

The Glory of Gods Grace

by William Gadsby

Salvation is a free gift of God's grace, not something that can be earned or deserved through human efforts or piety.

Scripture: Romans 4:4, Romans 11:5, Ephesians 1:6

Topics: "Grace", "Salvation"

Description

William Gadsby preaches on 'The Glory of God's Grace,' emphasizing that grace is God's unmerited favor towards sinners, not a debt owed to them. He explains that salvation is entirely by grace, highlighting its branches such as quickening the dead, justifying the ungodly, and bringing prisoners out of bondage. Gadsby warns against the misconception that salvation is based on human works, asserting that true faith and repentance come from a deep awareness of one's sinful state and need for divine mercy. He encourages believers to recognize the matchless grace of God that transforms and redeems, leading to a life of praise and gratitude.

Transcript

"To the praise of the glory of his grace." (Ephesians 1:6)

As the Lord shall be graciously pleased to give me wisdom and strength, I shall endeavour to call your attention to three leading particulars;

I. What is grace, God's rich and free grace.

II. Point out some branches of the glory of God's grace.

III. Make a few remarks on some things as connected with our text, which the Lord has done to the praise of the glory of his grace.

I. What then is God's free grace? The word grace is in almost everybody's mouth who makes a profession of religion. "Salvation is all of grace; we must be saved my grace," are words frequently spoken. But if you will allow the bulk of professors to tell their own tale but for a few minutes, you will find that they either do not understand the meaning of grace, or else they do not mean what they say. There is a large body of professors of religion who say that salvation is all of grace, and then roundly assert that if God does not give all men a chance of being saved, he is an unjust God. What a horrible idea! God unjust if he does not give all men a chance of being saved! If that be true, then instead of salvation being all of grace, it is a

debt that God owes to rebel man, and if he does not pay the debt, he is an unjust God; and upon that ground there can be no real thanks due to him, for he only does that which to leave undone would impeach his justice; and if so, how can it be of grace? Grace is free, unmerited, undeserved favour; and if God would be unjust if he did not give guilty man a chance of being saved, then it cannot be of grace, but of debt. (Rom. 4:4)

Salvation is either entirely of grace, entirely of works, or of works and grace together. Now let us hear what God the Holy Ghost, by the apostle, says upon this subject: "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." (Rom. 11:5,6) Thus, beloved, you see that salvation is entirely of God's free grace, and not a debt which he owes to rebel man, nor does it in any measure proceed from the works of man, but is the rich, free, undeserved favour of God to poor, worthless, guilty sinners, who have awfully merited his righteous indignation. And this rich bestowment of grace is without the least idea of worth or worthiness in them upon whom it is bestowed. (2 Tim. 1:9); Tit. 3:5) Thus God's people will both see and feel that salvation, in all its bearings, is of God's rich, free grace.

We are often told by proud, pompous man, that salvation is within the grasp of every man, and that it is the duty of all men to whom the gospel comes to have saving repentance towards God and saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that if man has not a natural capability of doing these things, God would be unjust in punishing him for sin. Why, were it possible for the devil to feel shame, he would be ashamed of such a doctrine as that. God unjust if he does not give guilty man a chance of being saved! And if man has not a natural capability of performing the conditions of that chance! The very thought is horrifying to every really spiritual mind. The fact is, we are, in and by and as the effect of the fall of Adam, and by our own awful transgressions of God's holy law, already in a guilty, ruined condition, and stand in need of salvation. It does not need salvation, nor an offer of salvation, to justify God in condemning us. We are already guilty of breaking his holy law, and stand justly condemned by it. (Rom. 3:19) Talk about God not being just in damning guilty man, unless he gives him a chance of being saved! It is awful blasphemy. If ever we are saved, we must be brought by the invincible power of God the Holy Ghost to feel our lost, ruined, guilty condition before the Lord, and that we are so lost and ruined by sin that we have no power to help ourselves. In our legal conflict, we shall try, and try again; but all our efforts will prove abortive; for, with agonizing pain we shall feel that the disease is too deep, and the guilt too awfully great for any human arm to reach or cure.

But, say some, though man has lost his ability to obey, God has not lost his authority to command; therefore, it is the duty of man to have saving faith in the person, blood, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the fact is, man, in his innocent, holy state, in Adam the first, never had redemption through the blood of Christ. He never did, as an innocent, holy man, by and in his creation relationship, simply considered as the creature of God, possess either pardon of sin or justification through grace by the righteousness of Christ imputed; and, therefore, could not have saving faith in them. These are blessings suited to, and designed for sinners; therefore innocent, holy Adam, and all men in him, could not lose them by the fall, it being impossible to lose that which they never had. They, with all other new covenant blessings, were treasured up in, and secured by the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Head of the church, and for his church. The Lord created man holy in his own image as the God of nature; but supernatural, spiritual, free grace blessings were all secured in Christ. God never trusted Adam the first, nor any other mere man, with the care and charge of them, nor ever will. They were all locked up in the

heart of Christ before the world was. "It has pleased the Father that in Christ should all fullness dwell." (Col. 1:19) And, bless his precious name, he is full of grace and truth, and of his fullness his dear people receive, and grace for grace. (John 1:14,16) The eternal, electing love of God is the spring-head of all spiritual blessings, and matchless grace has given them all in Christ, and made them all sure to the seed of promise. This is the word of God, and according to that word we must either stand or fall. Ah! Say some of you, I do not like it. That may be, and a strong proof it is that you are rotten at heart. Your heart is not made sound and upright in the sight of a heart-searching God, by the divine, quickening, enlightening, teaching power of God the Holy Ghost. If the Lord had made your heart honest, you would like God's word, and though you might tremble at some parts of it, (Isa. 66:2) you would feelingly know that the things we have stated are what just suit your necessitous circumstances, and that you must either be saved by the rich, free, discriminating grace of God, or perish forever; and every gleam of hope you had in this free grace gospel would lead you to bless the Lord for it; and when, by the unctuous power of God the Spirit, you felt your interest in this glorious salvation, you would freely say, "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto thy name be all the praise."

