

The Riches of God's Love to His Elect

by Thomas Goodwin

God's love is a fundamental attribute of his nature, firm and absolute, unchangeable and invincible, and it is the foundation of his decrees.

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 17:19, Jeremiah 31:3, Jeremiah 32:41, Lamentations 3:33, Micah 7:18, John 17:23, Romans 8:35, Ephesians 2:4

Topics: "Gods Love", "Election And Salvation"

Description

Thomas Goodwin preaches about the rich mercy, great love, and grace of God towards us, emphasizing that these attributes are the causes of our salvation. He delves into the deep love of God, highlighting that God's love towards us is rooted in His eternal love from everlasting, which precedes our fallen state. Goodwin explains that God's love is unmatched, commanding, and unchanging, manifesting in transient acts like giving Jesus Christ for us, calling us to Himself, and glorifying us in heavenly places. He further explores the invincible and unchangeable nature of God's love, illustrating how it overcomes all difficulties and accusations, making believers more than conquerors. Goodwin also reveals that God's love towards us mirrors the love He has for His Son, signifying a deep union and affection towards His chosen ones.

Transcript

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.--Ver. 4-6.

The scope of the Apostle in these words, as I have told you, is to magnify these three attributes in God--his love, mercy, grace, towards us; and these as they are the causes of our salvation.

In opening of these words, I have,

1. Shewn you the difference between love and mercy.
2. Shewn you why that the Apostle, when he would speak of the causes of our salvation, contented not himself to have said that God is rich in mercy, but that he addeth 'for the great love wherewith he loved us.'
3. Shewn you likewise that a great love, and an act of love, or a purpose of love, taken up towards us, is the foundation of his shewing mercy to us; and that act of love is especially that taken up from everlasting, which he took up to us before we were, and therefore preceded the misery we were fallen into; for he had

engaged himself to us by so great a love, which stirred up his mercy.

The next thing I came to was this, the greatness of this love. I did profess not to handle this argument in the vastness of it,--which by the grace of God might arise to a volume, if it should be so handled,--but so far forth as the text doth give foundation to anything about it, so far I professed to handle it, because I would explain the text.

First, therefore, we considered the subject of this love, who it is that loved us. It is God, whose love therefore is as great as himself; and if God will be in love, how deep, how great will that love be! What a love will they possess with whom God professeth himself to be in love! Love, it is of all attributes the most commanding; it commandeth all in a man, and it commandeth all in God.

Secondly, we considered that this God, though of a loving nature and disposition, yet he took up an act of love. 'He loved,' saith the text.

There are two sorts of acts of love which God hath put forth towards us:

1. That immanent act, as it is called; that is, which is in God himself only, abideth in himself, in his own heart, that first act from eternity, which is the foundation of all; and this the Apostle here mainly intended in this 4th verse. But,

2. There are transient acts of love, which are the fruits of that first, which in the text here, as afterwards I shall shew you, are mainly these three:

(1.) Giving Jesus Christ to be a head for us, and to die for us; that is couched in these words, 'He hath quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together with him;' which importeth both him to be a head for us and him to have died for us, as a fruit of this love.

(2.) The act of calling us to himself, which is expressed in these words: 'Even when we were dead in sins hath he quickened us.'

(3.) The glorifying of us hereafter, we being already 'set in heavenly places in Christ,' as an engagement of all that glory we shall have hereafter.

These three transient acts I must handle in their order, as I open the fifth and sixth verses; therefore now, in this fourth verse, I shall only speak of that immanent act in God, 'the love wherewith he loved us.' And concerning that, two things,

1. The greatness of that love in itself. And,

2. In respect of the time when this love began; for he speaks in the time past, 'he loved us.'

First, For the greatness of this act of love taken up towards us. It is so great, as all the acts of love, all the manifestations of love, the transient acts of love, the fruits of love, that God shews and manifesteth to eternity, they are not all enough to express that love which he took up in the first act, when he began to love us, and all serve but to commend and manifest that love. And then,

Secondly, For the time. If you ask when he first began to love,--which also sets out the greatness of it,--it was from everlasting. This word in the text, 'hath loved us,' or, 'he loved us,' reacheth to eternity; so in Jer. 31:3.

