

Paul's Farewell Discourse at Ephesus.

by John Gill

The apostle Paul commends the brethren to God and the word of His grace, emphasizing the importance of relying on God's power and the gospel to build them up and give them an inheritance.

Scripture: Psalm 33:6, John 1:1, John 1:14, Acts 20:32, Romans 14:12, 2 Corinthians 5:19, 2 Timothy 1:12, Hebrews 4:12, 1 Peter 1:4, Jude 1:1

Topics: "Grace", "Divine Guidance"

Description

John Gill reflects on Paul's farewell discourse to the elders of Ephesus, emphasizing the apostle's deep affection and concern for the church. Paul commends the believers to God and the Word of His grace, highlighting the importance of divine guidance and protection against false teachings. He reminds them of their need for God's grace, wisdom, and power to build them up and secure their inheritance among the sanctified. Gill underscores that true ministers should direct souls to Christ and His grace rather than their own works, ensuring that believers find strength and encouragement in their faith. The sermon concludes with a call to trust in the boundless grace of God and the sufficiency of Christ as the Word of grace.

Transcript

PAUL'S FAREWELL DISCOURSE

AT EPHEBUS.

ACTS 20:32

And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

This passage is part of the last words of the apostle Paul, to the elders of the church at Ephesus, whom he had called together to deliver his mind unto. He was an eminent instance of divine grace, and an excellent preacher of that grace, which he was made a partaker of. His work lay chiefly in the Gentile world; great part of which he traveled over; and, wherever he came, spread the gospel of the grace of God. Thousands of souls were converted under his ministry; and it is hard to say, how many Churches were planted by his hands.

The conquests which he, through mighty grace, was enabled to make, were far superior to those of Alexander, or of Caesar; and now he is returning to Jerusalem like a triumphant conqueror, as having with

success fought the Lord's battles in those parts. And, in his way thither, calls at Miletus, convenes the elders of the church of Ephesus, and declares his manner of entrance and his behaviour among them; how he had kept back nothing which was profitable to them, had used no artful methods to conceal his principles, but had made it his study, to declare all the council of God, and that in a way intelligible to the meanest capacities.

This he did openly and publicly; testifying, both to Jews and Greeks repentance towards God, and faith toward, our Lord Jesus Christ. Though, in so doing, he ran the greatest risk of his life, yet none of these things moved him; neither did he count his life dear to himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And knowing that they to whom he had preached, and to whose souls he had been useful, should see his face no more; he takes them, as witnesses of his faithfulness, and to shew his regard and care for them to the last, advises them to take heed both to themselves and to the flock of God; and assures them, that after his departure, grievous wolves would enter, and not spare the flock; and that even some among themselves should arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciple after them.

And now, having discharged a good conscience, and acted the part of a faithful minister, he takes his leave; and having no longer the care of them, as a faithful shepherd, commits them again into the hands of him who had made them his care and charge, in the words which I have read. And now brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, &c. In which may be observed the three things: I. An Endearing appellation, which he gives them, Brethren. II. An instance of his regard unto them, and affection for them; and that is, commending them to God, and to the word of his grace.

And, III. The motives which induced the apostle to commend them to God, and to the word of his grace. I. Here is an endearing appellation which he gives them, Brethren. This was a usual and familiar way of speaking among the Jews. Nothing more frequent with them, than to call any who were of their own country and nation, Brethren; though no otherwise allied unto them, in the bonds of consanguinity, Thus the apostle Paul calls all the Jews, being his countrymen, Brethren and Kinsmen according to the flesh, for whose salvation he had a great concern; which we must not suppose to be confined to those of his own tribe and family only.

And so Stephen begins his oration thus; men, brethren, and fathers. And perhaps, from this usual way of speaking among the Jews, the primitive saints took up this appellation, and gave it to each other. Sometimes we find it given to the multitude of believers, or such who were in private capacity in the churches, as distinct from apostles and elders. Thus it is said; The apostles, and elders, and brethren send greeting, unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch.

