

## S E R M O N XIV.

THE BENEFIT OF BEING ESTABLISHED IN  
GRACE.

HEBREWS, Chap. xiii. Ver. 9.

*Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines : for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.*

WHEN a Scripture, taken for a text, stands surrounded with, or in any measure depends on the context, it then seems absolutely necessary so far to observe and take in its connexion, as may serve to open and unfold the true genuine meaning of the text itself. With this view and design we will briefly view the connexion of the passage before us, that so we may be led to the right opening and unfolding of it.

The inspired writer of this epistle had been engaged in setting forth most divinely, the transcendent majesty, dignity, excellency, and worth of the person of Christ Jesus, God-man, with a peculiar design to shew how great an high Priest he is who is set over the house of God. He then proceeds to express and declare the all-sufficient fitness, fulness, perfections, and qualifications of Christ, as God-man, Mediator,

for the discharge of his work and office. He further goes on, to shew how far this great high Priest, Jesus the Son of God, exceeded and excelled all the priests under, and belonging to the Levitical economy : and then he treats largely of the everlasting value of the sacrifice of his body and soul in union with his divine person, to take away sin ; and shews, that pardon of sin, sanctification, boldness, and access with confidence into the holiest, are but the fruits and effects of it. As he draws to a close of this most divine epistle, he, according to the usual method of the apostolic writers, gives sundry instructions and exhortations suited to those to whom he directs it. It may not be amiss here to observe that duty and practice, given forth by the sacred writers, are founded upon the doctrine which was delivered by them, as the only foundation to support practice ; and as that which gave life, being, and energy thereto. All apostolical exhortations are, throughout the epistles, addressed to such as professed to know Christ, and the Father's love in him to their own souls, by means of those doctrinal truths, which by the ministry of the word had been dispensed to them ; by which the eternal Spirit had enlightened their minds, wrought faith in their hearts, and enabled them to make a confession of it with their mouths. Exhortations to gospel conversation, duties, and practice, are all given to such as are considered believers in Christ Jesus, one in him, and with him, and are urged by motives drawn from God's everlasting love and free grace, as all-sufficient to excite and influence to the observance of them. Also they

are given after the doctrinal part of the epistles is closed, to shew that obedience is but the fruit of faith, not the cause of it; that obedience follows upon receiving the truth as it is in Jesus, not going before to prepare the mind for the reception of it. It is in proportion to the growth and strength of faith, that the fruits of it abound. Faith receives neither support nor nourishment from its fruits, but must be, and is wholly supported by evangelical doctrine; to the end it may be in vigour to put forth its proper fruits, and produce its proper effects. If this was but attended to, both by preachers and hearers, it would then clearly appear, that all our faith in God is supported by what we know of Christ from the word, and by the Spirit; and that our spiritual walk and practice in every part and branch thereof, are influenced by bringing the truths of the everlasting gospel into constant use and experience; for it is only as our hearts are influenced by them, that our walk can be holy, spiritual, and evangelical.

In the chapter which is now before us, the apostle exhorts to the continuance and exercise of brotherly-love, to shew hospitality to strangers, and sympathy to afflicted and imprisoned saints: to live chaste and worthy of the marriage state, which is an honourable one: to be contented in our stations, and with our circumstances, resting on the Lord's promise, by which we are assured *he will not leave nor forsake us*: to shew respect and honour to our spiritual pastors and guides, considering how they bear a testimony to Christ both in their lives and deaths, who after they

have persevered in the faith to the end, frequently die happy and triumphing in the Lord, with evident proofs of his grace and favour. And, seeing Christ's grace and favour are always one and the same, he being *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*; his grace and power are sufficient, and shall produce the same effects in such as believe, as were manifest in these witness bearers, as far as will promote the Lord's glory, and his people's good. The apostle further exhorts them, *Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines*, which he speaks by way of dissuading them from returning back to Judaism, and the observance of the ceremonial law; *for*, says he, *it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meats*; alluding to some among them who, it may be, made holiness to consist in abstaining from such food as was prohibited by the Mosaic law; which being now abrogated by the death of Christ, could not profit such as were occupied in observing abstinence from the meats forbidden thereby. To cast further light upon the subject, it may be remarked, that this epistle was written and sent to the believing Hebrews, just before the destruction of Jerusalem, and the burning of the temple by the Romans. And, as times of distress and persecution serve to try professors of the gospel; so, as the wrath of the almighty was about to fall on the Jewish unbelieving nation and people to the uttermost, many commotions were among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and many who had frequented the Christian assemblies, professed faith in Christ, and belonged to his church there, began to