And then for the continuance of it ever since; he hath continued it every moment. Though we were children of wrath, and dead in sins and trespasses, yet he all that while, since the first time he began to love us, hath continued to love us with the same love; he hath reiterated the same thoughts again and again. And for this great love, wherewith he loved us from everlasting, and wherewith he hath continued to love us ever since, from everlasting, as we may so speak; 'for this great love,' saith he, 'he hath quickened us.'

I also opened in the last discourse the greatness of this love from the persons, 'us.' Us, saith he, not others. We were children of wrath as well as others, but 'for the great love wherewith he loved us,' and not others, for he hath not quickened all, but he quickeneth all that he loveth,--he hath 'quickened us together with Christ.' He loved us, not ours, nor for anything in us. He loved us, not indefinitely,--that is, 'I will love some of mankind,'--but he hath loved us distinctly, fixing his attention upon those persons he fixed his love upon, and laying forth all the mercies and all the fruits of love upon them, eyeing their persons.

There was likewise, I told you, another thing which sets out the greatness of this love, and that is the condition of our persons, 'dead in sins and trespasses,' and that follows in the fifth verse. But as I said then, I going over these words in a way of exposition, and not handling them as a subject, will not insist on everything in that artificial method, as if I were to write a tract upon it.

There is but one thing more, and it is a great thing, and I confess I did not observe it a long while in the text, but still took the words to have run thus, 'for the great love wherewith he loved us;' but I find it is, 'for his great love wherewith he hath loved us.' There is a great emphasis in that word his. He saith not simply, as he might have done, because that God greatly loved us, or, because of a great love he bore us; but he doubles it, 'for the great love wherewith he loved us;' and not only so, but, 'for his great love wherewith he loved us.' My brethren, there is a love proper to God, which is a differing kind of love from that in all the creatures; his love, as the text hath it here. As his goodness is another kind of goodness than what is in the creatures, so is his love. There is none that hath tasted of this love of his but say that it is a differing love from the love of all the creatures; and the difference is found more by tasting and by feeling of it than it is by setting of it forth; as it is in wines, 'Thy love is better than wine, and thy loving-kindness is better than life;' both of which are better discerned by taste and feeling than set out by any expression. Indeed, God doth compare his love to what is in the creature, to set it out to us, because we apprehend it by such comparisons; as when he saith, 'Like as a father pitieth,' or loveth, 'his children, so the Lord loveth them that fear him.' And, 'If a mother forget her child,' &c. But yet, notwithstanding, 'the love wherewith he loved us' is of another kind from all these. In I John 3:1, 'Behold,' saith the Apostle, 'what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!--he speaks in respect of one fruit of it,--such a love, for the kind of it, as no man, no creature, could bestow upon us. In Hos. 11:9, where, giving the reason why that he loving his people they are not destroyed, he saith, 'I am God, and not man.' It is spoken in respect of his love clearly, for it comes in there upon a conflict with himself; when he had been provoked beyond the bounds and measure of pardon, yet when he comes to punish, he finds his love not to be as the love of a man. 'My heart is turned within me,' saith he, ver. 8, 'my repentings are rolled together: I will not return to destroy; for I am God, and not man.' My love is of another extent, of another kind, than the love of man. And so when he speaks of mercy, in Isa. 55:8, 9, 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord: for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.' It is his love, so saith the text here.