In our text it is given to the elders, particularly, whom Paul calls so; either because they were partakers of the same grace, and so had this title in common with the rest of believers, or else, on account of their office, being labourers together in the Lord's vineyard. And here may be observed the humility of the apostle; who was far superior to them in gifts, office, and usefulness. His gifts were, no doubt, far greater than theirs; and so was his office, being an extraordinary minister, an apostle of the Gentiles; and his usefulness abundantly exceeded theirs.

Yet he does not treat them with an haughty and assuming air, but puts himself upon a level with them, and calls them brethren. Thus imitating his Lord and master; who, being of the same nature with us, is not ashamed to call us brethren, though he himself is Lord of all. II. Here is an instance of his regard unto

them; and affection for them; which appears in commending them to God, and to the word of his grace. We are not to suppose that, in this commendation, the apostle intends the elders only, but the church also.

These were addressed, as being officers and representatives of the church, and as men capable of delivering to it, what the apostle should say to them. There are three things to be considered in this commendation. 1. The persons to whom the brethren are here commended. 2. The act itself, and what is intended by it. 3. What induced the apostle to commend the saints as he does. First, The persons to whom the brethren are commended; that is, God, and the word of his grace. 1. They are commended to God; by whom is meant God the Father.

The apostle, in commending them to him, commends them to his grace, wisdom, and power. To his Grace; to supply their need; to fit them for every duty he shall call them to, and for every trial he shall exercise them with. Such a commendation suits both ministers, and private believers. The former, who, notwithstanding all their learning, parts, and gifts, are insufficient for their work, without fresh supplies of divine grace. And private believers, under all their trials and afflictions, should make their application to God, who sits upon a throne of grace, and has promised that his grace shall be sufficient for them; which they always find, more or less, made good unto them.

Such a commendation as this you find in Acts 14:23, 26. They are also commended to his wisdom, to counsel and direct them in all their ways. Such a commendation is proper and useful, both to elders and others. Elders have need of wisdom from above, to behave themselves aright among the churches of the living God. Believers in common also, in their several states and conditions, should not lean to their own understandings, but acknowledge God in all their ways, who has promised to direct their paths.

They should commit themselves to him, to be guided with his counsel, and directed by his wisdom; because the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps. Likewise, the saints are commended to the power of God, to keep and preserve them. For it is by that alone they are kept; being weak and liable to daily back-slidings. They therefore should commit themselves to him, who is able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless, before the throne of his glory, with exceeding joy.

This they should do, to keep them from the sins and corruptions of the times; and from the errors and heresies which are now broached. They should with Jabez pray, that God would keep them from evil, that it may not grieve them: not only from the evil of punishment, but from the evil of sin, which brings it; which, as it dishonours God, so it wounds their own souls. We should not imagine, that we are able to keep ourselves, from being carried away therewith. The greatest believer, who has the largest measure of grace, if God should withdraw, leave him to himself, and not grant him fresh supplies of his grace, would not be able, with all the grace he has received, to withstand the snares of the world, the temptations of Satan, and the corruptions of his own heart.

We should always suspect our own hearts, and put no confidence in them. For, who can understand his errors? Therefore we should, with David pray, That God would cleanse us from secret faults, and keep us back from presumptuous sins. Saints should commend themselves to God, to be kept from error and heresies; and so the saints are here commended to God, for this purpose. It is manifest that the apostle had a regard to this; for he had observed, in the preceding verses, that grievous wolves should enter among them and that persons from among themselves should arise speaking perverse things, and should draw away disciples after them; and therefore he commends them to God, to be kept from falling in

therewith.

He commends them to one, who is able to preserve them safe unto an inheritance when false teachers, and those who followed their pernicious ways, should bring upon themselves swift destruction. Though the elect of God cannot totally and finally be seduced by men, who lie in wait to deceive; yet they may fall from their steadfastness in the doctrine of faith; and therefore such a commendation of them to God, is very proper; that they may not be like children tossed to and fro, with every wind of doctrine.

For that is both unbecoming and uncomfortable to them. Let not, therefore, the most established saint in the doctrine of faith presume in his own strength, and think himself immovable; but being conscious of his own weakness, let him commend himself to God, who is able to keep him from the evil of the world, and the errors of the times. 2. The apostle commendeth them to the word of divine grace. By which I understand, not the gospel, or the written word, but the Lord Jesus Christ; who is frequently in Scripture called, *the Word*, or the Word.

