

T H E

RICHES OF CHRIST,

A N D

Glorious treasure of heavenly joys,

Pr HELD FORTH AND *Smitten*

Expounded to all good Christians.

Wherein unspeakable Blessings are proposed for the Encouragement and Comfort of all that will strive and labour to work out their Salvation with fear and trembling.

BY MR. JOHN BUNYAN.



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2 COR. viii. 9.

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that tho' he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye thro' his poverty, might be rich.

UPON this consideration, we may raise our largest thoughts to an exceeding height. For, if we purchase this pearl of great price; if we buy this field, we have a portion laid up, sufficient to satisfy the most desirous mind and craving appetite, not only in this world, but in the world to come; the consideration of which made the apostle cry out, as in a rapture, 'O the height and depth of the riches and mercy of God in Christ Jesus.' In this there is no fading riches, that 'make themselves wings and fly away,' or are perishing and cannot relieve us in our greatest necessity: But this is an unspeakable and everlasting treasure, beyond what the world can afford; this treasure of riches is above the value of a thousand worlds. Would you have length of days? here you may find it held out in one hand. Would

you have riches and honour; it is to be found in the other hand. Would you aspire to true greatness? here you have a crown, not for a time, but for ever and ever. 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life,' says our blessed Lord and Saviour. Would you be a king? here is a kingdom worthy of the highest ambition, where you shall reign with our blessed Lord, not only for an age, but endless ages, even to all eternity, as kings and priests. Would you have joy and comfort? here it is, for holy David witnesseth, 'Thou wilt shew me the path of life, in thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore,' Psal. xvi. 12. Would you have wherewithal to refresh you? here flows the river of the waters of life; here's the heavenly manna, the spiritual food of angels. Would you be always in light? here needs no sun by day, nor moon by night; the Lamb is the lamps, and the light of his countenance fills the mansions of eternity with dazzling glory and rays of brightness, transcending all the brightness this world is capable of, far beyond what the sun affords, when shining in his full lustre,

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compared with a glimmering taper. If the queen of Sheba came to admire the wisdom of Solomon, 'Behold a greater than Solomon is here!' Behold here the wisdom of the Father, the eternal Word, by whom all things were made that are made; and yet he offers himself with all that can be counted rich and glorious, to those that will freely embrace his tender love. O what would not some men do for a small portion of earth, which at last they must be separated from? How do we behold worldlings grovelling below after vain transitory things, and sparing no pains, cost, hazard, nor danger, to acquire transitory trifles, and neglect to purchase, when such a pearl of price is to be had! nay, even neglect to desire it; preferring a small weight of perishing earth, before an exceeding weight of glory; preferring sickness, trouble, and diseases, before life, ease, and immortal happiness; O consider, how infinitely unequal the terms are; what infinite gain may be had for the like time, if well improved, that is spent in seeking after riches, even transcending the largest account: for, as the apostle tells us, 'Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it en-

tered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath laid up for those that love and obey him.' All precious things to which this world gives a name and most esteem, are not comparable to them, as a drop of water to the ocean, or a grain of sand to the whole mass of earth. And how great then ought our love to be towards him, that not only renders us this treasure, but shed his rich redeeming blood to purchase it for us, and to draw us out of the snares of destruction when we lay in darkness and the shadow of death.

How great ought our veneration to be for so transcendant a love and favour as this! when the innocent submitted to die to save the guilty from the power of the second death; 'for he hath delivered us from the wrath that is to come,' 1 Thess. i. 10. so that, 'to them that are in Christ, there is no condemnation,' Rom. viii. 1. This being the main promise of God, 'That whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life,' John iii. 15, 16. For this great conqueror has overthrown him that had the power of death, (that is, the devil,) delivering them, who through fear of death, were all their

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life-time, subject to bondage, having spoiled principalities and powers, and made a triumph over death and hell; baffles the king of terrors, and the enemy of mankind, who laboured earnestly to enslave and bring to final destruction all the sons of Adam; and had undoubtedly seen his implacable malice accomplished upon the whole race, had not this great Prince divested himself of his glory for a time to free us from bondage, and put us into a state of possibility of salvation.

How can we, in these thoughts, do otherwise than break out in a rapture with holy David, 'I will magnify thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord and marvellous, worthy to be praised. There is no end of thy righteousness. The memorial of thy abundant kindness shall be shewed, and men shall sing of thy righteousness: that thy power and thy glory, and the mightiness of thy kingdom, is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all ages. The Lord upholdeth all such as fall, and lifteth up those that are bowed down. The eyes of all wait upon thee, O Lord, and thou givest them meat in due season,' Psalm cxxv. 1, &c.