Now to speak a little of this, for it lies in the way in the text,

First, His love; it is a love for nothing in us. The love that one creature bears to another is still for something in them; but the love of God, if it be his love, a love that is proper unto him, must needs be free: and that not only for this reason, which is usually given, and is a true one too, because that his love is from everlasting, and nothing in the creature in time can be the cause of what is in God from everlasting; but for this reason likewise, because that only God can be moved by what is in himself, he can love no otherwise but from himself. The creatures love because things are lovely, and there must be motives to draw out that love that is in them; but when God loves, he loves as from his own heart. There is nothing in us, no, not in Christ, that should move God to love us; though indeed to bestow those things that God bestows upon us, so Christ is the moving cause. 'Jacob have I loved,' saith he, and that before he had done any good or evil. So that, as no evil in him did put God off from loving him, so no good did move God to love him. In 2 Tim. 1:9, there is one little particle that I establish this upon, 'Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ before the world began.' Mark: 'according to his own purpose,' which is the thing I fix your attention upon in that place; that is, as the Apostle explains it, Eph. 1:9, 'which he purposed in himself,' or 'from himself'--a purpose merely taken up in or from himself. And therefore you shall find the phrase in Scripture to run, that as he loves us out of his own purpose, so for his own sake. 'Not for your sakes do I this, but for my own name's sake.' My brethren, there was a love which God did bear to man in innocency, the terms of which were such as, in a way of justice between the Creator and the creature, it became God, if he made him holy as he did in innocency, to bestow upon him. But because that this was a love that seemed to have a kind of justice in it, and something in the creature which it was founded upon, therefore he destroys that condition, that he might make way to manifest the love that was according to his own purpose and grace, and merely from himself. And that now is his love; for if God do love like God, this is the love that is his, that is proper unto him. And saith he, 'not according to our works'--that is, it is founded upon nothing at all in the creature. For by 'works' there, he understands all habitual dispositions of goodness, of what kind soever, as the Scripture usually doth; as when it saith, 'he will judge every man according to his works,' it is not only meant of the outward acts, but of the inward frame of heart. He looks to nothing in the creature, but to his own purpose. It is his love, therefore it is free.--That is the first.

Secondly, His love; it is a love that is firm and absolute, unchangeable and invincible; and such a love it became God to bear us, if he would love us, for that properly is his love. 'Put not your trust in princes,' saith the Psalmist; they will all fail; the men perish, and their thoughts perish; yea, sometimes their thoughts and affections die to their greatest favourites, before they die themselves. But his love is firm and absolute, it is unchangeable and invincible, and this because it is his love. Mal. 3:6, 'I am the Lord, I change not;'--that is, If I be God, and whilst I am God, I will not cease to love you, I will not change --'therefore it is that ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.' His love is as immutable as his being. I will not be God, if I be not your God, and love you; he secures it with his Godhead. 'I am the Lord,' saith he, 'I change not; therefore ye are not consumed.' In Rom. 9:11, speaking of the election of Jacob, he saith, 'that the purpose of God according to election might stand;' it is a great word that; he fixed it upon such a basis as might stand for ever. It is a true thing that all God's counsels do stand fixed and firm; look how he purposeth them, be they of what kind soever. That Adam should be holy, that counsel did stand firm; but how it stood firm for so long as he purposed it, which was till such time as he fell; it was but for a moment in comparison. And so, that Saul should be king, he purposed it, and it stood firm so far; but he repented that he made Saul king. But when he cometh to speak of election, he speaks of that as of such a counsel that not only standeth as all other his counsels do, but as that which is perpetuated to eternity. His purpose to love Adam was a firm purpose, for so he did; but how? Whilst he was in that state of innocency, and had the image of God upon him. But his purpose according to election, as the distinction is

there, that stands, and it stands for ever. Therefore it is not of works, but, as was said before, of his own purpose, that it might stand, that it might have a rock of eternity, for the basis of it to stand upon. It is therefore, as by way of distinction from all purposes else as it were, called the 'purpose according to election.' If you will have this further confirmed, take that place also, which loadeth it with more epithets for the firmness of it, in 2 Tim. 2:19, 'The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.' He speaks of God's purpose in election, and of the persons elected; for he saith it is that which hath this seal, 'The Lord knoweth them that are his.' You have here all sorts of words to make it firm.