withdraw from it; to abstain from church meetings, neglect the public ordinances, to be cold and shy of their profession of the gospel, and were in danger to be drawn from it, by means of the ceremonial observances of the apostate Jews, kept up by them in open defiance of Christ's finished sacrifice. To put an end to this, the Lord permits the temple to be burnt, and the city rased to its foundation. On these accounts it is that so many awful things are uttered in this epistle concerning apostates, the like to which are not found in other epistles, and which are here delivered to such as stood in danger of, and to prevent them from apostacy. If it be queried, can believers fall from Christ, and totally perish? which may be asked, seeing the expressions used of apostates in this epistle are very high and strong indeed, the answer is positive: true believers in Christ cannot. But the visible church of Christ is made up of servants, as well as sons, *and the servant abideth not in the house for ever.* All the visible church of Christ are not *the elect of God, holy and beloved.* Such as are but bare professors, are in danger of falling, let their gifts and attainments be ever so high, conspicuous, and glorious. And their fall often dishonours Christ, hurts his true people, is attended with great guilt and injury to their own souls, and should, if possible, be prevented by the seasonable admonitions of the gospel. *Be not,* says Paul, *carried about with divers and strange doctrines.* The truth of God is one uniform system and chain of doctrine, which begins in God, and ends in him; but errors about, and concerning it, are divers, strange, and various, and have frequently

such a glos set on them, as to be beguiling and bewitching to unstable souls; to preserve from which nothing is more effectual than to have the heart established with grace. Here are three things in the text which I propose to set before you.

First, I will briefly inquire and declare what we are to understand by the word *grace*, in this Scripture.

Secondly, shew that there is a necessity *that the heart be established with grace.*

Thirdly, That *it is a good thing that the heart be established* with it: and the blessings which are the fruits and effects of it shall be stated to you.

As to our first particular, what we are to understand by the word *grace* in the Scripture before us, and which is the present question: the word *grace*, as made use of by the inspired writers of the New Testament, is vastly comprehensive, and has various meanings. In its grand, original, and primitive signification, as used by them, it is taken for, and is expressive of the free, eternal, everlasting favour and love of God, which is the ocean, fountain, spring and source, of all the blessings, benefits, gifts, and graces we receive from him. From this infinite fountain, the free favour and love of God, which arose within himself, from his own heart, and which was the good pleasure of his immutable will, flow and proceed all the acts of his grace towards, in, and upon us. See 2 Tim. i. 9. *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.* Our eternal, personal,

unconditional election in Christ ; our union with him, interest in him, relation to him, and acceptation in him, together with our being blessed in him with all spiritual blessings, are all ascribed to the praise of the glory of God's grace in Eph. i. 6. The covenant, which obtained among the persons in the Godhead, upon the foreviews of the fall, in which the coeternal Three sustained distinct offices, and engaged to exercise everlasting love and mercy to the elect in their fallen state, was all of grace ; and we commonly style this covenant of the trinity on our behalf, the covenant of grace. God so loving the elect, considered in their fallen state, as to give his only begotten Son, and to send him to obey and die for them, is attributed to grace. See John iii. 16. God's imputing the sins of the elect to Christ, and his righteousness unto them ; his acts of justification and pardon, pronouncing them, upon the footing of Christ's righteousness placed to their account, perfectly righteous, and declaring them justified from all things ; his blotting out all their trespasses, and freely forgiving all their iniquities, are the fruits of free grace. See Rom. iii. 24.—Eph. i. 7. We read in Rom. v. 15. of *the grace of God, and the gift by grace* : which must mean the favour of God in his own heart towards us, in distinction from all gifts given by God unto us ; yea, from Christ himself, that unspeakable gift ; and by *the gift by grace*, must be meant Christ's righteousness, which, in relation to us, and as flowing from that original grace in God, is called *the gift by grace*, or the gift of grace. The influences, operations, working and breathings of the Holy Ghost in regene-