Poor vain, proud man may boast of the wonders he both can do, and does; as it is written, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? But what says the answer of God? I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7:22,23) Who, my friends, can these boasters be? Surely not the people of God, so often called Antinomians. No, no; they have had their mouths stopped by the law of works, and boasting excluded by the law of faith, (Rom. 3:19,27) Therefore it cannot be they. It must be those characters who boast of their mighty doings now, who are often in effect saying, "See what we do for God; see our zeal for the Lord;" and they will do their best to carry it to the bar of God, and boast till the Lord sends them to hell, unless the Lord quickens their dead souls and makes them ashamed of their boasting, to feel and know their ruined, lost condition, and to cry out for mercy and pardon through the precious blood of the Lamb. But if the Lord breaks their hard hearts, gives them a tender conscience, and blesses them with vital repentance towards God and living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, revealing Christ in them the hope of glory; then they will feelingly know, heartily confess, and solemnly sing, "Salvation is of grace; sovereign, rich, and free grace."

O the matchless grace of God! What is it? Who can describe it? Let a poor worm venture to drop a hint or two upon it. It is the glorious, rich teeming out of the free favour of God the Father in election and its glorious bearings; of God the Son in redemption, and all he is and has, and has done for his spouse, the church of God; of God the Spirit in his quickening, enlightening, teaching, sealing, anointing, and sanctifying power. Every act of the eternal Trinity, from the first contrivance of the plan of salvation to the full consummation of it in glory, when and where the whole church shall be with Christ and like him, is all of the rich free favour and sovereign grace of God the eternal Trinity.

Now let me ask you, before I proceed, has the Lord ever teemed a measure of free grace into your heart? Have you ever been solemnly amazed that you are out of hell, and, from a feeling sense of your loathsome condition, cried, "O Lord, I am vile?" And have you been obliged to cry mightily to the Lord for pardoning mercy, and has the dear Lord ever blessed you with a feeling hope in Christ as the salvation of your soul? "O," say some of you, "I have had a pious education, was sent to a pious school, and had pious tutors, and when I came to years of maturity, I became more decidedly pious. I never experienced any particular change, and the minister under whom I sit tells me not to expect any, but simply to believe, and do my duty, and all will be well." Then your minister is one of the devil's quacks, administering the devil's

opium, and is doing his best to lull you asleep in carnal security. Eternal truth declares that we have all sinned; that we were "born in sin, and shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mother conceive us;" (Ps. 51:5; 58:3; Rom. 3:12) and Immanuel declares, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3) Whatever pious education you have had, if God never quickens your dead soul, communicating divine life and light; if you are never, in the court of your conscience, brought in guilty before God, and made to confess your sins with abhorrence, and sicken, under a sense of your vileness, at his feet; if you are never brought, from feeling necessity, to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," (Luke 18:13) and led by the Holy Spirit to believe in and rest upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, but are left to trust in your pious education and decided piety, and so make this the ground and foundation of your hope; you may think me extravagant in what I am going to say, but if this be your case, it is nothing better than idolatry. You set up your piety in the place of Christ, and if you die in that state, your imaginary piety will be fuel for hell flames. Do not mistake me. I do not mean to say that pious acts are idolatry. No; they are good in their place; but when they are trusted in, they become idols, being substituted for Christ, and thus rendered fuel for eternal burning. (Matt. 23:25-28; Rom. 10:2-4; Matt. 7:21-23)

But do I hear some poor soul say, "Ah me! I feel myself lost and ruined; and sure I am, that if ever I am saved at all, it must be by the free teeming out of God's matchless free grace, without any worth or worthiness in me. But I am so vile, guilty, and detestable, that I fear the Lord will never save me?" Come, poor soul; still cry unto the Lord, for his matchless, free, rich grace is just suited to thy condition; and his blessed Majesty says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." (Ps. 50:15) You are in your feelings ruined and entirely lost, and God's grace is free in all the rich bearings of it. It is the free teeming out of his sovereign favour to the poor and needy. Worth or worthiness can make no claim here.

"The poorer the wretch, the welcomer here."

And whoever is brought, from feeling necessity, to cry to the Lord for mercy, and really and truly call upon him in the day of trouble, shall in the end, receive manifestative grace in his soul; and of such a soul it shall be said, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles;" "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom. 10:13) Thus proving that grace is free, unmerited, undeserved favour of the Lord.

II. We now come, in the second place, to speak of some things connected with the glory of God's grace.

1. Grace quickens the dead, enlightens the blind, and makes the dumb cry out again, and at last sing for joy. 2. It pardons the guilty. 3. It justifies the ungodly. 4. It brings prisoners out of their prison-house, and sets the captive free. 5. It communicates divine holiness to the unholy. 6. It raises the poor man out of the dust, and the beggar out of the dunghill, and sets him among princes, even the princes of God's people; and thus stamps immortal dignity upon the degraded. 7. It strengthens the weak, confirms the feeble, and upholds the sickly. 8. It brings poor vile worms to have sweet and solemn intercourse with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. 9. It restores backsliders. 10. It brings millions of once poor wretched sinners to ineffable glory, and makes them more glorious than the holy angels; and all to the praise of the glory of God's grace.

1. Then it is one branch of the glory of grace that the Lord, in rich mercy, quickens the dead, enlightens the blind, and makes the dumb to cry, and at last sing for joy. By nature all men are "dead in trespasses and sins," (Eph. 2:1,5) and darkness itself. They are in very deed dead to all spiritual and true holiness; not

one holy act, holy desire, holy thought, or holy motion can they perform. They are totally dead to the image and life of God, and to all real intercourse with him. They are as unable to perform one spiritual act as a dead corpse is to rise out of his grave, and perform the common functions of life. Do I hear some say, "No, no, not so dead as that; for man is able to read or hear the word of God, and to go to a place of worship; the same legs which carry him to an alehouse would carry him to a place of worship, and with the same tongue and lips with which he blasphemes God he is capable of saying his prayers?" And so he may, in the letter of it, and a hundred things more, but all this may be done without one particle of spiritual life or vital godliness. You may go through a long round of external duties, as they are called, and add to that a natural belief of the various branches of divine truth, and yet be "dead in trespasses and sins." But if you have no divine life and light from the Lord, but rest for salvation in your external natural duties and belief, you are doing your best to damn your souls comfortably. Men may have a form of godliness, and at the same time deny the power; yea, and go about very zealously to establish their own righteousness, while they have never submitted to the righteousness of God, and cry Peace, peace, where God has not made peace, and so prove they are strangers to vital godliness. May God Almighty, if it be his sovereign pleasure, have mercy upon you, and strip you of your self-righteousness and self-confidence, quicken your dead souls, and make you feelingly know what poor, vile, dead sinners you are by nature and practice, causing you to feel your lost, ruined condition, and cry mightily to God for pardoning mercy.