1. It is called a foundation; 'The foundation of God,' saith he, 'standeth sure.' There are two great foundations, and of the two, if we may make comparisons, this is the greater. Jesus Christ is a foundation, but the eternal love of God, that is the first foundation; it was the womb of Christ himself: I Cor. 3:11, 'Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.' There you see Christ is a foundation, but here is a higher foundation,--'The Lord knoweth them that are his,' loved them and chose them, and so he did Christ himself.

2. It is not only called a foundation, but a sure foundation.

3. It is called the foundation of God, it is founded in him, it is founded upon him, it is as firm as himself; as he is God, he will stand to it, and therefore it must needs stand.

4. It is a foundation that remaineth, it standeth, it is steady.

5. It is sealed: 'having this seal,' saith he; so that it is never to be broken and altered. If the decrees of the Medes and Persians, when they had set their seals to them, were such as were not to be altered; much more God's. His seal is in this respect more than his oath. 'Him hath the Father sealed,' saith he, speaking of Christ. Now you have both his oath and his seal to this; that is, to the invincibleness and unchangeableness of his love. You have his seal in this place, 'The Lord knoweth them that are his;' and his oath you have in Heb. 6:17. And what doth this oath serve for? To shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel; and the immutability of his counsel respecting persons, and not things only, for it is an oath that God made to Abraham, when he swore concerning Isaac. And therefore the text hath it in Timothy; it hath this seal, 'The Lord knoweth them that are his.' If you will know whence the words are taken, that I may open them a little, you must observe this, that the Apostle handleth the doctrine of election and reprobation in the New Testament out of the speeches and types of the Old: as, 'Esau have I hated, Jacob have I loved,' in Rom. 9. And so, 'I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful;' it was spoken of Moses, in Exod. 33:19. And so likewise those words in Timothy, 'The Lord knoweth them that are his,' are spoken of Aaron and Moses in Num. 16:3, when Korah and his company gathered themselves together against Moses and Aaron, saying, 'You take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy,' and they may be all priests. No, saith he; God hath chosen Aaron and Moses to go before his people, and to-morrow the Lord will shew who are his. So we translate it, and the Septuagint reads it, and it comes all to one; 'The Lord knoweth who are his.'

Now this that was said in this respect of Moses and Aaron in a typical way, and indeed in a decree of election too,--for that God singled out Moses and Aaron, it was his everlasting love,--I say, these very words doth the Apostle here apply, and pertinently too, to the same occasion; for, speaking of divers that seemed to be holy, and yet fell away, however, saith he, 'the foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth who are his.' And the word 'knoweth who are his,' it is, whom he hath pitched upon to love; it is a knowledge of approval. Exod. 33:12, 'Thee have I known by name,' saith God unto the

same Moses, which is all one and to say, 'Thee have I chosen;' for, ver. 19, speaking of Moses also, he saith, 'I will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy,' which the Apostle quoteth in Rom. 9 as spoken of election. Now in respect of his love that is thus firm, and firm in respect that it is his love who is God and not man, and therefore changeth not; it is therefore said of the elect that it is impossible that they should be deceived. As I told you there are two foundations, so there are two impossibles made in Scripture; I know there are more, as it is impossible that God should lie, &c., but I speak of impossibles that relate to God's decrees. The one is, Matt. 26:39, 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' It was not possible. Why? Because God's eternal love to his saints had decreed it otherwise, and God stuck firm to it. The other impossible is in Matt. 24:24, 'Insomuch that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect;' that is impossible too. And the truth is, the reason of this firmness is because it is the love of God, and because it is so great a love; that is the foundation of it. And, my brethren, it is well that love made God's decrees for us; no attribute else would have fixed them so unalterably upon the same persons, in themselves so changeable. Would wisdom alone have gone and obliged God to so fickle a creature as we are? No. But love knew what it did, for it meant to manifest itself to the uttermost; therefore it pitched upon no conditions why God loved us; and if he requires conditions before he saveth us, love shall work those conditions in us. Therefore out of his infinite love and wisdom, he was able to make absolute promises to love, and to love firmly. It is love that commandeth all in God, and if love will do it, it shall be done; for if all that is in God can keep us and preserve us, and work in us what God requires to make him love us, and continue to love us, it shall be done. It is firm love.