John makes mention of Christ under this name or title, in all his writings; in his gospel, in his epistles, and in his Revelation. He makes use of it in his gospel, chapter 1:1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Which manifestly declares his Deity, Eternity and Co-existence with the Father: and that he is a person distinct from him: and that we may not be at a loss which Person in the Trinity he intends, by the Word, he tells us, (in verse 14) that this Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

Also mention is made of Christ, under this name, by John in his epistles. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled of the word of Life. (John 1:1) Christ was from eternity with the Father, but has been manifested in the flesh; and the apostle informs us, that it was not imaginary, but real flesh, which he assumed. This he proves against some heretics of that day, by three of the natural senses, hearing, seeing, and feeling.

They heard him speak; they saw him walk, eat, drink, &c, and they handled him, and thereby knew that it was a real body which he assumed, and not a phantom. He calls him the Word of Life, because he is life itself, and the author and donor of it. In chapter 5:7, where he takes notice of three who bear record in heaven, he tells us, that they are the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and, that these three are one. So likewise in his Revelation, he speaks of him more than once, as the Word.

In chapter 1:2. he tells us, that he bore record of the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ. And in chapter 19:13, he represents Christ as a triumphant conqueror, and says, that his name is called, The Word of God. Now the reason why John makes use of this name, seems to be, because it was well known to the Jews, being frequently used in their Targums; some of which were then wrote. It is also thought by some, that *the Word*, being a term used by Plato, and his followers, as expressive of something divine; and Ebion and Cerenthus, with whom John had to do, understanding the platonic philosophy, he makes use of this term on purpose, it not being ungrateful to them, that he might the more easily gain upon them.

It is reported of Amelius, a platonic philosopher, that when he read the beginning of John's gospel, he thus broke out and said, "By Jove, this Barbarian, (meaning John) is of the same mind with our Plato, when he says, In the beginning was the Word." But I rather think, the former is the true reason why John uses it. Nor is it peculiar to him; but used by other inspired writers of the New Testament. So Luke, (chap. 1:2.), is thought to intend Christ, the Word, when he speaks of the disciples as eye witnesses and ministers of the

Word; who with much greater propriety of speech, may be said to be the eye witnesses of Christ, (according to 2 Peter 1:16), than of the gospel, or the written word.

And it seems very agreeable, that Luke, intending to write a history of Christ's life and actions, should, in his preface to Theophilus, make mention of him, under some name, title, or character; which he does not, if he is not intended by the Word. The apostle Paul is also thought to use it in this sense, in Hebrews 4:12. For the Word of God, is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword; piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

This, I think, is not so applicable to the written word, as to Christ. He is [the living Word of God](#); or the Word of God which liveth, as it may be rendered. It is true, this Word was made flesh, and was put to death therein. He was dead, but, as himself says, is now alive, and lives for evermore. He is the living Word, or Word of Life. Also he may truly be said to be [powerful, efficacious](#); for so he is in his death and sufferings, being mighty to save; and now he is in his intercession at the Father's right hand.

He will also, ere long, appear to be sharper than any two-edged sword, when he comes to judge the world at the last day. He will then pierce, to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and will shew himself to be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Then he will bring to light the hidden things of darkness; and will let the world know, that he it is, who searcheth the reins and hearts; which, I think, cannot be said of, and applied unto, the written word.

The following verse makes it still more plainly to appear, which is closely connected with this by the copulative [and](#). Neither is there any creature which is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Where the apostle manifestly speaks of a person, and not of a thing; and of one who is omniscient, and to whom we must give an account at the day of judgment; for so these words in the last clause may be rendered, [to whom we must give an account](#). [to whom we must give an account](#).

But to whom must we give an account? Not to the written word, but to a divine person, to God. Thus the apostle says, (Rom. 14:12) So then every one of us shall give an account to God. We ministers are accountable for our preaching the word, and you for hearing it; but the account must be given, not to the written word, but to Christ, the living Word. Nay, in verse 14, this Word is said to be an high priest. Christ, the Word, assumed our nature, and in it offered himself a sacrifice for us, as our High Priest; and as such, is passed into the heavens, and ever lives to make intercession for us.