When God, in his rich grace, takes a poor sinner manifestatively in hand, the first thing he does is give life and light. (Eph. 2:4,5; John 5:25; Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9; Ps. 119:130) Some good men have endeavoured to prove that God gives spiritual light before he gives spiritual life; but to me it appears that the Lord communicates them both at one and the same time, and they mostly act in the soul together: "In Christ was life, and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4) And again, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12) When this divine life and light are communicated, the dead soul is quickened, and the dark soul is enlightened.

We begin to see sin in the light of God's countenance, and even our secret sins are laid open to the conscience, and we both see and feel that it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God. The pure life and light of God, placed in the conscience against our vile deadness and darkness, horrify the soul; and though we may not be able to account for our feelings and sight, we do find that we have such as we never had before, and such as we cannot get rid of. We now become, in soul feeling, real sinners before a heart-searching God, and really tremble at his word.

We both see and feel that God is pure and we are impure, that God is just and we are unjust, and that there is an awful disparity between God and us, and we feelingly cry, "What poor, vile sinner like me can stand before such a holy God, whose law I have broken in so many ways, and whose majesty I have so often insulted?" By this light and life, the soul feels and sees its own inability to help itself, or take one step in self and of self towards obtaining either real holiness or happiness.

By this light and life, the living soul in the end both sees and feels that there is no way of access to God, nor acceptance with him, but in the person, blood, and obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ; but how to get at that, the poor soul cannot tell, till the dear Lord makes manifest in the heart, by the divine power of the Holy Ghost, the truth couched in the following branches of God's word: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" (2 Cor. 5:21) "And ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power." (Col. 2:10) When the glorious substance of these blessed truths is brought home to the conscience by the power of the Holy Ghost, the soul can then solemnly sing, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"

The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 27:1) And this is to the praise of the glory of God's grace. In some of God's people this glorious light shines more bright than the sun, and its rays appear to pierce through the whole soul; and with the light the Lord speaks in divine power, "Behold me;" or, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;" (John 1:29) or, "Look unto me, and be ye saved;" (Isa. 45:22) and with this makes manifest such a glorious display of the person, beauty, love, and loveliness of Christ crucified, as fills the soul with holy amazement, wonder, love, and praise.

Sin and guilt appear to have taken their flight never to appear again, and the soul is swallowed up in praise and adoration. The glory of God appears in all his works and ways; the soul seems as if it were translated into another world, and never expects to be in darkness again, but in very deed feels that blessed truth, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." (Col. 1:13) Though the Lord acts as a sovereign, and does not always shine in the same conspicuous way into the hearts of all his children, yet he brings them all, in a certain degree, to see light in his light, and feel life in his life, and know and feel that they have no salvation but in the Lord alone.

Do I hear some poor soul say, "I have never been able to sing that glorious song, and I fear I never shall be; yet I thirst and pant for it, and glad should I be to know the Lord had indeed quickened and enlightened my soul?" Hear the word of God to his quickened, spiritually taught family; "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10) "This portion of God's word," say you, "cuts me up root and branch, for I am all vile, and have no good works to boast of."

No, if you thought you had, that would be no proof that you were interested in that salvation which excludes creature boasting. One of the first branches of good works which the Holy Spirit produces in the quickened soul is to give the sinner a tender conscience, and make him honest before God. Then he does not conceal his sin, but, like an honest man, confesses feelingly that he is a vile, ungodly, ruined sinner, and deserves the righteous wrath and indignation of the Lord, and he wonders that he is not already in hell.

Whoever may tell him that he is not so base and vile, he both sees and feels that he is, and with shame of heart confesses it before God; and thus it is to the glory of grace that he is made honest at the feet of the Lord. "And is this a proof of life?" say you. Yes, if in very deed it is felt and truly confessed. (1 John 1:9) It is one thing to acknowledge it with the tongue, and another to feel it in the heart. A man may have head and tongue religion, and never feel one particle of it in his heart; and a head stuffed with the various branches of truth, when the heart is a stranger to them, only produces a religious brain fever, and the poor creature often goes wild in matters of religion.

But one proof that the Lord has put his life in the heart, is when in reality they feel themselves poor, deathly, loathsome, base, vile sinners, too deathly to raise themselves up in either hope or faith, or any other spiritual act. Suppose you put two dead corpses together; neither of them would either quake or move; but place a tender, living man bare upon a dead one, and the living man would shiver, and say, "Take me away, or I must die; it is so dead and cold I cannot bear it."

Just so it is in a spiritual sense. A man dead in sin is a total stranger to the deadness, coldness, and wretchedness of his heart. He has no real spiritual feeling. But a living soul feels, and groans, and signs and pants, and cries, and shivers under a sense of his deathliness. There are many like Saul of Tarsus before God quickened him. They have many good things to boast of; but when the Holy Ghost gives them

divine life, they begin both to see, feel, and confess that they are awful sinners before God; and eventually the poor will feel himself so lost and ruined, that if hell blazed before his eyes, and he were to hear the yellings of damned souls, he has no power to keep himself out of the horrible pit, and before a heart-searching God he declares and confesses that there is no help in him.

O, say some, I think in such a case I could hope and believe in and love God, and help my own soul. You have never been there, nor in close legal conflict, heartily tried with hell and destruction in your own conscience, or else you would know better. A poor soul who has had a dead fall, and felt his plague, must have a dead lift, or he never can rise. The poor soul that really believes and feels this has life at the bottom, a life which comes from the Lord, and centers in him, and shall never die; and though it may be like a spark hid in the embers, it shall break forth in God's due time.