ration, quickening, enlightening, revealing, and applying Christ, and putting us into an actual enjoyment of Christ and his salvation, are the effects of the covenant of grace; therefore it is all of grace. But to close, as briefly as possible, a subject so vast, that if taken in to its full latitude, with the glorious epithets given it, such as *free grace, riches of grace, exceeding riches of grace, &c.* might well suffice of itself for a discourse, I only add that gospel gifts for preaching, 2 Cor. vi. 1. graces wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, 2 Cor. xii. 12. bear the title of grace in the sacred pages, as might at large be proved, see Acts xx. 24. Hence Paul speaks of some having fallen from grace, see Gal. v. 4. by which he means the truths and doctrines of it. But to come home to the question before us, what are we to understand by the word grace in the text? I conceive that by the word grace in this passage, the doctrine of God's free grace without us, in his own heart towards us, together with the blessed operations of the Holy Spirit within us, are intended by the grace here spoken of, and this, I think, bids fair to be the true meaning of the apostle. To which, by way of illustration and confirmation, I add, that the doctrine of God's grace revealed in the gospel, is eminently styled *the grace of God that bringeth salvation*, see Titus ii. 11. And this salvation, thus revealed, when it is brought home to the heart by the Holy Ghost, produces its blessed fruits and consequences in the person to whom it becomes the power of God. I shall therefore consider the word grace in my text, as containing in it both the doctrine

of grace, and inherent grace, and, as here used, to be truly applicable to both. First, then, as it respects the doctrine of grace, which is styled *wholesome words, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness*, 1 Tim. vi. 3. These truths contain that sacred system of divinity, which includes all the fundamentals of the everlasting gospel of the blessed God; that mystery of his mind and will which reveals and sets forth to us the whole counsel and covenant of the eternal Three, the record of God concerning his Son, by which he declareth that *he that believeth hath everlasting life*. As the whole of the gospel, in all its mysteries, in its high and grand original, with the great salvation contained in it, and the blessings, graces, consolations, privileges, promises, and encouragements of it, were fully, freely, clearly, and impartially preached by the apostles; so it was attended with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, to the minds and hearts of many who heard it; by which means they were made partakers of the divine nature, renewed in their minds, and quickened with spiritual life in their souls, and brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord, and to a true and actual closure with him, by means of the word of truth. The doctrines of grace, as taught by the apostles, and as clothed with the energy of the Spirit, who accompanied them with his power and demonstration to the mind, were the means of a spiritual birth, of producing a new creation in the soul, turning it from darkness unto light, and from the power of darkness unto the kingdom of God's dear Son. These, attended by

the influence of the Holy Ghost, produced faith and the whole assembly of christian graces, and were mighty to the pulling down the strong holds of sin, to the lifting of the heart from all false dependence, and fixing it upon the immutable rock of God's eternal decrees and purposes; yielding to the mind divine support; to the conscience, perfect peace; to the heart, everlasting consolation and good hope through grace; and drawing the affections, and fixing them upon Christ, as the supreme object for love and delight. Thus, sirs, in those days, were sinners wrought upon, drawn to, and fixed upon Christ. Their understandings were enlightened to know from the gospel, that it was God's will to save them by Jesus Christ. Their wills were sanctified by the belief of this important truth, *that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.* Their hearts were filled with the love of Christ, and they walked in union and communion with him, adorning his gospel by their lives and conversations; shewing forth the praises of him who had called them to glory and virtue; going on looking to him as their captain, leader, and guide; leaving their souls and bodies, their temporal, spiritual, and eternal concerns with him; and thus they lived Christ; lived on him as their food, and to him as their end; finding no higher desire in their souls than this, that Christ might be in them spiritually and experimentally, their all in all upon earth, and their all in all in heaven throughout eternity. Sirs, it is of vast importance to hold forth a clear profession of the doctrine of grace, and to be able to declare a true