The apostle uses this as an argument. with believers, to hold fast their profession, and to come with boldness to the throne of grace, for what they want. And, as the apostle uses it in this sense here, so he does, I apprehend, in the words of my text. My reasons for it are these, 1. Because the saints never commend themselves, or others, either in life or in death, to any but a Divine Person. The word signifies the committing a person or thing, to the care, charge, and protection of another.

Now, none but a Divine Person is capable of taking the care and charge of the saints, neither will the saints trust any other. They commit their souls to God, as unto a faithful Creator; and rest entirely satisfied herein, as the apostle Paul was, who could say, I know in whom I have believed; (whom I have trusted

with my immortal all, and with my eternal salvation) and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day. (2 Tim. 1:12) Now, certainly to whom he committed himself, he committed others.

Having had experience of Christ's care, faithfulness, and ability, he could here, as undoubtedly he did, commend the saints unto him, with the utmost pleasure and satisfaction. And, as in life, so in death, they commend themselves to none but a Divine Person; and that in imitation of Christ, who in his last moments said, Father into thy hands I commend my spirit. 2. Because to put the written word upon a level with the Divine Being, does not appear agreeable. A commendation of the saints, equally to the written word, as to God himself seems to be a lessening of his glory, and ascribing too much to the written word; but suits well with Christ, the essential Word, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.

To commend the saints equally to Christ, as to God the Father, is no diminution of the Father's glory; nor does it give Christ more than his due, or than he is able to perform but a commendation of them to the gospel, seems to do so. 3. Because, never in the whole book of Scripture, as far as I have observed, are the saints commended to the gospel; but rather that to them. The written word is committed to the care and keeping of the saints; not the saints to the care and keeping of that.

They are in the hands, and are the care and charge of Christ Jesus. We frequently read of God committing the written word unto the saints more especially, to the ministers of it; and of their committing it to others: (See 2 Cor. 5:19; 1 Tim. 1:11-18, and 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14, and 2:2.) but never of the saints being committed to the written word. 4. Because what is here ascribed unto it, suits better with Christ, than with the gospel, viz. which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance, &c.

It may indeed be replied, That saints are here commended to God, as the efficient, and to the gospel, as the instrumental cause of their building up, and having an inheritance: the engrafted word being said to be able to save us, and the inspired writings able to make us wise unto salvation. It must be acknowledged, that the gospel, in the Spirit's hands, is an instrument of building saints up. But then Christ is the greatest master-builder; he builds the temple, and he must bear the glory.

The gospel is, indeed, the map which shews us where our inheritance lies, and points out to us the right way unto it but it is Christ who gives it, and puts us into the possession of it. It is in, by, and through him, that we obtain the inheritance. Therefore, if we understand it of the gospel, it must be in a much lower sense, than if we understood it of Christ: for which reason, together with others before mentioned, I prefer the latter. Not but that the words may be profitably insisted on, agreeable to the analogy of faith, in the other sense; but then a Hendiadis must be supposed in the text, as Grotius and others think.

According to which, the words, as to their sense, must be read thus: And now, brethren, I commend you to God, who, by the word of his grace, is able to build you up, &c. But I see no reason, or necessity, to suppose such a figure in the text, when there occurs a good sense of the words without it; and one far more noble than that which must be affixed to them with it, and every way as agreeable to the analogy of faith. The sense which I have given of this text, and of some others already mentioned, is not singular; but what has been observed, and approved by some valuable divines.

Taking this to be the sense of the words, it will be proper to enquire these two things. Why Christ is called the Word: and why the Word of God's grace. 1. Why he is called the Word. Some think he is so called, because as the mental word, or the conception of the mind, which is called

Θετος, is the birth of the mind, begotten of it, intellectually and immaterially, without passion or motion, and is the very image and representation of the mind; of the same nature with it, and yet something distinct from it.