Another proof of life is a thirsting for God, the living God, a real panting after the pardoning love, mercy, and grace of God, a spiritual hungering and thirsting after righteousness, such a thirsting as nothing but the Lord can satisfy. All that the world calls good or great will not do for such a soul, and the language of the heart is, "O that I could but in faith and feeling say, 'My Lord and my God.'" (John 20:28) It is not enough to say the Lord, nor thy Lord, nor their Lord, nor your Lord; no, no; the soul thirsts to say, "My Lord and my God;" and nothing short of the Spirit's bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God, and that God is his own God, will satisfy such a soul.

And when the Lord is graciously pleased to bring the following truths to the heart, it sets all right; and this is done to the glory of God's grace: "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call on my name, and I will hear them. I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." (Zech. 13:9) Then will the Lord blessedly say, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid"--hid!

Where? In Adam the first? No, bless your poor souls, if it had been, he would have lost it, for he lost all the holy life he had in his own possession. Then, say you, is it hid in myself? Were it hid in yourself, and at your own control, you would lose it too. Then, says the poor soul, where is it hid? "With Christ in God." O the wonders of matchless grace! Hid with Christ in God! Out of the reach of Satan or sin! Who then can destroy it? honours crown the brow of the eternal Three-One-God!

This blessed, spiritual, everlasting life can never be lost, unless Satan, men or sin be capable of storming heaven and plundering the heart of God; for it is hid with Christ in God, and the Lord declares that "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory. For a manifestation of this glorious life, so as to be able feelingly to say, "Because Christ lives, I shall live also," the quickened soul is daily thirsting and daily wrestling, often in his feelings saying, "O that I did but know that the Lord had pardoned my sins; that Jesus was in very deed my salvation."

A self-righteous trumpet-sounder may say, up and be doing; get holiness, get Christ, get God, get sanctification, and all will be well; but all this only increases the fetters and bondage of the soul, who really feels he has no might nor power, but is in very deed lost to all self-hope and self-help. If ever the Lord were to bring these up and be doing characters, in a spiritual sense, to the Red Sea, with the Egyptians close at their heels, crying, "We will overtake, we will destroy," and with insurmountable mountains on each hand, law and justice, and the red gulf before them, that would be the time to try their up-and-be-doing strength.

Let a poor sinner be brought into these straits, where nothing but destruction appears behind and before and on each hand, and let him feel as though he were forgotten of God, or only remembered of him to be abhorred by him and plunged into misery; this would try his free-will strength. In this state the poor soul pants, sighs, groans, and thirsts for mercy, rich and free mercy; and here the glorious Lord will appear, and exhibit to view a new and living way, give the soul a dead lift, lead him to Christ, or bring Christ to his conscience, bring him out of his dreadful troubles, set his feet on sure ground, namely, the Lord the Lamb, the Rock of Ages, put a new song into his mouth, even glory to the Lord, and cause him feelingly to know a sweet measure of the power of the glory of grace.

Another proof of divine life and light is a spirit of prayer; for God's living children shall come to him with weeping, and with supplications will the Lord lead them. (Jer. 31:9) It is one thing to say prayers, and another thing to pray in spirit and in truth. When the Lord sent Ananias to Saul of Tarsus, the Lord said, "For, behold he prayeth;" as if praying was something very wonderful. Now Saul was a stout pharisee, and they made long prayers; so that no doubt he had made and said many a bundle of prayers before then; but he never had in reality prayed before; therefore the Lord introduces it with a "Behold."

He knew that, in rich grace, he had granted him a spirit of prayer; and this blessed spirit he gives to all his people when he quickens their dead souls. And when the Lord communicates divine life and a spirit of prayer, he is sure to tear all their old formal prayers to pieces, set fire to them, and burn them up in their consciences. I know it was the case with me, after the Lord had quickened my soul. I soon found that I could not say my old prayers which I had been taught, and I believe, had you put a thousand forms of prayer into my hands, I could not have used one of them.

My conscience would have said, this does not suit me; I do not feel that; and the conscience having been made a little tender, it dare not use a swarm of words, without feeling, and call it prayer; therefore they must be thrown on one side. Perhaps some of you may think that you can pray most wonderfully. You utter words very fluently, and think you have a fine talent for prayer; but your conscience never asks you whether or not you feel what you say. No, no; you pray, and that is enough.

Do you not know that if saying prayers, or uttering words, is prayer, the devil himself both prayed and had his prayer answered, and that is more than some of you can say; for with all your fine prayers, you cannot give one proof of ever having had them answered. But the devils besought Christ, "If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go." (Matt. 8:31,32) Thus, I say, Satan had his prayer answered, and that is more than some of you can say, with all your fine prayers.

A mere muttering, prating noise, uttering a few words well put together, however great the talent manifested therein, is not real, vital prayer. It is only mocking God, and to such characters the Lord says, "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." (Matt. 15:8) But the poor, quickened, tried, distressed, tempted child of God will find that he cannot make long formal prayers.

His prayers are often very short, the same words over and over again, God be merciful to me; Lord, save me; or, Lord, help me. Well, poor soul, if you are led by the blessed Spirit to search the word of God, you will find that most of the prayers recorded there as prevailing prayers were very short; and, indeed, sometimes not one word is recorded as being said, but it was the prayer of the heart. We find, at the Red Sea, the Lord says to Moses, "Wherefore criest thou unto me?"

Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." Now there is not one word recorded that Moses said to the Lord in prayer, yet the Lord answered him, and made away for the people's escape. (Exod. 14:13-31) And when Amalek came to fight against Israel in Rephidim, Moses stood with his arms lifted up, and the rod of God in his hand, as an emblem of faith in, and prayer to the Lord; but there is nothing recorded of the words he uttered; and while his hands were held up, Israel prevailed; but when he let down his hands, Amalek prevailed; so when Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side and the other on the other, his hands were steady, and Israel prevailed.

But with Moses, Aaron, and Hur all seems solemn silence, very little, if anything, being said; but there was the prayer of faith, and it prevailed. (Exod. 17:8-13) When Peter was upon the water, and found himself beginning to sink, he cried, saying, "Lord, save me." The two blind men followed Christ, crying and saying, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us;" (Matt. 30-34) and the Lord opened their eyes. Sometimes the Lord appears as if he would neither hear nor regard the prayer of a poor sinner; yet his blessed Majesty keeps the poor soul to the point; and while he appears to put him away with his left hand, he secretly draws him with his right hand, and the poor soul still keeps on crying.