work of grace wrought in our hearts by the Spirit of God, agreeably to the truth of the doctrine we profess; and this work of grace, which we sometimes style inherent grace, because wrought in our souls by the inward operation of the Spirit of God, is, I conceive, to be also considered by us as contained in the word, grace, before us; and it may well bear this name, it being grace indeed. For the quickening our souls with spiritual life, making us new creatures in Christ, and bringing us into open fellowship with God and his Son Jesus Christ, are indeed acts of grace; for hereby are we made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. And this grace is most truly marvellous and divine; God's eternal purpose of grace in his own heart and within himself, towards us, now actually beginning to take effect within us; and he communicates to us from our head Christ, eternal life. This is conveyed into our souls by the mysterious agency of the Holy Ghost; who consecrates us as his temples for fellowship with the Father and the Son; which divine communion is carried on by the indwelling of the Spirit in us, who so reveals the grace of Jesus, takes of his salvation, and shews it unto us, shedding abroad in our hearts the love of the Father, that we see, taste, and feel, that *God is love*, that Christ is precious unto us; and have each of our spiritual senses and faculties satisfied with the loving-kindness of the Lord: according to his promise, *My people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord*, Jer. xxxi. 14. Before I close this head, wishing to deliver myself with exactness and

precision, I would express my sentiments of what I style inherent grace, thus: that it consists, in a spiritual perception, inward apprehensions, dispositions, and affections created by the Holy Ghost in the souls of those who are born of God; that such are fitted for God, and the things of God; to take holy delight in him; to have holy breathings after him; to hunger and thirst after righteousness; to long for Christ's presence; to have a spiritual appetite to feed upon him as the bread of everlasting life. This brings me,

Secondly, to shew that there is a necessity for the heart to be established with grace. This is a truth which every one who is born of the Spirit, must more or less know and feel. Where the Spirit of God dwells, there sin is known in its guilt, felt in its power, and the emptiness of all the faculties, by means of the fall, is experienced. When the Holy Spirit hath revealed the superexcellencies of Christ, his all sufficiency as a Saviour, and his suitableness as such, this begets some longings after him, thirstings for him, desires to be found in him, and high prizings of his blood and righteousness. Many there are, who have not yet closed in with Christ, cannot say he loved them and washed them from their sins in his own blood, know not that their sins are pardoned, and that their names are in heaven, who yet are among the number of God's beloved, called and regenerated ones. The Holy Spirit hath thus far wrought within them, that they feel themselves to be in themselves, sinful, miserable, lost sinners, justly deserving of God's wrath and curse in time and eternity: they are emptied of

all creature dependence and self-sufficiency: their hearts are broken and humbled with a true and thorough sight, sense, feeling, and experience of sin: they have heard of Christ, and of his infinite pity, tenderness and compassion, love and mercy, to sinners like themselves: the Lord the Spirit has brought them on so far, as to attend the preaching of the everlasting gospel; and though they may be as bruised reeds and smoking flax, incapable of expressing their wants, of uttering themselves on spiritual matters to others, so as to be understood, yet they find, in the preaching of Christ crucified, that which suits them. Often the Holy Ghost is pleased to work by means of the word upon them, so that they long for Christ's presence, to *know him, and be found in him*. His sufferings, blood-shedding, sacrifice, and death, yield them balsamic virtue, healing their wounds, and reviving their broken and contrite spirits: and they find that when these subjects make a principal part of the ministry of the word, they sweetly encourage their faith and hope in him; so that they prize and value his blood as efficacious to cleanse them from all their spots and stains. And though they cannot yet say of Christ for themselves, *he loved me, and gave himself for me*, yet they trust in him, wait on him in his ordinances, longing for him to arise upon them as *the sun of righteousness with healing in his wings*. Such, though they may be called seekers only and inquirers after Christ, yet they are blessed, the Holy Ghost having said, *Blessed are all they that wait for him. Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.* Upon such