And let me add this to it, which may illustrate it more, it is invincible love. You will say, this is the same thing with being unchangeable. I confess it, but only with this difference, that to shew his love is unchangeable, he would have a world of difficulties to ran through, which yet his love should overcome. Saith he in Cant. 8:6,7,--and he speaks of his love, having set us as a seal upon his arm, having this seal, 'The Lord knows who are his,'--'Love is as strong as death. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.' They are therefore called the sure mercies of David. And you know how David put them to the trial, and how he put God to it. What difficulties doth the love of God overcome? Do but consider. The purposes of his secret will toward us do overcome all the difficulties of his revealed will, and those were enough. He had given a law of his revealed will, and he had said that heaven and earth should pass away before one tittle of that should perish; and that the soul that sinned should die; and all had sinned and transgressed this law. But now though all were fast locked up under this, yet love breaks open all, for it is an invincible love. That secret purpose of his, I say, overcomes that revealed expression of his, which had so many bolts and bars to it,--all the threatenings and curses of the law,--and finds out a way to reconcile all.

And the way whereby he did it, it was an infinite difficulty. For God to overcome his own heart! Do you think it was nothing for him to put his Son to death? When Christ came to die, what a difficulty did he overcome! Do you think it was nothing for him to give up himself and his soul to the wrath of his Father? 'Father,' saith he, 'if it be possible, let this cup pass;' save them, if it be possible, some other way. Why, God's love overcame it, and Christ's love overcame it; his love would not permit him to think of any other course; it was an invincible love. When he comes to call us, hath he no difficulties which love overcometh? A man hath lived twenty, thirty, forty years in sin; love overcomes it. We were dead in sins and trespasses; yet for the great love wherewith he loved us, he quickened us. When we have been dead, and dead forty years in the grave, that 'lo, he stinketh,' then doth God come and conquer us; it is an invincible love. After our calling, how do we provoke God? What a world of difficulties do we run through! Such temptations that, if it were possible, the elect should be deceived! It is so with all Christians. No righteous man but he is

'scarcely saved;' and yet saved he is, because the love of God is invincible, it overcomes all difficulties. Still, as the Apostle saith, in Rom. 8:35, 37, 'Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall life or death?' &c. In all these, saith he, 'we are more than conquerors.' There is an invincibleness; but how? 'Through him that loveth us,' so it follows; and mark that particle, it is because his love is an invincible love that doth thus make us to be conquerors: because that love is as strong as death, therefore neither death nor life,--it is as strong as hell, therefore neither hell nor devil, shall be able to separate.

Nay, where there is but a mention made by way of supposition, or by way of query, whether God will part with or cast off any of his people or no; you shall find that he throws it away with the highest indignation, his love is so great. Paul doth but put the question because he knew men would put it, in Rom. 11:1, 'Hath God cast away his people?' How doth the Holy Ghost answer it? 'God forbid,' saith he. He speaks with the highest detestation that there should be any such thought in God. Even as in another place in the same epistle, chap. 6:1, 'Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?' Oh, God forbid! He throws it away with all the indignation that can be; and God may allow the one as soon as do the other. He throws it away, I say, with the highest indignation that ever such supposition could be made, that God should have such a thought. He is so possessed with love to his people that he will hear nothing to the contrary. 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?' saith the Apostle; 'it is God that justifieth,' and it is their being elect that carries it. Yea, his love is so strong that if there be any accusation,--the Apostle makes the supposition, 'Who shall lay anything to their charge?' Sin or devil?--that if at any time sin or devil come to accuse, it moves God to bless. His love is so violent, it is so set, that he takes occasion to bless so much the more. In Deut. 23:5, when Balaam would lay something to the charge of the elect people of God there, and accuse them and curse them, what saith the text? 'Nevertheless the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam,' he would not hear of it; and, not only so, 'but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee.' And why? 'Because the Lord thy God loved thee.' His love was so strong as it overruled all the accusations Balaam could make, and all his curses. Even as a king that loveth his favourite, if any one comes to accuse him, it provokes him--his love doth--so much the more not only to pardon him, but to shew his love to him. My brethren, if that God be angry with us for our sins, it is for our good; and in the end they do provoke him to bless us so much the more. This must needs be invincible love. 'Who shall separate us from the love of God? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? In all this we are more than conquerors.' And so much now for the second thing which is proper to this love in God, which the Apostle calls his love, and to no creatures else in the world as it is in God, namely, to love thus invincibly and unchangeably as he doth.