The poor Canaanitish woman cried, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David;" and he appeared to turn a deaf ear, and answered her not a word. She then went to his disciples, perhaps to ask them to intercede for her; "and the disciples came, and besought him saying, send her away, for she crieth after us." Then Jesus gave her a solemn repulse, enough to strike her all of a heap; for he said, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Now this woman was a Gentile, and if she took this in a literal sense, it left her no room to hope; but necessity will try hard; and, as some people say, break through a stone wall.

The dear Lord kept her still crying, so that she came and worshipped him, saying, "Lord, help me." Still, he gave her another repulse, and, if possible, worse and worse: "But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs." Now this repulse would have offended all the pharisees in the world, and they would have been ready to say, "A dog! No more a dog than your honour," and have left him in anger. But real prayer is not to be put off so; therefore she says, "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table;" as though she had said, Truly I am a vile dog; but I want a crumb of mercy, and only thou canst give what I need; therefore I cry unto thee for it.

And the Lord declared that great was her faith, and she obtained the blessing she needed. Now her petitions were short, "Have mercy on me;" "Lord, help me;" but they were felt prayers, and came from the heart, and the Lord answered them. (Matt. 15:22-28) The poor thief upon the cross had no very long prayer: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:42,43) The poor publican, with burdened conscience, stood, in his feelings, very far off, and dared not approach near, nor even so much as to lift up his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, as a proof of his soul torturing feelings under a deep sense of his guilt, and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke 18:13) His prayer was short, but the Lord both heard and answered it; for "he went down to his house justified rather than the pharisee."

When the Lord quickens and enlightens a poor soul, and makes him see and feel his guilt and danger, he has no time to form along round of fine worded prayers, nor can he feelingly read those man-made prayers already formed to his hands; but he breathes out before the Lord the feelings of his heart, though it be in broken accents: "Lord, save me; Lord have mercy upon me, a poor, vile sinner;" and sometimes, in sighs and groans, or words, he utters the same again and again. I tell thee, poor soul, for thy comfort and

encouragement, that when this is done feelingly from the heart, it is real prayer, and "The Lord will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer."

Thus, the Lord hears and answers the cry of the poor and needy; but the fine, long, self-exalting prayers of the pharisee never reach the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth so as to gain his approbation, and be a means of bringing blessings from above. I have often thought of what an old man once said, who had been at a prayer meeting. There had been several fine prayers said, but the old man observed that all of them stopped in the place till the doors were opened; none went through the roof, and reached the ears and heart of the God of heaven; and I believe this is often the case.

But a poor broken-hearted, sighing, panting, groaning, crying prayer, thirsting after Jesus, struggling hard for pardoning mercy, being unable to give up the point, though hard beset without and within, still breathing after God, this prayer reaches heaven, and takes the kingdom by a holy violence: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." (Matt. 11:12) This is the glorious power of God the Holy Ghost in the heart of a poor sinner. (Rom. 8:26,27) Though the child of God is at times so troubled that he cannot speak, (Ps. 77:4) yet the Spirit indites his unutterable groans, and they shall be answered.

An inspired apostle says, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought." Neither do we, except God the Spirit teach us. But since Paul's day, we have had many men living upon earth who did not only suppose they knew what to pray for, but thought themselves capable of making prayers for others for hundreds of years to come; and to the present moment there are a great many who think that it is nothing but a bad spirit that induces God's people to object to the use of these ready made prayers.

But however a man may be induced to vindicate these man-made prayers, they will never suit a child of God, when sin, death, and hell bear hard upon and in him, and he is at close quarters with God for pardoning mercy; nor do I believe that any minister of Christ uses them in his secret moments, when the Bible seems dark, and his soul is dark, and all appears dark without and within, and he can get neither text nor subject to go before the people with. Then the prayer book will not suit.

No; the man is then brought to close quarters with God and conscience; and I believe that if God and conscience were always tenderly and spiritually consulted, prayer books, whether composed by episcopalian or dissenter, would appear, as they really are to a burdened conscience, mere lumber. But all prayer indited by the Holy Ghost in the soul, though it is but in sighs or groans, shall reach the ears of the Lord, and he will answer it in his own blessed time; for "the Spirit maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

"Prayer's a weapon for the feeble;

Weakest souls can wield it best."

God sits upon his throne to hear and answer the prayers of his people, and though some of them are in unutterable groans, he will in his own blessed time send an answer of peace. He may for a while forbear, and appear as if he did not hear or regard the poor soul's prayer; still they cry unto him day and night: "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." (Luke 18:7,8) Bless his precious name, he has appeared, he does appear, and he will appear for the help and deliverance of the poor and needy broken-hearted sinner; and this is one branch of the glory of his grace. It is the Lord which puts the cry into

the heart, and influences the soul to thirst for God, the living God, nor will he suffer the soul to give it up till he drinks a little of the sweetness of sovereign mercy; and this is to the glory of grace.

Another display of the glory of grace is, that the Lord brings the poor sinner to feel that nothing short of Christ will do for him. He must have a glorious Christ, and a perfect, full, and free salvation in Christ. But, say some, if I can but get holiness of heart, will not that save me? I tell thee, poor soul, take away the Lord Jesus Christ, remove Christ out of the world, and there would be no real holiness left. If the poor soul had all the holiness of all the good men in the world from Adam's fall till now, separate from Christ, there has not been, is not now, nor ever will be, holiness enough, separate from the Lord Jesus Christ, to save one sinner. So that if you or I had the whole of what is called holiness, which does not come from Christ, and center in him, being thus destitute of Christ, we must be damned, with all our supposed holiness. Without Christ we must perish: "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) This blessed Jesus "shall save his people from their sins." (Matt.1:21) All the imaginary holiness in the world, without Christ, would not save one sinner. "But," say you, "you do not understand me. I mean, if I could extract all sin out of my heart, and live a life of holiness, then I should be saved." But that you cannot do; and if you could, it would not save you. What must become of the old score? You have already sinned, and living holy in time to come would not make up for past offences and guilt. If you think it would, you had better be off to Italy and make merchandize of your works of supererogation. If you believe you can now do enough and have some to spare for old offences, be honest, and set Christ at naught altogether, for you cannot see and feel your need of his precious blood and righteousness; nor can you feel your need of a work of grace begun and carried on in the soul by the invincible energy of God the Holy Ghost; nor do you really believe that it is by grace we are saved through faith; and that not of ourselves, but the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. (Eph. 2:8,9). If ever you are saved, you must be saved by Christ. You must be brought, by the matchless grace of God, to receive Christ by faith; to give him your whole heart, and glorify his name. Bless his precious name, it is he that saves his people from their sins, and this to the glory of his grace. But if you extract sin from your own hearts, you must suppose you save yourselves, and then, if you profess to come to Christ, what do you come to him for? Is it for him to admire you for your exertions in saving yourselves? If it be, you will prove in the end that what is highly esteemed among men, is an abomination to the Lord.