persons, in the Lord's good time, he causes his light of grace to break forth more clearly, shining within and upon them, causing the spiritual faculties to expand and open, and to be exercised more particularly upon the truths, doctrines, and mysteries of grace; and thus their spiritual senses are brought to taste the sweetness of divine truth, to have an inward relish of it, to find divine sweetness and nourishment from it, to perceive its spiritual glory and excellency; and in receiving and digesting it, they are brought to find the doctrine of God's free grace to be wholesome; or, as Mr. Toplady says, "Salutary, health-giving doctrine; not only right and sound in itself, but conducting to the spiritual strength and health of those who receive it." By this means they are nourished up unto eternal life. It is thus the Lord carries on his work in the souls of his people. When he is pleased first to work upon their souls, by his regenerating grace, the open discovery of it breaks forth in spiritual affections to God, and the things of God. All seems to be life and vigour, and much is done, many difficulties are overcome, and sin is but little felt in the soul: As the Lord increases his people with the increase of God, they find great changes and alterations in their frames, feelings, and experiences. Sometimes a damp or death is permitted to be brought upon their comforts, experiences, frames, and affections, to the intent they may learn and know that the grace of God is to discover itself, and be supremely operative in their understandings and wills: that they, having the greatest truth ever revealed and uttered by

the Lord himself to satisfy, engage, and exercise their minds, and the chiefest, supremest, and most comprehensive good in earth or heaven to satisfy, and influence their wills, and give them perfect content, the efficacy thereof in the understanding and will, is to command all the faculties of the soul, and thereby Christ and God in him are to become their supreme joy and delight. Thus, upon a clearer knowledge of Christ, all past experience is done away, so as to be disesteemed, and not trusted in, way being now made for their living simply by faith on him, by means of those bright views they now have of Christ as their Saviour and complete salvation. Hence may appear, the necessity of having the heart established in grace, taking it in that two-fold sense which has already been given of it. To speak first of being established with inherent grace, which is a subject, when rightly expressed and explained, useful and profitable to the children of God, they being the subjects of it, and it being a subject of spiritual sense, which, when clearly stated and set before them in the ministry of the word, yields them spiritual comfort, profit, and encouragement. On this account it is that God's people in general are so fond of what they style experimental preaching; and that, because when the true work of the Holy Ghost in his office and indwelling in the souls of the regenerate, how he acts within, and maintains and carries on his work in their hearts, in revealing Christ in them, and bringing them to believe on him, putting them thereby into the actual possession of him, his salvation, graces, and blessings, is made known

and understood by them to be purely his work, they finding and feeling themselves to be the subjects of this work, can set to their seals that God is true, that he hath thus far wrought in them, and upon them, to the glory and praise of his grace. Nor is there any legality in this; the work of the Holy Ghost, in the whole of his economy, flowing as freely from the covenant of grace, as the work of Christ; yea, we are said to be *saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*, Tit. iii. 5. which is thus expressed, to shew that salvation depends upon each of the distinct offices which the eternal Three are engaged in on our behalf. It is good and profitable to converse at times with such as are experimentally acquainted with God and his Son Jesus Christ, and hold communion with them, by the influences of the Holy Ghost. I confess, I look not on it as safe to deal with, and attend much to what passes in this professing, trifling age, for experience, and what bears the name of it. I leave others to judge for themselves. I choose to view what deserves that title, by looking at the experiences recorded in the written word. And, upon a close survey of them, I find they all spring from, and are the effects of the saving knowledge of God and divine truth; and are influenced, increased, and supported thereby. That they were fed, maintained, and increased by the word of God, dwelling in believers, and as brought home and applied to their cases and necessities by the Lord the Spirit. True genuine experience consists principally in this: the Holy Spirit is pleased, in his infinite grace, to

open and explain the Scriptures unto us, making them the ground of our faith, and giving us to feel their energy, making the experience contained in them our own; revealing Christ, as set forth in the word to us, and filling our hearts with his love, agreeably to what is revealed of it in the word of the gospel. The people of God therefore need to be taught, and brought to an acquaintance with the nature of true gospel grace, and what the experience which it produces is; they need to be acquainted with the real work of God within them, with his method of strengthening, refreshing, comforting, and quickening them, that they may be confident where they have good grounds, and go on in the Lord's ways as bold as lions. There is a necessity that their hearts be established with grace, as it respects their knowing for themselves, that a true work is wrought in them; that Christ is in them the hope of glory; and that their works *are wrought in God*, as Christ's expression is, John iii. 21. This necessity will easily be seen: for without it they will be, as to themselves, at an uncertainty, as it respects the state and case of their own souls. Let us therefore diligently study the work of God's holy Spirit within us, compare it with the written word, and carefully distinguish between natural and spiritual acts and affections; moral refinements and supernatural regeneration. Nor let it be forgotten by us, that the grace of God within us, is only discoverable to ourselves, as the Holy Spirit shines upon his own work in our souls. Though it be the subject of spiritual sense, yet that faculty cannot exercise itself but as shone upon