So Christ is the begotten of the Father, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; and is of the same nature with him, though a distinct person from him. But this may be thought too curious, and as falling short (as all things else in nature do) of expressing that adorable mystery of godliness. And, indeed, oftentimes, when we indulge our own curiosity, and give a loose to our thoughts this way, we run into confusion, and every evil work. For though Christ is certainly and really God, as well as man; yet I am afraid that our abstracted ideas of him, as God, of his Generation and Sonship, distinct from him, as Mediator, often lead us into labyrinths, and draw off our minds from the principal things we have in view.

God having set bounds around his inscrutable and incomprehensible Deity, as he ordered to be set about mount Sinai, when he descended on it; that we may not too curiously gaze upon it, and perish. It seems to be his will, that our saving knowledge of him, and converse with him, should be all in and through Christ the glorious Mediator. With this we should be contented. It is enough for us, that this Divine Person, who is called λογος, the Word, is God; for John expresses it in so many words.

As for those who deny it, they are not worth regarding; but ought to be treated as the enemies of Christ's Person and Glory. I rather think that he is called the Word, from some action or actions, which he has done, or still continues to do. That the Jews, in their Targums, understood by the word Memra, which they so frequently make use of, a Divine Person, seems plain and undeniable; and that this was the promised Messiah, is as manifest. I will only name one place, in the room of many, which makes it appear, and that is, Hosea 1:7, which we thus read; But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God.

The Targum thus: But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and will redeem them by the Word of the Lord their God.--Now I apprehend, that Christ is called the Word. 1. Because he spake for his people in the council of peace; and covenanted with his Father on their account. He then presented himself, and in effect, said, "I will be surety for these persons; of my hand shalt thou require them. And though it is certain, that they will fall into the depths of sin and misery; and bring themselves into the most ruinous circumstances; and become altogether undeserving of thy regard: yet, if I bring them not unto thee, and set them before thee, in all that glory which I viewed them in, in the glass of thine eternal decrees, then let me bear the blame for ever."

When, in this ancient council, the method of man's salvation was agreed upon; he addressed his Father, and signified his ready compliance with his will, after this manner: Sacrifice and offerings thou wouldst not; in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin, thou hast had no pleasure. As if he said, It appears to be thy will, that man should not be saved by any sacrifice of his own, whatever. Then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. (Heb. 10:5-7) The whole covenant of grace, which is an everlasting one, ordered in all things, and sure, was made with him, as the Word.

He spoke for every blessing, and every promise of grace, in that covenant, for his people; and entered into articles with his Father, for the security of them. You have a text (Haggai 2:4, 5), which speaks of Christ, as the Word, with whom God covenanted; where the Lord, by the prophet Haggai exhorts Zerubbabel, and Josedech the high Priest, and all the people of the land to be strong, and work, in rebuilding the temple; and for their encouragement says, For I am with you, saith the Lord of Hosts; according to the Word, that I

covenanted with you, when ye came out of Egypt; so my Spirit remaineth among you.

Here all the Three Persons are mentioned. Here is Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, the first Person, who promises to be with them; together with the Word, the second Person. The words, according to, are not in the Hebrew text; which Janius renders, Cum verbo, quo pepigerum vobiscum. That is, with the Word, in, or with whom I covenanted with you: and in his notes on the text, applies it to Christ, as it should be. So my Spirit, the third Person, stands and abides among you, to make application of it, and see all made good; which I, and my Word, have covenanted about and agreed upon. 2.

He is called the Word, because he spake all things out of nothing, in the first creation. Moses and John entirely agree in their account of the creation; and it remaineth no longer a mystery, why Moses so often, in the history of the creation, takes notice that God said, Let it be so, and it was so. For it was God the Word that said so; as appears from what the evangelist says, (John 1:2, 3) when he tells us, that the Word was in the beginning with God; that all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

All the three Persons had a hand in the creation of the universe; as may be observed from the three first verses of the first chapter of Genesis. It was God the first Person, who created the rude unformed mass. It was the Spirit of God, the third Person, who moved upon the face of the waters. And it was God the Word, the second Person, who said, Let there be light and there was light. All which three Persons, as being concerned in creation, are mentioned by the Psalmist in one verse: By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them, by the breath of his mouth. (Ps. 33:6, 9) Where are Jehovah the Father, the first Person; and Christ the Word, the Second; and the Breath, or Spirit of his mouth, the Third.