Thirdly, His love is the same love wherewith he loveth his Son; Yea, wherewith he loveth himself.

It is the same love wherewith he loveth his Son. For that you have a known place in John 17:23, 26. At the 24th verse, saith Christ, Thou hast loved me before the foundation of the world, and hast therefore given me a glory, and thou hast united me unto thyself. Thou art in me, and I in thee, so ver. 21; and thou hast united a company of thine--so he calls them, ver. 6--unto me, I in them, and thou in me, so saith the 23d verse; and then what follows? 'That the world may know that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.' As he is united to God, and we to him, so God loveth us with the same love wherewith he loved him.

And then again you have the like expression, ver. 26, 'That the love where with thou lovest me may be in them,'--that is, towards them, set upon them, derived to them. It is a phrase of kin to that in the text; 'the love wherewith he loved us,' saith the Apostle; 'the love wherewith thou lovest me,' saith Christ, to note a special love: but that which I quote it for is this, 'that the love wherewith thou lovest me may be in them,' or 'on them,' also. God loved all his creatures. He loved Adam, but not with that kind of love wherewith he

loved Christ; but he loveth his elect with the same kind of love wherewith he loved him, the same love is set and pitched on them. He loveth him as his Son, and them as daughters married to him: as a father loveth his son, and a daughter married unto him, with the same kind of love, and differing from his love to the servants, or to any else that are about him. And therefore you shall find that still this love comes in with a distinction: Rom. 8:39, 'Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.' Mark it, he distinguisheth; there is a love indeed which men have been and are separated from, even Adam in innocency; but, saith he, if it be a love in Christ Jesus, if God loveth us with that kind of love wherewith he loveth Christ, nothing shall separate from that. For as we are said to be chosen in Christ, so we are said to be loved in him; for election, or the act of choosing, is expressed to us still by an act of love,--it is all one, they are convertible. Now, he is said to choose in Christ, so to love in Christ; and saith the Apostle, nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ. He speaks it by way of distinction from other love which men may be separated from; but from this, saith he, there is no separation.

Yea, let me go higher. God loving us in Christ, his love is in a manner the same wherewith he loveth himself. There is a union betwixt Jesus Christ and us, and there is also a union between God and us: John 17:23, 'I in them, and thou in me.' As our Lord and Saviour Christ loved his people so as that if his people be hurt, he takes it as if it were done to himself,-- 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?'--so you shall find that God himself speaks as if his people and he were all one. It is not only, as in John, 'thine they were,' and, 'God knoweth them that are his,'--and these are great words, they are deep words, and deep expressions,--but you shall find that God in the Old Testament speaks in the person of his people, as well as Christ doth in the New. Ps. 81:6, 'This he ordained in Joseph, for a testimony,' speaking of God, 'when he went out of Egypt,' meaning his people. And therefore, in Exod. 11:8, saith he to Pharaoh about midnight 'I will go out into the midst of Egypt, and all the first-born shall die,' &c. 'And after that I will go out,'--that is, my people shall go out. So that now, as the union between Christ and his people is such, and his love such, as that what was done to them, he reckons clone to himself; so between God and us also. 'Thine they were,' saith Christ, 'and thou gavest them me.' They are more God's therefore than Christ's, or first God's, and then given unto Christ. Therefore, in Isa. 63:9, in all their affliction he is said to be afflicted. Yea, the salvation of his people God accounts his salvation, Isa. 49:6: 'Thou shalt be,' speaking of Christ, 'my salvation unto the end of the earth.'