by the light of the divine Spirit: and to know our own personal spiritual case and state, what it really is, and what our spiritual knowledge, faith, and experience of Christ amount to, and really are, must conduce to our spiritual profit. It will arm us against our spiritual enemies, prevent and put a stop to practical doubting and unbelief, and cause us to glory in the Lord, and to praise him as our own God, guide, and portion. To speak out freely, and declare fully and experimentally, the influences and operations of the Holy Spirit within us, as they really are, is exceedingly difficult, and not easily to be done. It is what the preachers of Christ can more easily engage in, to preach the doctrines of the grace of God, than describe the influences and effects produced in the hearts of God's children by them, through the Spirit of God. I therefore close this part of the subject, concerning the necessity of the heart's being established with grace, as it respects the inward experience of it in our souls, with this—that every doctrine of grace hath its inward efficacy, power, and influence on every faculty of the new man, and that it is the doctrine of grace which produceth, increaseth, and nourisheth the work of grace. For, as the doctrines of free grace enter the soul, through the channel of regeneration, by which means they have their being and existence there, they produce every act wrought in it by the Spirit of God, and drawn forth by him into use and practice.

I proceed, secondly, to consider the necessity of the heart's being established with grace, as it respects the

doctrines of it. Without knowledge the heart is not good, and the doctrines of grace are in their own nature, influence, and tendency, good, and make them so who cordially receive and embrace them; therefore there is a necessity that the heart be established with them, and in them. It is true, the believer in Christ is not denominated a believer from his having his heart established with grace, but on account of his looking to, believing on, and trusting in the person, righteousness, and atonement of Christ Jesus, who is the immediate object of his faith and hope, the everlasting foundation to bear up his person, and support him in life, death, and throughout eternity. As his all, therefore, depends on Christ without him, on the everlasting covenant between God and the Lamb, it is therefore necessary that his heart should be established in those doctrines, which hold forth this inestimably precious grace, and help to a view thereof. The believer has his corruptions inherent within him, to wound his heart, to bring guilt into his mind; the subtleties of hell to menace and withstand him; with an ungodly generation, who will be sure to hate and vex his righteous soul: so that he must and will find it to be absolutely necessary for him to make use of those eternal truths revealed by the Lord in his written word, as his shield, and by them to encourage himself in him as the Lord his God. And these doctrines, both particularly and summarily, tend to establish the heart, and confirm the faith and hope of the child of God. They are, each and all of them, immutable verities, upon which we may safely venture

and rely. In their own nature and influence, they lead off from, and out of self, and serve to fix our hearts wholly and for ever on the Lord. Election is a fundamental, and also an establishing truth, as viewed in the light of the Spirit, and believed by the faith which is of his operation; as by it we see that our interest in Christ is built upon the free, sovereign, everlasting love of God, which knows no beginning nor end, but is as immutable, and remains as unchangeable as the will and nature of JEHOVAH.

The mystery of Christ's person, as God dwelling personally in our nature, manifested in the flesh to take away sin, is a subject, in which the incomprehensible glories, riches, and freeness of grace break forth; and as it shines on our minds, it fills our souls with admiration and praise. The atonement of Christ, which is a personal, particular, full and all-sufficient one, including and comprehending all the sins, guilt, and filth of God's elect; the foundation of which was laid in the everlasting transaction between the Father and the Son, in the counsel and covenant of peace; the worth and efficacy of which flow from the responsibility of our redeeming surety, as the essential Son of the Father; according to whose will, and at whose call, our Jesus engaged to be the atoning sacrifice; holds forth a solid ground for peace, joy, and consolation: so does every part and branch of the system of divine truth. And it is the doctrines of grace, which must be the means, in the hands of the Spirit, to beget faith, to increase it, to promote its growth, to uphold and strengthen it. Therefore,