And because of Christ's particular concern herein, in speaking, and it was done; in commanding, and it stood fast: he is called the Word. 3. Because he is to us the interpreter of the Father's mind; like as our words, or speech, which is called *verbum* prolatum, or the word expressed, is the interpreter of our minds. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

Christ is the Word, who hath discovered the secrets of the Father's grace, the hidden purposes of his heart; and hath declared his mind and will to his people in all generations. It was he, the Word of the Lord God, whose voice Adam heard in the garden. It was he the Word, who said unto Adam, Where art thou? And it was the same Word of the Lord, who continued his discourse with him, his wife, and the serpent: and made the first discovery of grace to fallen man. It was he, the Word, who appeared to the patriarchs and prophets in after ages; and made still greater discoveries of God's mind and will: but never so full and clearly as when he was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

For then God, who at sundry times and divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers, by the prophets, did in these last days speak unto us by his Son. He, the Word, has spoken all his mind, and has made the clearest discoveries of his grace that ever was. 4. He the Word, who now speaks for us in the court of heaven. He there appears in the presence of God for us; acts the part of an advocate; demands the blessings of grace for us, as the fruit of his death; pleads our cause, and answers all charges and accusations.

His blood speaks better things for us, than that of Abel. Now for such reasons as these I am inclined to think that Christ is called the Word. But, 2. Why is he called the word of God's grace? I answer, 1.

Because in him is highly displayed and revealed, his Father's grace to poor sinners. God in pitching upon him to be a Saviour, and in sending him, his only begotten Son; and not sparing him, but giving him up into the hands of justice, commends his love to sinners, and shews forth the exceeding riches of his grace. 2.

Because in him, it hath pleased the Father, that all fulness of grace should dwell. Saints behold him, as full of grace and truth; rejoice in him, and receive from his fulness grace for grace. I shall now consider, Secondly, The act itself of commending them, which signifies to commit to the care, keeping and protection of another; depending upon his ability and fidelity. Thus the apostle must be supposed to commit the saints to the care, keeping, and protection, of God the Father and of God the Son; being well assured of the ability and fidelity of them both.

And his commending them to both, not only shews the equal esteem and regard he had for them; but also the greatness of his concern for the brethren here. This act of his must be considered prayer wise, as expressing the desires of his soul, that God, and the Word of his grace, would take them under their care, and preserve them safe to glory. Or else as an advice, or direction, to whom they should make application, and whence they might expect comfort, support, and safety. And so it is much like the advice which Paul gave to Timothy, when he said, My son be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.

I proceed now to consider, Thirdly, The motives which induced the apostle to commend the saints into the hands of those divine persons. This is expressed in the following part of the text. Which, or who, is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance, among all them that are sanctified. This may have reference, either to God or to the Word of his grace. I rather choose to consider the apostle as referring to the latter. I have already hinted what might induce the apostle to commend them unto God; namely, his grace, wisdom, and power; nor need we wonder, that he also commends them to Christ, seeing he is the Word of God's grace.

All fulness of grace is treasured up in him. Here are two things particularly mentioned, which seem to be the motives that induced the apostle to commend them to Christ, the Word of God's grace. 1. Because he is able to build them up. Ministers are instruments in building up of saints. They ministerially lay the foundation, Christ. All the gifts and graces of the Spirit, which are bestowed upon them, are for the edifying Christ's body, the church: and though they have not dominion over people's faith; yet they are oftentimes blessed and made useful, to be helpers of their joy.

Saints also may be useful one to another, to build up one another on their most holy faith; by praying together, by conversing with each other, and declaring what God has done for their souls. But Christ is the great master builder. He is the chief architect; and, except he, the Lord, build the house, they labour in vain that build it. The work is his. He is the builder; and he is the, foundation on which saints are built, and the corner stone that knits them altogether, though they have lived in the world at different times, and in different parts, and are of different denominations.