These considerations, I think, should

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raise and influence the minds of men, with desires suitable to the longing after a treasure so inestimable, a pearl worth more than ten thousands, a jewel no where else to be purchased, no where else to be found; a kingdom of all pleasures and delights: these thoughts made the kingly prophet to have but a mean esteem of earthly pomp and grandeur, compared with this, when he cried out, 'How amiable are thy dwellings, O Lord of hosts! my soul panteth after thee, as the hart panteth after the water-brooks,' &c. And St. Paul counted all things as dung and dross to the love of Christ, and courageously affirmed, 'That neither height nor depth, principalties nor powers, things present, nor things to come,' &c. should be able to separate him from the love of God, which was in Jesus Christ, the blessed and amiable Lord of life, glory and immortality, the fairest among ten thousand.

But here let us consider; to gain the riches of Christ we must give up ourselves wholly to his divine will, both soul and body, committing ourselves to him, as to the hands of a faithful Redeemer; for seeing he has redeemed us from our enemies, and, therefore, we

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need not stand in fear of them, according to that of Isaiah xiv. 2. 'Fear not, for I have redeemed thee;' but as we are taught in the next words, we should all the days of our life worship him without fear; and when at any time we have grieved so good and gracious a God, by sinning against him, remembrance of our redemption should encourage us to return unto him, seeing he, as our Saviour, hath redeemed and bought us with so great a price, therefore, we ought to acknowledge him to be our Lord, in right of redemption, and ourselves not to be our own, but his servants; for, therefore, Christ died and rose again to life, that he might be the Lord of the quick and the dead, Rom. xiv. 16. And, if we acknowledge him to be our Lord, we must be careful to do his will, or else we in vain do call him so, as did those he reprov'd, &c. 'Why do ye call me Lord, and do not the things that I command you?' Luke vi. 4. Christ died for all, that those who live, should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again, 1 Cor. iv. 5.

This consideration caus'd the primitive Christians to seal their testimonies

with their blood, running valiantly to flames and tortures, and not accepting any deliverance that might render them unworthy of the riches and mercy of their Redeemer, who had so freely laid down his life to purchase them glory and immortality, in a kingdom that lasts as long as God is God, and that is endless, and to all eternity; here we have (even in our best state) but a glimpse of the glory that shall be revealed, and how often have good Christians despised and trampled on all the riches, honour and glory, this world could give, and embraced all the miseries we suppose can make a man the most miserable of creatures, to follow the guidance of that marvellous light that has been revealed; nothing but the riches of Christ held forth in his meritorious death and passion, could satisfy to bound the large desire of their souls: No worlds below, tho' immutable, adorned with all the gaudy vanities, and momentary pleasures, could balance the least thought of eternal happiness, and many times raptures of joy, in holy and pious contemplations, have raised them to heaven itself, in imagination, whilst their bodies have remained on earth, and made

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them with St. Paul cry out, 'That they desired to be dissolved and to be with Christ.' The holy martyrs have held up their finger ends, blazing with fire like so many torches, to light their souls to the mansions of eternal bliss, prepared for them by their Redeemer, and sung triumph and praises to the Lord Jesus, who strengthened and supported them in the midst of their trial: and some have confessed, when the flames have compassed them, and part of their bodies were consumed, that they felt no more pain than in a bed of down; and that the coals of fire and devouring flames, appeared like a pleasant garden of roses and lilies round about them.

O that men would be wise, and consider these things, that they would, with St. Paul, die daily to sin and the corruption of the flesh, to live to Christ in righteousness and purity of spirit; that so they might justly lay claim to his merit, and the riches and treasures of his mercy. For no doubt the consideration of the stupenduous redemption that he had wrought for the sons and daughters of men, occasioned what St. John saw, Rev. iv. 9. 'And when these beasts (whose character you will find at large in that

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chapter) gave glory and honour, and thanks to him that sat upon the throne, who liveth for ever and ever; the four and twenty elders fell down before him that sat upon the throne, and worshipped him for ever and ever; and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive honour and power; thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.'