there is a necessity that the doctrines of free grace, God's everlasting love, and Christ's finished redemption, should be continually preached, though they may be already known, and their influence and energy felt in the heart, because our walk with God, and confidence in him, receive all their encouragements therefrom. We are called to live by faith in God, to hold communion with him, and we cannot maintain confidence before him but upon the foundation of the doctrines of grace; so that there must be a necessity for the heart to know, and be established with them. There are times when believers cannot live without them. There are seasons when their minds are invaded with distress, when sin is permitted to stare them in the face, Satan let loose upon them to buffet them, and they are forced to rely upon, and plead the covenant of the eternal trinity, as the sole foundation of their hope. There are seasons when they cannot pray, otherwise than by silent, inward groans, which come from their hearts, as deeply afflicted and distressed with soul burthens and conflicts, which serve to prove to them the absolute need they have of being established with the doctrines of the grace of God, and also make way for their establishment; for they never feel the worth and value of divine truth more, than at such seasons. And, though it may not be readily received, yet I dare be bold to affirm, you never exercise true faith better, nor does it ever appear stronger, than when you have such seasons as to be sorely afflicted with a spiritual sense of your indwelling sin and miseries, and are

greatly exercised with temptations; this draws forth the exercise of faith upon the everlasting covenant, word, promise, and oath of God; you ground your plea on Christ and his blood, and are often bold to say, *I will not let thee go except thou blest me.* Such seasons and cases shew us the necessity of an establishment in grace; and the Lord designs to teach us by them, how to improve our confidence in him, by faith in his written word; when all in ourselves, as to sense, feeling, and experience, makes against us. The text speaks of the heart's being established with grace—not the head: it being a possible case, to have a theoretical knowledge of truth in the head, when the influence of it is not felt in the heart. And though it is certain the head must be enlightened with the knowledge of truth, before the heart can experience the virtue and efficacy of it; yet it is thus expressed in the words before us, to point out the quickening, operative virtue of divine truth, when it is received into the heart, believed, embraced, and maintained there.

This brings me, thirdly, to shew that *it is a good thing* that the heart be established with grace; and to set forth the fruits and effects of it. It being absolutely necessary to promote the comfort and well-being of the child of God, and to promote his spiritual growth, *that the heart be established with grace*, it must therefore be a good thing, as it promotes good aims, and brings to a right end. It is also good, inasmuch as it is a preservative against error, an antidote against unbelief, and a choice cordial to cheer, refresh, and revive the soul in seasons of heaviness and distress. This is the

work of the Holy Spirit, and he effects and accomplisheth it thus: by enabling the believer to live the truths of the gospel in his own mind, bringing him to give full credit to them, and so to mix faith with them, that spiritual nourishment is derived from them; and thus they become the means of the believer's growing into an experimental and practical acquaintance with Christ Jesus, so as to be rooted and grounded in and upon him, as being one with him, the foundation, and living in him as his root, head, and fountain of spiritual life. I do not conceive that any sinner does, immediately upon the first work of the Spirit of God upon him, close directly with Christ. When the Holy Spirit first reveals the worth and efficacy of Christ, and sets before the eyes of the mind of the enlightened person, the righteousness and atonement of the bleeding Lamb, he thereby draws the soul to long to have a part and interest in Christ. He gives the soul such a view of the exceeding glories of Christ's righteousness, and such conceptions of the virtue of his blood, as causes the heart to breathe after Christ, as *the pearl of great price*. Yet it is by a further overpowering light created in the understanding that the sinner closes in with Jesus, as the Spirit is pleased to give a more comprehensive knowledge of him in and by the word, to the understanding and heart of the enlightened man, helping the soul to close in with Christ under clear, distinct, spiritual apprehensions of him, accompanied with a joy which is *unspeakable and full of glory*. Now it is that the believer lives in views of Christ, the object of