Christ is a complete Saviour; therefore the poor, sin-burdened soul may venture to come unto him with all his sins in and about him, and he shall prove the Lord able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him. May the blessed Comforter reveal Christ in you, the hope of glory, and lead you, in faith and in feeling, to embrace him as the Lord your righteousness and strength. Then you will sing the wonders of his immutable love.

2. But, secondly, another branch of the glory of grace is, that it pardons the guilty; and here let it be observed, that God is a just God, as well as a Saviour. (Isa. 45:21) He is bound by all the honours of his glorious nature, that if he forgives a sinner, he must be both faithful and just in forgiving him. (1 John 1:9; Rom. 3:26) When God's people are in legal bondage, they are horror-struck, and confounded to know how it is possible for God to be just and save them; for, in the court of conscience, both law and justice appear against them, nor can they have any hope or rest till Christ is revealed unto them the hope of glory; and though some of the people of God may have a notional knowledge of the method of salvation, it gives them no solid relief till the Holy Spirit brings a message of grace to their conscience.

Notional knowledge and the power of divine truth in the conscience are as different as death and life. And God's people will be brought vitally to see and feel that God's glorious method of pardoning the guilty is not like the method of an earthly king pardoning a man condemned to die. No; this pardon only costs the king a single stroke of his pen, as an act of mere mercy; but the method divine grace takes is a method that magnifies the law of God which the sinner has awfully broken, satisfies divine justice, clears the guilty in a way which honours law and justice, and makes a new and living way to heaven, crowning the eternal Three-One God with all the honour of his rich, free, sovereign grace.

All pardoned sinners will be brought to see and feel that their pardon comes through the heart-rending, soul-travailing agonies of the Son of God. Christ stood in his people's law place, bore their sins, and put them away by the sacrifice of himself; (Heb. 9:26-28) and it cost the Lord of life and glory groans, and sighs, and horrors indescribable. In his own soul and body he bore the punishment and hell due to the sins of his church. Their guilt fell upon him; tortured his soul, and broke his heart; (Ps. 69:9) and remember, poor broken-hearted sinner, that thy awful reproaches against the Lord broke the heart of Christ, and filled his soul with horrors, and there was none to take pity upon him or comfort him.

No, no; he must have gall for meat and vinegar for drink. honours crown his brow, though the flames of hell due to his people entered into his holy soul, he quenched them with his heart's blood; and when this precious sin-atoning, wrath-quenching blood is brought to the conscience by the power of God the Holy Ghost, it clears the conscience of guilt and dead works, and brings pardon and peace with it. So that the real believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of his sins, according to the riches of his grace.

The holy living, the solemn agonies, groans, sighs, sufferings, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, are the glorious solemn channel through which our pardon comes. O the matchless love and condescension of Christ! Hear, beloved, what he says, when speaking by the Psalmist: "O God, thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee." (Ps. 69:5) And again, "For innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me." (Ps. 40:12) "But," say you, "there was no foolishness or sin in Christ."

No, there was none of his own, inherently or practically; for he was holy, harmless, and undefiled as man, and wisdom itself as God, the holy, just, and wise God-Man; but in his mediatorial capacity, as the head, surety, and representative of his elect, all their sin and foolishness were charged upon him, and placed to his account. Therefore his calls them his own. (Isa. 53:4-6; 2 Cor. 5:21)

Some people say that Christ never bore guilt. Then what broke his heart? For he says, "Reproach hath broken my heart." (Ps. 69:20) But he really and in very deed bore all the soul-damning guilt of his elect, and under that he groaned, and sweat, and bled, and died, and through this solemn channel God proclaims pardon to our consciences. The precious sin-atoning blood of the Lamb forms a blessed part of the song of the church; (Rev. 5:9) and every soul that is led by the blessed Spirit into the solemn glory of the following portion of God's word will know this to be true: "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss," etc. (Phil. 3:8-10)

How gloriously sweet it is for a poor sin-burdened soul to feel pardon sealed upon his conscience by the anointing power of God the Holy Ghost through the precious redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes; and every fresh manifestation of this blessed pardon will be sweet too; for whatever fresh contracted guilt

the poor child of God may get upon the conscience; whatever labyrinths of confusion he may be brought into; God's manifestation of love, through the blood of the Lamb, is the method God takes to heal and deliver him; and in this blessed sense, he manifestly kisses their guilt away.

I remember, that after my poor heart had wandered from the sweet enjoyment of the Lord, and I had got entangled with some flesh-pleasing idols, the Lord brought me feelingly into chapter 16 of Ezekiel, for that chapter contains a solemn figure of the wandering, backsliding heart of a child of God. Almost every sentence of it cut me up, and I said to myself, this is my case. In a spiritual sense, I am this vile fornicator, I have acted this base part; whatever becomes of these base characters in the end, I must go with them.

But I think I shall never forget the conclusion, for a blessed one it is: "And I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; (Eze. 16:62) that thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." This, this is matchless grace. Here the Lord shames us out of our sins, and kisses us into obedience. (Jer. 31:19,20) This is the Lord's matchless method, and it is to the glory of his grace.

When the poor prodigal son left his father's house, took his journey into a far country, and wasted all his substance which was at his own control with riotous living, and a famine arose, he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country to feed swine, and he fain would have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat; but the Lord in rich mercy had made his throat too narrow for that. He could not swallow down those husks, nor feed his famishing soul upon them; and here he was, in a poor, forlorn, forsaken, filthy, famishing condition; for no man gave unto him anything that his soul needed.