It is he that raises, and finishes, the noble superstructure of grace in the soul. He only having begun the work, is able to finish it and he will do it. We may be confident of it; for he is both the author and finisher of faith. 2. Another reason why the apostle commends the saints, not only to God, but also to the Word of his grace is; because he is able to give them an inheritance among them that are sanctified. And here are two things to be considered. The inheritance which he gives; and the persons among whom it lies. 1.

The inheritance which Christ gives. This is the heavenly glory. That inheritance which Peter (1 Peter 1:4) speaks of, and says, that it is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved in heaven. This is not

procured by the works of the law; for the inheritance is not of the law; neither are they, who are of the law, heirs. It is true, we read of the reward of the inheritance: but then it must be understood of a reward of grace, not of debt. For Christ gives the inheritance freely.

He took possession of it in the name of his people, and is, as I may say, a feoffee in trust for them. He is made heir of all things, and the saints are co-heirs with him. He gives them a title to it, which is his own justifying righteousness; and the evidence and earnest of it, which is his own Spirit. It is he that makes them meet for it, by his own grace, and will ere long put them into the possession of it, saying, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world. 2.

The persons among whom it lies. These are, all them that are sanctified: which at once points out the persons to whom it belongs, and discovers the excellency of it. The persons to whom it belongs are, all those that are sanctified. That is, who are set apart by divine grace, and distinguished from others, by a sovereign act of love, for the enjoyment of this blessing. So the word is used, Jude verse 1, where Jude inscribes his epistle, and wishes an increase of mercy, peace and love, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Christ Jesus, and called.

That is, who are set apart and distinguished from others, by the electing love of the Father; preserved in the hands of Christ, the head of the everlasting covenant, notwithstanding their fall in Adam, and their numerous transgressions; and called by the grace of the Spirit, to be partakers of all that which is prepared and designed for them. Or else, by sanctified ones, are meant, such as are sanctified by the Spirit of God; have a principle of grace and holiness wrought in them: and are enabled by faith to deal with Christ, for sanctification as well as righteousness.

For much of a believer's holiness lies in faith's acting and living upon, dealing with, and receiving from Christ, grace for grace; and, therefore, in another text, this inheritance is said to be, among them which are sanctified by faith, that is in me. Thus I have endeavoured to explain the text, and shall conclude with a few words, by way of reflection upon the whole. 1. Hence it appears, to whom souls should make application in their time of need; that is, to God, and to the Word of his grace.

Here only may they expect relief; from hence their wants may be supplied. Here they may rest in safety, depending upon divine ability and fidelity. Souls, here, have the greatest encouragement they can wish for to come and make application under all their trials. For one of these divine persons is the God of all grace; and the other has an inexhaustible fulness of all grace dwelling in him. The apostle knew what he did when he commended the brethren to these sublime Persons; and those souls may rest entirely satisfied, who have committed themselves into their hands; for, from thence, none can pluck them. 2.

This evidently shews, that those ministers have the greatest concern for souls, who commend them to God, and to the Word of his grace; who direct them to Christ, and his fulness; and not to their own works or frames, but to the grace that is in him. 3. It is also manifest, that such commendations and directions as these, are likely to meet with most success. It is the most likely way to build up souls, by sending them to Christ and his grace; and not to pore upon their own frames and duties.

When the minister has given them a long bead roll of marks and signs, what is the consequence of it? Plucking down, and not building up. Says one, "I am none of Christ's for I have not done so and so." "Nor am I in such and such frames of soul;" says another, "therefore the work of grace was never begun in me," So that here is tearing, rending, plucking down, and denying the very work of the Spirit, instead of building up; and what else can be expected from it? If souls would be edified and built up, they must go to Christ,

and his grace; and if ministers would be useful that way, they must direct them to that great fountain of supplies. 4.

Let us adore boundless grace, that we have the God of all grace, and the Word of grace to apply to; and that we have any reason to believe that these divine Persons have taken the care and charge of us; we having been enabled, by an act of faith, to commit ourselves to them; believing that they are able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-gill/pauls-farewell-discourse-at-ephesus/>

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