his faith; and he is carried above all his sins and miseries as long as he keeps Christ in view, and lives on him as his righteousness and propitiation; so that he triumphs in his Redeemer with holy joy, and finds the word of reconciliation to afford him increasing pleasure and sweetness. And as he is taught of the Spirit to be skillful in the exercise of faith, and in the word of grace, he goes on growing *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*, and finds that every part of the gospel revelation serves to increase his confidence and joy in God; the believer thus finds it to be a good thing indeed, to have his heart established with grace. But this is not presently the case with him; for, though it is the very end of the gospel and its ordinances to promote, and the work of the Holy Spirit to accomplish it, yet it is slowly and by degrees that believers are brought to it; and when they are, their establishment does not prevent their being tried and grievously assaulted by their spiritual enemies. On such of the Lord's beloved ones as are not established with grace, Satan's assaults are, to keep them from Christ, tempting them to doubt either of his willingness, or ability to save them; and if they receive encouragement from the word, then he will stir up, if possible, their corruptions, or by ten thousand fears and cares hinder them from digesting the word by faith and spiritual meditation. Such as are established, Satan changes the mode of his attack on them, trying, if possible, to sap the foundation of their faith. And, well knowing how much they are inclined to sense and feeling, he will ever

seek to keep them looking at comforts, enlargements, and upliftings, that so they may withdraw their eye from Christ: or he will put them in remembrance of their deadness and formality in duty, bring home their sins, reminding them of them, or bring the Scripture to their memories with a view to legalize their hearts; it being impossible he should have any other aim or end in view. Thus it is often the case, that the believer who is highest advanced into personal communion with God, has the sorest conflicts with his own heart, and is most beset, opposed, and assaulted by the devil. You may place grace in what you will, but it consists not in unspeakable comforts and consolations, but is chiefly expressed in high estimations and valuations of Christ, who exceeds all your spiritual graces and comforts as much, yea, infinitely more than the heavens do the earth. You may think as you please; but if God is carrying you on in a conformity to Christ, you are not always then brimful of joy in the Holy Ghost: but you are sometimes in the valley of desertion, and also of temptation, and have the same experience, in your measure, that your head had, when he said, *But I am poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.* Psalm lxi. 29. As it is good to have the heart established with grace, in the belief of God the Father's everlasting love, God the Son's complete salvation, and God the Holy Spirit's testimony thereof, so the fruits of it redound to God's glory, and to the benefit of ourselves and others also. They will redound to the Lord's glory, inasmuch as the established believer, having

views of each of the divine persons in the uncreated essence, his interest in them, and of the interest the whole elect have in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, will be led to give that tribute of glory to them according to their distinct personalities, and offices in the covenant, as is their due. In doing which there will be an actual personal intercourse held with each of them in their divine economical offices. The Father's love and personal acts of grace will be recounted and acknowledged. The Son's ancient love and engagements, his work of salvation and mediation, will be confessed, and his name will be celebrated on account thereof. The Holy Spirit, who is the efficient of all grace and glory in us, will be worshipped in his personality, and have his distinct praise and glory rendered to him. In which most holy exercises, we shall receive confirming evidence to establish us more and more in our most holy faith. So that this benefit will redound to us, that as we know the trinity in unity by the doctrines of grace, and worship and praise them in consequence hereof; so we shall have the benefit of experiencing grace communicated abundantly from the Father and the Son, through the Spirit, by means of the word of grace dwelling in our hearts. This benefit also will redound to others herefrom; they will be encouraged from the grown believer, to hope in the Lord. And the effects of it, in the life, will be divine; for persons under such influence will seek to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*. Is peace to be obtained and promoted by a mutual forgiveness of injuries? Such will not forgive injuries and offences

merely for the sake of peace in a family, or church; but they will do it upon gospel motives, because Christ has freely forgiven them. By being established in Christ, and by having their hearts established with grace, they, from the doctrines of grace, derive their motives and ends, through the whole of their Christian walk and warfare. God's love is their motive. Christ's death, made known in its efficacy, and felt in its virtue, is the mortification of sin in them, and they die to the love, guilt, power, and life of it, by having communion with their Lord. The communion of the Holy Ghost gives them spiritual life and energy to perform duty in faith, and to fight manfully against sin and the devil. Their end is the glory of God, and their hope eternal glory; which, when their race is run, will be their portion for ever. May it be your's. *Amen.*