At length the Lord brought him to his right mind, and he said, "I will arise, and go to my father, for in my father's house there is bread enough and to spare. Now, had not the matchless grace of God influenced his heart, he would never have come to this point; but famine pinches, guilt tortures, rags and filth put to shame, sovereign, rich grace draws, and necessities urge, while the secret power of God the Holy Ghost leads and guides, and he arose; but did he go in haste, and at once, to his father's house?

He appears to linger. A thousand thoughts occupy his mind, as, "How can I for shame face my father, all want, filth, and rags as I am, and all this the effect of my base proceedings?" Methinks I see him, and in him myself too, for I have been there. I say, methinks I see him peeping first in one corner and then in another, at a distance from home, hoping some one might see him and let his father know, and yet almost afraid of meeting his father, lest he should have nothing but righteous frowns and displeasure.

Sometimes he appears to start back, saying to himself, I cannot go; I dare not go. I am so vile, so base, so sinful, and so wretched, I feel quite ashamed of going; and if he sees any one of the family, though he wants to get home, yet he fears to meet them, and starts back, trying for a moment to hide himself. Still go he must or starve, for hunger pinches and necessity bears all down before it. But mark the glory of grace! While the poor soul stands trembling, groaning, sighing, fearing, and famishing, a great way off in his feelings, yet panting to be there, but scarcely daring to move that way, his father sees him a great way off; and what did he say?

Did he say, Yonder is that dirty, ragged, disobedient youth; shut the door against him, and tell him when he comes he shall have no home here; I will not see him, nor have anything to do with him: I will never own him again, nor suffer him to enter into my house? I say, did the father thus say and act? No, no. Bless his precious name, he ran and met him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and I believe he kissed his

dirty face clean; for the poor wretch came away from the herd of swine, all in his filth, and dirt, and rags, and we nowhere read that he, or anyone else, had washed him to make him in any sense tidy.

He crawled towards home, just as he was, and the father saw him, and had compassion on him, and kissed him, and ordered the best robe to be put upon him, and a ring to be put on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and a feast to be made, (Luke 15) yea, a feast of fat things and wines on the lees, (Isa. 25:6) and the family music to be played, and they began to be merry. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Thus saith the Lord to poor fearful Zion, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save; he will joy over thee with singing." (Zeph. 3:17).

Thus the Lord grants a manifestation of pardon, not reluctantly, but with all his heart, and rejoices in making his people rejoice. Bless the loving and lovely name of our Three-One God, in Christ, and by Christ, and through Christ sin is destroyed, and the sinner fully and completely pardoned: "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve;" (Jer. 50:20) and when the Holy Ghost brings this truth to the conscience, and seals it there, the pardoned sinner can then sweetly sing, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless his holy name." (Ps. 103:1) And this is a blessed branch of the glory of grace.

3. Another branch of the glory of grace is, that it justifies the ungodly. Perhaps some will shrink at this, and say, not so. Well, let us hear what the Lord says, for I had rather have one "Thus saith the Lord," than a thousand thus saith this, that, or the other wise, pious, judicious, learned man. One "Thus saith the Lord" brought home to the conscience by the power of God the Holy Ghost is worth more than, thus say all the great men in the world. When the Holy Ghost seals a divine truth in the conscience, it is as a nail fastened in a sure place.

Then hear the word of the Lord, and may the Lord the Spirit seal it on some poor sin-burdened sinner's conscience, and then he will sing for joy: "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." (Rom. 4:4-8) This is the testimony of God, and must stand, let men say what they will; and God's elect will be brought to feel that they must stand here, or they cannot stand before God at all in any other character than that of vile, guilty, condemned criminals. The poor living soul in his legal toil has worked and worked again and again, till he has worked himself out of the power of working, and is ready to say, "Damned or saved, I can work no longer," and in his own feelings to give it up as a lost matter, truly believing that it is all over with him; for, with all his workings, he can bring nothing but sin to recommend him to the favour of God, and he both knows and feels that the Lord abhors sin.

But when he is at his wit's end, the Lord is graciously pleased to reveal the above blessed truth to his conscience, and bless him with a living faith in it, enabling him sweetly to feel and sing, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." He is led by the blessed Spirit to search the word of God, and the God of the word brings to his faith and seals upon his heart one portion after another to testify of this glorious justifying grace, "the Lord our righteousness." (Jer. 23:6) "God hath made Christ to be sin for us, who

knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Cor. 5:21) And this blessed Christ is "the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth;" (Rom. 10:4) and, under deep depression of spirit, real faith will be vehemently struggling after the enjoyment of this truth, and the soul will be feelingly crying, "O to be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith!" (Phil. 3:9) The Lord reveals the glorious righteousness of Christ to faith, and faith receives and bears witness to the conscience of its reality, and of its blessed suitableness to the sinner's case and to the honour of God.

And it is one branch of the work of faith to enter into the blessedness of this justifying righteousness, and so, under the power and unction of God the Holy Ghost, to bring justification into the sinner's conscience, thus enabling him to say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." (Isa. 45:24)

Then, say you, if this is one branch of the work of faith, the sinner is justified by his own works; for faith is his own work. So you may think and say; but the glorious mystery of the truth is this, that faith, with every other grace of the Spirit, is God's work in us, for the Lord works all spiritual work in his people: "Lord, thou hast wrought all our works in us." "It is God which worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure;" (Phil. 2:13) and he works in them that which is well-pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ."

Whatever a poor soul has in him that is well-pleasing to the Lord, it is the Lord that works it there. Yea, his gracious Majesty works in them the work of faith with power. (2 Thess. 1:11) Therefore, they have no works of their own to boast of; and, after all, it is not faith as a grace of the Spirit, nor as an act, that justifies the ungodly; but the glorious object of faith, viz. the Lord Jesus Christ; for he is made of God unto us righteousness, and is the Lord our righteousness, and we are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

And this blessed righteousness, which is unto all and upon all them that believe, is received into the soul by faith. (Rom. 3:22) Thus grace, sovereign, rich, free, reigning grace, justifies the ungodly; and blessedly sweet it is when by faith we can receive and enjoy this glorious truth. Real faith is an eye to look unto Christ, a foot to walk in and with Christ, a hand to handle Christ, and a tongue to speak to and of Christ. Some people speak about faith as if it were a mere plaything, at the sinner's own control; but however brisk and lively men may be in natural faith, spiritual, supernatural faith, that faith which is the fruit of the Spirit and the gift of God and which works by love, of which Jesus is the author and finisher; this faith can only act and work as influenced and drawn forth by its divine Author.

This faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1) It is the Lord's witness in the conscience of the reality of that truth. There are times when the child of God, by this faith, under the divine anointing and sealing power of God the Holy Ghost, feels in his own soul that he is a child of God, and that the Lord is his God; and there are other times when the Holy Ghost draws faith into solemn acting's on God's truth, when, according to nature, it would seem as unreasonable for him to believe in Christ as the Lord his righteousness as it would be to talk about a blind man seeing, or a man without legs running, or for a man without arms fighting the greatest warlike champion in the country; for the poor soul feels himself as weak as a worm, with hosts of devils both within and without.

This is the time to try the nature and strength of faith; and when the soul is unable to believe in the promise of God, and to cling to, twine around, and hang upon Christ; and when it appears to be sinking a thousand fathoms in a moment, still to cry unto, and hang upon Christ, saying, "Save me, O God; for the waters are come into my soul; I sink in deep waters, where the floods overflow me; I am weary of my

crying; my throat is dried; mine eyes fail while I wait for my God;" (Ps. 69:1-3) if the Lord is graciously pleased to appear with this precious truth in the soul, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God," etc. or, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper;" then in very deed the soul will know, in some sweet measure, that God justifies the ungodly by and in the precious righteousness of Christ, and that he can rejoice therein.

Abraham believed in hope against hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, so shall thy seed be. Flesh and blood always make sad havoc with the promise of God. God had promised to Abraham a son, and he had long waited and prayed for it; but no appearing, free-will, like the free-will Arminians in our day and the same principle in our heart, set to work to hasten the promise of the Lord, and Sarah gave her handmaid to her husband; but this free-will act was a means of bringing forth free-will fruit, for it was the cause of abundance of grief, mischief, and confusion.

But when Abraham was as good as dead, and, according to nature, Sarah was quite dead, for it had ceased to be with her after the manner of women, then God renewed his promise to Abraham, and blessed him with faith in it, so that he staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. Now reason and nature said that such a promise, under such circumstances, could not be fulfilled, and therefore reason was ready to swear by the infernal den that there was no ground for hope; but vital faith has neither carnal reason nor fleshly power to aid it.

God gives the word, and gives faith to believe it, and against all carnal reasonable grounds, we believe in hope against hope, and give glory to God. Abraham believed, let reason say what it would, and God fulfilled his promise, and this crowned Abraham's faith with the blessing he had long looked for. And so, to the present moment, God's people are sometimes hard put to it. Nature, reason, and all visible appearances say there is no ground for faith, nor anchorage for hope; but the Lord gives faith, and we believe, and in the end the Lord confirms the promise of his truth and grace in our heart, and faith gives him all the glory; for in very deed the glory all belongs unto him.

The child of God by faith receives the atonement and righteousness of Christ, and sweetly rejoices in being complete in Christ, and with solemn pleasure says, "He was delivered for my offences, and raised again for my justification, (Rom. 4:25), and this according to the riches and glory of God's grace. (Eph. 1:7; 3:16) "Yes," say some of you, "he thinks he has righteousness in Christ." Think religion is poor dry work, and will never satisfy a child of God. He can have no real rest in his soul till he can go beyond think.

Faith never will give up the point till it can and does say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." The righteousness of God by faith the living soul is thirsting and panting for. The dear Lord says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." (Matt. 5:6) The inspired apostle says, "To be found in him;" as though he had said, let me look at myself, or look to myself, where I will if I am not enabled by faith to find myself in Christ, I can find nothing but a guilty sinner.

If I look to myself in my tears or prayers, mortifications or duties of any kind, still I am a guilty sinner. I want to be found in Christ, in all my approaches to God, at all times, at home or abroad, in life and at death, "to be found in him." And when the dear Lord gives the poor soul grace and faith to find himself in Christ, wrapped up in the glorious righteousness of Christ, then he both sees and feels that Christ was made sin for him, and that he is made the righteousness of God in Christ.

Such is the glory of God's grace, that Christ his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead unto sin, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes we were healed. (1 Pet. 2:24)

Perhaps here is a poor sinner trembling before God, with guilt charged upon his conscience, and justice appearing ready to cut him down as a God dishonouring rebel; but O how blessed to see Christ stand forth and say, "Charge the sinner's guilt upon me; place it to my account." "But," says the soul, "I am such a vile, base, ungodly sinner." "I died for the ungodly," says Christ; "let all thy vileness be placed to my account." "But I have sinned with a high hand and an outstretched arm." "Place it to my account, for I am a Saviour, and a great one," says the dear Redeemer. "But I have even done violence to conscience, in order to commit sin greedily." "I bore the whole," says Christ. "I put it away by the sacrifice of myself; finished it, and made an end of it, and brought in an everlasting righteousness; and, in rich free grace, I placed my glorious righteousness to thy account, and thou art made the righteousness of God in me." Thus grace imputes God's people's sins to Christ, and the righteousness of Christ to them. This is the glory of grace. The Son makes the sinner free, and he is free indeed; and when the dear Lord reveals this to his heart, it is a sweet reviving cordial to his poor wretched conscience. This, then, is one part of the glory of grace.

4. But we proceed to observe, that it is the glory of grace to bring the prisoner out of prison, and set him at large. By nature, as sinners against God, we are all shut up under the law, and under the power of unbelief as in a prison; (Gal. 3:23; Rom. 11:32) and when the Lord quickens the dead soul and brings the sinner to see and feel what he is, and where he is, he finds he is in a most dismal prison, shut up as a criminal debtor and a vile sinner; nor has he it in his power to get out. He may hear of and see others walking at large, but that only adds to his misery; for his guilty chains are heavy, and a cursing law binds him fast down, and he expects nothing but a just reward for his vile doings, which is, for justice to execute upon him the righteous vengeance of heaven. He feels in his very soul that se

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