And though God loveth himself with a natural love, yet this his love to us is now in a manner naturalised, because he is become a father to us. He was happy in himself, and might be so without us for ever; yet now he speaks as if that the want of us would make him imperfect: 'Who shall separate us from the love of God?' The word implies a separation, like the rending of the soul from the body; and as the soul would be imperfect without the body, so the love that God bears us would make him so too, if there could be a separation. Therefore in Zeph. 3:17, he is said to 'rest in his love;' if he enjoyed us not, he would never be at rest else. To these kind of expressions, my brethren, doth the Scripture rise.

And so much now for having opened this, 'this great love wherewith he loved us.' His love, a love that is proper unto God, which therefore must needs be thus great, as you have heard it opened to you. The greatness of this love, in respect of his giving Christ to be our head, and carrying us to, and giving of us heaven, and the like; that follows after, and I shall speak to them in their season and order. I have done, you see, with that which is the main foundation, viz., 'for the great love wherewith he loved us.' I should have first handled the first clause in the verse, viz., 'But God, who is rich in mercy;' but you may remember, I told you that love was in this to have the pre-eminence, because it was an act of love first

taken up, and this great love is that which guides and stirs up, manageth, and spends, and draws out all the riches of mercy that are in God towards us, when we were 'dead in sins and trespasses.' Now then there must be something said to that, that he is rich in mercy.

But God, who is rich in mercy.--These words, for the opening of them, may be considered two ways:

1. In their relation or reference, in the Apostle's scope here.

2. Simply as they are in themselves.

1. In their relation or reference, they do, first, hold forth, that to save us all the riches of mercy that are in God were necessary. Had not God been thus rich in mercy, and borne so great a love to us, we had not been quickened, such was our misery, and such was our condition. They do imply, secondly, that all the riches of mercy that are in God, and all in God, did move him thus to be merciful and to be gracious to us. And then, thirdly, that where God doth love, there he will shew forth to the uttermost all those riches of mercy that are in him, he will spend them all to save us, he hath engaged them all. 'God,' saith he, 'who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins and trespasses, hath quickened us, and saved us.'

2. If you take the words simply in themselves, they import two things

(1.) That God is of a merciful nature and disposition.

That there are riches of mercy in that nature of his.

The words imply both.

First, I say, that he is merciful in his nature and disposition; which I argue from two things in the text and in the context.

First, if you observe it, when he speaks of his love, he speaks of it as an act taken up by God, though he is of a loving nature, which is the foundation of that act. 'The love wherewith he loved us,' saith he. But when he speaks of mercy, he speaks of it as of a disposition which love stirred up, which love expendeth and commandeth, guideth and directeth. God, saith he, being in himself rich in mercy, and in his own nature, and having pitched an act of love upon us, for that great love wherewith he loved us, setting aside that nature of mercy that is in him, hath saved us, and quickened us. Secondly, though I do not much urge the participle, *wn*, God being rich, which being in God is his essence; for though that word *wn*, is not always taken for participium essendi, yet notwithstanding, look upon the words just before, he speaks of what we were by nature: we were by nature, saith he, and by our natural disposition, children of wrath; and so on the contrary, speaking of God: God, saith he, *plousioV wn*, who is in his nature, in his disposition merciful and 'rich in mercy, even when we were dead,' &c.

So that, I say, the words simply considered in themselves import, first, that God is in his nature and disposition merciful, which is the foundation of our salvation. And then, that the mercy that is in him is a rich mercy; there are riches of mercy in him.

