

## THE BENEDICTION

by John Angell James

"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." 2 Cor. 13: 14

This benediction contains rich and incalculable blessings.

May THE LOVE OF GOD, that is, the FATHER, be yours. Yours not only in that general sense in which he loves the world—but in the special favor which he bears to his people—in all its rich, immense, infinite, and eternal benefits. Admire, as you well may, this love of God to his people—that he should not satisfy himself with bestowing upon them little things, and *temporal* blessings—but should confer upon his people all *spiritual* and *eternal* blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus—that he should love them not only for *a while*—but *forever and ever*—that he should put forth for them the uttermost of his love. Oh, this is wonderful! Yes, he has gone to the *uttermost* in nothing but his love—he has never showed so much of his wisdom and power—but he could show more; he could go on creating and multiplying worlds to eternity—but his love cannot do more or greater things than it has done in giving us Christ, heaven, and himself. He has left his love no greater work to do, no richer development to make. His love is inconceivable by all but himself. It has heights not to be scaled, depths not to be fathomed, breadths not to be measured, and lengths not to be traced—it *passes knowledge*. Oh the greatness of God's love! Admire it, I say, and may you possess it, in itself, and in all its operations and provisions, in time, and through eternity.

May the GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST be yours—that grace of which the apostle so beautifully writes, where he says, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich," 2 Cor. 8:9. That grace of which he speaks in another place *by itself*, as if it were *of itself*; the sum of all spiritual blessings, "The grace

of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you," 1 Cor. 16:23. Who can imagine what this grace is in its spring and fountain in the heart of Jesus, and in all its streams in the work of redemption; how unsearchable, how free, how abundant, even to exceeding riches? Who can imagine what that grace must be, of which the stable and manger of Bethlehem, the life of humiliation and sorrow, the endurance of ceaseless contradiction and persecution, the agony and bloody sweat in the garden, the degradation and insults in the hall of Pilate, and the tormenting and accursed death of the cross—were but the fruits, expressions, and operations? What must be the grace itself, when these are only its outward workings? May this grace be yours. May you live in the heart of Jesus. May his favor compass you about as a shield. May all the blessed, and untold, and inconceivable results of his mediation be your portion. And then you are rich amid the deepest poverty; safe amid the most pressing danger; happy in the heaviest sorrow; great and honorable amid the lowest obscurity.

May THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT be yours. By this we are to understand, the participation and fruition of his all-enlightening, renewing, sanctifying, preserving influences. May you live in the Spirit by regeneration, and walk in the Spirit by sanctification. May you be habitually led by him. May he be your Counselor and Comforter. May he dwell in you, as in his temple, and actuate you as the pervading soul of his body the church. May he help your infirmities, indite your prayers, and make intercession within you, according to the will of God. May he fill your minds with light, your consciences with peace, your hearts with love, your lives with holiness. May he so shine upon his work in your souls, and so enable you to compare it with the description of his work in the word, as to witness to you in this manner clearly and assuredly that you are the children of God. May he, by his heavenly light, and love, and purity, and peace which he shall impart, be *to* you, and *in* you, as the pledge of heavenly bliss, and at the same time mold and shape you as vessels which he is preparing for glory.

Thus is the whole Trinity concerned in the great work of your salvation. All originating in the love of the Father, executed by the grace of the Son, and applied by the power of the

Spirit. Each Person performing his own part according to the arrangements in the eternal covenant of redemption, yet all concurring in the work of each.

What an important work, and how vast, is the salvation of lost sinners! All the Persons of the Godhead are concerned in it—the love of God the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Spirit. How vast a blessing must be the salvation thus accomplished, and which is the fruit of such an astonishing and mysterious scheme! Who can conceive of it adequately, and tell all that is included in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory? If we are to estimate the greatness of the product by the means employed to work it out, then what must be the glory, honor, and felicity which are to be the result of that scheme, which was devised by Omniscience from eternity, executed by the Son of God upon the cross, and which the Holy Spirit is poured out from on high to carry into effect in the heart of fallen, yet immortal man!

With what confidence may we wait for and expect the progress and consummation of our salvation. There is the eternal love of God, the all-sufficient grace of Christ, and the omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit—to carry it forward to its completion. What cannot Eternal love, Infinite merit, and Almighty power do? We have mighty and restless enemies to oppose us, great and formidable obstacles to surmount; and if the consummation of the work of grace depended upon ourselves, or upon any human or angelic aid; if we had no resources above what are human or created, we might well despair, and conclude our salvation to be impossible. But we have the whole and undivided Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, on our side. We have Divine, infinite, and inexhaustible resources of wisdom, power, love, and truth, to rely upon. In view of this blessed subject, we may utter the apostle's bold, beautiful, and triumphant language, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?—I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom. 8:38, 39. No—where *is* no condemnation, there *shall be* no separation. We may be separated from our

friends, our property, our health, our home, our country, our life—but never, no never, from Christ. One thing, and that infinitely the most valuable and momentous thing, is sure to us in this world of vicissitudes, losses, and wrecks; the salvation of those who believe, is as sure and safe as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can make it.

