are brought to this point to say with the apostle, "Yea, doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord."

iii. But the apostle speaks of another fruit of this gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation—that *"they might know what was the hope of his calling."*

Calling is a special blessing of God, for it leads to every other blessing. "Whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Divine calling is the beginning of divine life. But there is a blessed hope stored up in the bosom of this calling which cannot be realised till the calling itself is made plain. We are therefore bidden to make our calling and election sure, because in the bosom of the calling there is lodged a hope which can only expand itself as

the calling is made clear. We may compare it to a rose, or any other flower just in bud. In the bosom of the rose there are petals enfolding themselves leaf over leaf; but when the rose expands itself in full bloom, then the bosom of the rose comes up to view. So in the bosom of calling there is lodged every blessing that God can give for time and eternity, especially what the apostle calls the "hope of eternal life." Now, what the apostle prays for is, that the saints of God might know "what is the hope of this calling;" in other words, that they might clearly and fully realise their calling as being of God; be able to look back upon the first work of grace upon their soul; and by believing *that* to have been wrought in their heart by the special power of God, see what the bosom of that calling contains and gradually unfolds. This the apostle calls "the hope," by which I understand the hope of eternal life; the hope of salvation by the Son of God; the hope that all things shall work together for their good; the hope that Satan shall be defeated and all his arts and arms put to the rout; and that when they have journeyed through life's lonely, sorrowful vale, they shall at last be welcomed to the mansions of the blest. In fact, every thing which hope embraces, and in which it anchors, may be considered as embosomed in our call by grace; and as the hope thus engendered is made more and more clear, it becomes more manifestly "an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."

When then, the eyes of your understanding are enlightened to see your calling plain and clear; when the Spirit of wisdom and revelation is given to you in the knowledge of Christ; when the Lord himself manifests himself in his beauty, blessedness, grace and glory, it casts such a ray of divine light upon the first work of grace upon the soul, which might have lain long obscured; and it so sweetly assures the believer that God has called him by his grace, that every

blessing which God can give seems locked up and enfolded in it. This part of gracious experience is very desireable to be able to realise, for we often do not know what is the hope of our calling. We grovel here below, fond of these earthly toys, swallowed up it may be by carking cares and worldly anxieties, and covered over with the folds of time and sense. But there are times and seasons when the Lord is pleased to enlighten the eyes of the understanding, and give the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. And what is the effect? To see what is the hope of his calling, and that by it God has called us to his eternal glory; to the knowledge and enjoyment of himself; from sin to salvation, from law to gospel, from misery to mercy; from hell to heaven; for this calling is a special token of God's everlasting love to our souls. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

iv. The last fruit and result of the gift of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ is to know "the riches of the *glory of his inheritance in the saints.*" I wish that time and strength were allowed me to unfold all the blessedness contained in these words; but I can only give you a sip out of this rich, overflowing spring.

God is the inheritance of his saints, and what is more astonishing still, the saints are the inheritance of God, and especially of God's dear Son; and so delighted is he with his inheritance that he says in one of the Psalms, in the language of prophecy, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." (Psl. 16:6.) That these are the words of Christ is evident from the connection, for he says in the same psalm "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption." All the delight that the church takes in Christ is but a drop compared with the ocean of Christ's delight in

her. We can only love to the utmost of finite power; he loves to the utmost of infinite power. Our love, therefore, is finite and human; his love is infinite and divine. The delight therefore that Christ takes in the church as far exceeds the delight which the church takes in him, as what is infinite exceeds what is finite, as God is greater than man. The church, then, is Christ's inheritance; and as his mystical body consists wholly of saints, his inheritance is said to be in the saints. O, what must have been the love of Christ's heart to his beloved bride to move him to come down from heaven to earth and wade through a sea of suffering and blood to redeem her from the lowest! O what love was there? And what an inheritance! How glorious in his eyes, though so mean and worthless in the eyes of man. Nay, glorious in his eyes, even amidst all the depths of the fall; for our gracious Lord saw and loved the church, not in her filth and rags, but resplendent in all the beauties of holiness. He saw her as his darling bride, radiant in all the splendours of heaven, clothed in a robe of righteousness, and decked with those resplendent jewels with which he himself had adorned her. Hear her language as thus decked and adorned: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." This glorious church, then, is Christ's inheritance; and the apostle prays that we may know the riches of his glory in this inheritance, that we may look beyond a few poor dying men and women, look beyond the wrappings of the creature, and see what a saint of God really is as dressed in immortal robes, and made meet to sit down at the supper of the Lamb. We now see men and women wrapped in the miserable rags of our fallen humanity; but we do not see in them what they will be when resplendent with all the glories of heaven. But Christ sees

them as we do not, comely in his comeliness and complete in him. If, then, we were able to look a little beyond these mere trappings of humanity and these creature rags, which wrap up a mortal body and contain in the rags of mortality an immortal soul, and could realise that one day these rags of mortality will be changed into a glorious body, according to the pattern of the glorified body of Christ, we should enter a little into Christ's love for the church, and the certainty that every saint would be brought to see him as he is and to dwell with him in the matchless perfection of his own glorious splendour.

How these things should lift us up out of the mud and mire of this wretched world. If the God of our Lord Jesus Christ would but give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ; if he would but enlighten the eyes of our understanding; if he would give us to know more what is the hope of our calling and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, we should not be such muck-worms, raking and scraping a few straws together, and running about like ants with our morsel of grain. We should have our affections fixed more on things above; we should know more of Christ, enjoy more of Christ, be more like Christ, and walk more as Christ walked; we should love the saints of God more, esteem them more, honour them more, and bear with them more; and we should look forward to an eternal inheritance, when mortality would be swallowed up of life. If these things were brought into our hearts with divine power, how they would sweeten every bitter cup and carry us through every changing scene, until at last we were landed above to see the Lord as he is in the full perfection of his uncreated glory.