I shall speak a word or two to the first. It is his disposition thus to be merciful. You have an expression in 2 Cor. 1:3, where God is said to be the 'Father of mercies;' which imports that as he is the spring of all mercy, so it is natural to him, as it is to a father to beget children. He is not only said to be a father unto us,

and like a father to be merciful to us; but he is said to be the Father of all the mercies which he doth bestow upon us, more the Father of mercies than Satan is said to be the father of sin; yet he is said to be the father of sin, and when he sinneth, he sinneth of his own, John 8:44. I say, it is his nature, it is his disposition. 'God,' saith he, 'who is rich in mercy;' it is his being. We are by nature children of wrath, he is by nature merciful.

Mercy is his delight, and therefore natural to him, as in all acts of nature you know there is a delight, Micah 7:18, 'He retaineth not his anger for ever, because,' saith he, 'he delighteth in mercy.'

The mercies of God are called in Scripture his bowels; now there is nothing so intimate or so natural to a man as his bowels are. And they are called his bowels because they are his inwards; and all that is within him, his whole being and nature inclines him to it. Luke 1:78 'Through the tender mercy of our God;' so we translate it, look in your margins, it is the bowels of God.' So in James 5:11, he is called *polusplagcnoV*, full of bowels. You know the bowels are the most inward and the most natural, more than outward members. A man may lose an outward member and be a man still; but he cannot lose his inwards, his bowels. They are said to be his bowels, because all the mercy he sheweth, he doth it from within. Hosea 2:19, 'I will betroth thee unto me in loving-kindness and in mercies;' in the original it is, 'I will betroth thee unto me in mercy and in bowels;' yea, in the womb of mercy, as the word signifies. Now, as Sanctius well observes, he doth not only make a covenant to be a husband to us and to betroth us to himself in mercy; but, saith he, thou shalt have my bowels, thou shalt have the womb itself that conceives them, thou shalt have the mother of mercies, as he himself is said to be the Father of mercies, because that mercy is his inwards, and he begets it, he conceives it; he is both the womb of mercies and the Father of mercies. All these expressions the Scripture hath, to shew how natural they are to him as himself. 'God, who is rich in mercy,' saith he.

And then again; it is his nature and disposition, because when he doth shew mercy, he doth it with his whole heart. 1 Chron. 17:19, 'According to thine own heart, hast thou done all this greatness,' saith David, when he speaks of God's shewing mercy; that is, thou hast shewn mercy like thyself, like the great God, 'according to thine own heart.'

My brethren, though God is just, yet his mercy may be in some respect to be more natural to him than all acts of justice itself that God doth shew, I mean vindicative justice; in them there is a satisfaction to an attribute, in that he meets and is even with sinners; yet notwithstanding there is a kind of violence done to himself in it, the Scripture so expresseth it; there is something in it that is contrary to him. And so many interpret that place, 'I will not the death of a sinner;' that is, I delight not simply in it, I will not do it *animi causa*, for pleasure's sake, because I delight in the thing (as those that are of the Remonstrants' opinion slander the other party, that they make God to delight in the death of a sinner). No; when he exerciseth acts of justice, it is for a higher end, it is not simply for the thing itself; there is always something in his heart against it. But when he comes to shew mercy, to manifest that it is his nature and disposition, it is said that he doth it with his whole heart; there is nothing at all in him that is against it, the act itself pleaseth him for itself, there is no reluctancy in him. Therefore, in Lam. 3:33, when he speaks of punishing, he saith, 'He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.' But when he comes to speak of shewing mercy, he saith he doth do it 'with his whole heart, and with his whole soul;' so the expression is, Jer. 32:41. And therefore acts of justice, you know, are called *opus alienum*, his 'strange work,' and his 'strange act,' in Isa. 28:21. But when he comes to shew mercy, he rejoices over them, to do them good, with his whole heart, and with his whole soul; as it is in that Jer. 32:41.

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