Could we have a prospect, though in a vision, of holy men, whose souls are redeemed from the earth, and triumphing, sing praises and hallelujahs in the highest heaven; with what wonder and amazement the riches and mercy of our blessed Lord; transport and carry them away; we would truly and feelingly say, with the apostle, 'It is good for us to be here;' that is, to be in a state and possibility of gaining the like happy vision of the divine beatitude; we should then look upon every thing else as dark and dull, and conclude them but dross and dung. St. Paul, when wrapt into the third heavens, though he knew not whether in the flesh or spirit, saw and heard things so unutterable, that his tongue perhaps was not capable of expressing words suitable to give mankind

an account of them, tho' he had thought fit, or been disposed to reveal them, and after that we find his mind inflamed after fuller fruition of them; life itself (that was to dismiss him from the lower world) seemed tedious to him, and made him court death, the king of terrors, so dreadful to the greatest part of men, to set him at liberty, as appears by his desiring to 'be dissolved, and to be with Christ.' Whilst worldlings are contending for earthly treasure, that is of small duration, and cannot give the least real content, let us raise our souls to take a prospect of the true riches, the treasures of everlasting duration, even the riches of Christ's mercy and love towards miserable sinners; who, when laid in darkness and the shadow of death, gave his life a ransom for us, to appease his Father's justice.

O let not the consideration of worldly treasure make you turn aside from following this rich mine, this golden vein of heavenly treasure; let nothing stand in competition, or be thought too dear to part withal upon this account, so that we may not lose, for trifles, this most excellent of all riches promised to us in the gospel.

‘ And every one (says our blessed Saviour) that has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit eternal life,’ Mat. xix. 29.

—Here is a promise worth a thousand worlds; worthy the shaking off and sacrificing all our darling affections that stand between us and Christ, to hinder us from running into his blessed arms, and wholly casting ourselves upon the riches of his mercy, in which alone there is comfort and rest for weary souls. ‘ The king (says holy David) shall joy in thy strength, O Lord, and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice,’ Psalm xxi. 1. If we cast our anchor here, we have a sure foundation, and he that is the wise disposer of all things, will not suffer us, even in this life, to want what he sees convenient for us. ‘ The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof; the world and them that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods,’ Psalm xxiv. 1, 2.

Many times we find indeed that God withhold his hands from the righteous, and gives them no such plenty of

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earthly things as the wicked commonly possess. This made David almost stumble, but when he had better considered, he greatly rejoiced. For, as our blessed Lord confessed that his kingdom was not of this world, we may well believe that those whom he loves should not have their portion here, but receive it in the kingdom prepared for them, in all fulness of joy and blessedness, even the riches of Christ shall be their part. Then they may truly say their lot is fallen in a fair land, the Lord is their heritage, even the Lord of glory, the King of saints and angels, who has subdued death and the grave, who died and rose again that he might become Lord both of the living and the dead. And in this case the Christian may assure himself with holy David: 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want: he maketh me lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul, he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet I will fear no evil. For thou art with me, and thy rod and thy staff shall comfort me. Thou preparest a table for me in

the presence of mine enemies. Thou
 anointest my head with oil, my cup
 runneth over. Surely goodness and
 mercy shall follow me all the days of
 my life, and I will dwell in the house
 of the Lord for ever.' Psalm xxiii.
 Now, seeing all in heaven and earth is
 given to our blessed Lord, how can we
 doubt but the riches of his mercy will
 extend to those that love him, and keep
 his word in truth and righteousness.

O let us strive to 'run the race that is
 set before us,' that we may have the
 reward Christ offers in the riches of his
 mercy, which nothing can come near
 the value. If we can possess ourselves
 of that, we have all that ought to be
 desired; all that can make us eternal-
 happy.—These are the only aims and
 desires of the saints of God; they desire
 to purchase nothing but Christ, and in
 him find all that is rich, glorious, and
 desirable; all that is lovely and amiable:
 the only pearl of price, the rich
 treasure in the field; for which we should
 be ready to part with all to purchase; and the
 inheritance in which without fail will enrich us for
 ever, and satisfy the vastest desire that
 our hearts ought to conceive.

that: I had wings like a dove, (says

holy David in the rapture of his thought
 'that I might fly away and be at rest
 And certainly there remaineth (as the
 holy writings mention) a rest for the
 people of God, which, through the rich
 and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ at
 his merits, may be obtained, if we co
 sider, 'even in this our day, the thing
 'that belong to our peace?' Which gra
 O Lord, for thy infinite mercy's sake
 that we may praise and magnify thy
 holy name world without end.

A P R A Y E R.

O BLESSED JESUS, consider me
 miserable wretch, whom, in
 riches of thy mercy, by shedding
 most precious blood, thou hast rede
 ed from death to life: My soul is
 vished with the thoughts of thy tr
 cendent compassions. O draw me,
 I shall follow with joy and delight
 turn not away thy amiable eyes,
 faint, for my soul is sick of love. G
 me in thy truth, and let me so
 that when I die, my soul may rest
 thee. AMEN.

F I N I S.