But recollect that we are called upon, at the same time, to exercise all those virtues and graces which, as renewed creatures, are obviously our duty. Our souls are, in the first instance, to believe and trust, then to rejoice, then to hope—but then also to watch and pray, to resist and struggle, to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life. What blessed encouragement have we to all this in the promises and engagements of a Triune God to carry on the good work of grace where it is begun, even until the day of Christ Jesus. You are fully warranted to expect this love of the Father, grace of the Son, and power of the Spirit. It is promised to those who believe, and ask, and seek. As God will not be mocked by you by false professions, so he will not mock you with false promises.

Call to recollection your baptismal covenant—you were baptized into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and thus bound to yield and consecrate yourselves to the worship, service, and cause of the ever-blessed Trinity; to seek the satisfying love of the Father, the pardoning grace of the Son, and the renewing power of the Spirit. In that solemn hour, you were claimed for God, and set apart for him, and are thus solemnly bound to consider yourselves as belonging to him, and to seek by all means which he has put within your power—the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. The whole Trinity claims you—each Person has an interest in you, and to each you are to surrender yourselves by an entire and appropriate consecration.

And I admonish you to give all the glory of your salvation to God! Love, grace, and free undeserved mercy have done, and will do all. You stand now, and will stand to the end, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made you accepted in the beloved," Ephes. 1:6. You are saved by grace through faith. Grace chose, grace called, grace

justified, grace sanctifies, and it is grace that must keep, you. Let no note be sounded more loudly, more frequently, more gratefully, or more joyfully, than that which at once lifts you high, and at the same time lays you low, Grace! Grace! It is by the grace of God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, we are what we are. Yet a little while and grace will be swallowed up in glory. Soon we shall emerge from the shadows amid which we are now walking—into the regions of unclouded splendor, and fully possess the inheritance of the saints in light. There, as we bend around the throne of God, the fount of truth and life, we shall better understand, than I can teach, or you can now receive—the mystery of the Divine nature, and see more clearly, though perhaps we shall never fully comprehend, the doctrine of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. Oh, blessed state! Oh, glorious abode! where the din of controversy shall be no more heard than the din of war—where ignorance and doubt will no longer exist—where all mistakes will be rectified, all doubts be removed; and that which is perfect having come, that which is in part shall be done away, and we shall know, even as we are known.

This is the last address of the series. There is something affecting and impressive in the last of the continuous efforts of any scheme of a minister's solicitude for the welfare of his flock. And the last effort, of *the last scheme*, must soon be made. It is well both for you and for me to bear in constant recollection this solemn fact. **Time is ever rolling on, and carrying us upon its rapid and resistless torrent towards eternity**; and the tribunal of Christ is being erected for us both. To that scene I often turn with concern, not altogether unmixed with hope of a gracious acceptance from the grace and condescension of my Divine and merciful Lord. I feel it to be a fearful thing to watch for souls; but oh, to give account of them! Brethren, pray for me, that what of life remains, whether it may be much or little, may be so spent, that when I meet my Master, it may be to hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord!"

At that same tribunal you too must stand; to account for every effort of my tongue, and every labor of my pen, this among the rest, for your spiritual and eternal welfare. If I

am ever to be of any service to you, it must be *now*, and not "*in that great day*." Let me not see you *then* detected, despised, and rejected, as false and unworthy professors; let me not see you at the left hand of the Judge; let me not then be separated forever from the friends in whose society I have lived, in whose houses I have prayed, to whom I have preached, and for whose benefit I have written. Let me not then aggravate, by my testimony, the condemnation I was so anxious to prevent, and aggravate it even by that very concern to avert it. You will then learn, if you never learn it before, that the ministry of the word is of immense value and proportionate responsibility. What means of grace and opportunities of improvement does it, in every case of pastoral fidelity, involve! Oh, did you keep your eye upon the "great white throne," and upon Him who sits upon it, with the balances of the sanctuary in his hand, and the book of his account with each individual hearer of the gospel lying open before his eyes—would you hear sermons, and read the Bible and religious treatises with so much inattention and neglect?

I tremble in anticipation of our interview at the judgement bar of God. How shall *I* appear? How will *you* appear? Where shall we find ourselves? Oh, let us, meet each other at the right hand of the Judge—let us spend our eternity together, in the same happy world, in the presence of the same glorious Savior, and in the communion of the same ineffable felicity—let us go away in company from the judgment seat, with the song of cherubim and seraphim, into the mansions of glory! With what rapturous gratitude shall we there dwell upon our union in this world, as pastor and people. How sacred and sublime will be our communion! How transportingly shall we review the way in which the Lord our God has led us, and how wonderingly shall we recall the various schemes, and their benefits, then fully realized, of ministerial labor! How pure will be our friendship, how perfect our love, how sublime our communion! To that scene I refer your faith and hope, your anxieties and your prayers, your contemplations and anticipations; and, in prospect of it myself; I pour forth again, as the object of all my pastoral labors, supplications, and solitudes, the prayer, which I breathe from the bottom of my soul, and which I shall never cease to breathe as long as I live, "May the grace of the

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