

mind of God, or no. If this be done, and conviction of its truth and necessity do then appear, then let the soul know it hath to do with God himself, and wisely consider what answer he will return, what account he will give unto Him. Wherefore,

5. *The best way to keep our souls in a readiness rightly to receive and duly to improve such reproofs as may regularly be given us by any, is to keep and preserve our souls and spirits in a constant awe and reverence of the reproofs of God which are recorded in his word.*—The neglect or contempt of these reproofs is that which the generality of mankind do split themselves upon, and perish eternally. This is so fully and graphically expressed, Prov. i., that nothing can be added thereunto. And the great means whereby much hardness comes upon others through the deceitfulness of sin, is want of keeping up a due sense or reverence of divine reproofs and threatenings on their souls. When this is done, when our hearts are kept up unto an awful regard of them, exercised with a continual meditation on them, made tender, careful, watchful, by them, any just reproof from any, that falls in compliance with them, will be conscientiously observed and carefully improved.

6. *We shall fail in this duty, unless we are always accompanied with a deep sense of our frailty, weakness, readiness to halt or miscarry, and thereon a necessity of all the ordinances and visitations of God, which are designed to preserve our souls.*—Unless we have due apprehensions of our own state and condition here, we shall never kindly receive warnings beforehand to avoid approaching dangers, nor duly improve rebukes for being overtaken with them. It is the humble soul—that feareth always, and that from a sense of its own weakness, yea, the treacheries and deceitfulness of its heart, with the power of those temptations whereunto it is continually exposed—that is ever likely to make work of the duty here directed unto.

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## SERMON XXIX.

BY THE REV. THOMAS VINCENT, A.M.,

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WHEREIN DOTH APPEAR THE BLESSEDNESS OF FORGIVENESS? AND  
HOW IT MAY BE OBTAINED.

*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.—*

Psalm xxxii. 1.

OF all the pains or torments that any of the children of men do or can feel in this life, none are comparable to those which proceed from the lashes and wounds of a guilty conscience, under the apprehensions of the anger of a sin-revenging God, and the impression of some scalding drops of his wrath upon the soul. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?” (Prov. xviii. 14.) David had ventured to transgress, and that very heinously; and in his breaking

of God's law, he had broken his own peace; in his dishonouring of God's name, he had wounded his own conscience. After his sin, David is shy of God, and keeps silence for a while, maketh no confession. God is highly offended, and hides his face from him; but layeth his hand sorely upon him, making such a deep impression of his displeasure upon his spirit, that he sunk under the weight of it; and it became so very grievous unto him, that he roareth out all the day under the horrible anguish which he felt hereby: yea, he complaineth that his moisture was hereby turned into the drought of summer. In this condition David could find no relief, no ease, or assuagement of his grief, until, upon acknowledgment of his sin, he had obtained forgiveness, and God, through his free grace and tender mercy, had covered his iniquity, as we shall find in the third, fourth, and fifth verses of this psalm; which I take to be the occasion of the joyful acclamation and sweet expression in my text, the first verse of the psalm, concerning the blessedness of remission, or happiness of the man that hath, with him, obtained so great a privilege; which privilege none have a greater sight of, than those that have felt the wounds and smart, and roared under the horror, of an accusing conscience, and been terrified with the furious rebukes of God's angry countenance. And because this was David's case, therefore he might the more feelingly pronounce those to be blessed, whose sins were pardoned: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

*Blessed*—The word אֲשֶׁר־ in the original signifies *blessedness*; and it is read in the plural number, because, as one saith, "that man is many ways blessed: he is blessed in this world; and in the other world he is most blessed and happy; \* so that blessedness seems most properly to be his, and singularly to belong to him." And it is the plural number, "because many good things concur to true blessedness; or to show that such an one is cumulatively happy,—he hath a heap of blessings upon him:" thus our learned Mr. Poole in his *Synopsis*.† The same author observes, that "some take the word *blessed* in the Hebrew to be an interjection, or adverb; and so make this to be a rhetorical, though abrupt, exclamation, or a joyful acclamation, at the happiness of such."‡

*Whose transgression is forgiven*—There are divers versions of these words. One translates them out of the Hebrew, וְשׁוֹנֵי פָשָׁע "Whose iniquity is remitted."|| Another: "Whose prevarication is forgiven."§ Others, and that nearer the sense of the Hebrew words: "Who is eased of his defection, or unburdened of his transgression."¶ Another: "From whom his transgression is taken away."\*\* Another: "Who is absolved from his crime."†† All which versions agree in the same sense with our translation: "Whose transgression is forgiven." For "remission of iniquity or prevarication," is the same as "the forgiveness

\* Vir ille est multis modis beatus, nempe in hoc mundo, et in altero est beatissimus et felicissimus, ut propriæ videantur beatitudines et ad eum singulariter pertinere.—GENEBRARDUS. † Quia multa bono debent concurrere ad beatitudinem; vel ut ostenderet talem cumulatè beatum esse.—POLI Synopsis. ‡ Alii אֲשֶׁר est interjectio, sive adverbium: et sic rhetorica exclamatio ex abrupto, vel læta exclamatio, de felicitate ejus: O beatè illum!

—Sic SCHINDLERUS. || Quibus remissa est iniquitas.—CALVINUS. § Condonati prævaricationis, cui demittitur prævaricatio.—PAGNINUS. ¶ Qui levatus a defectione, vel qui exoneratus a transgressionem.—JUNIUS et TREMELLIIUS. \*\* A quo ablata transgressio.—PISCATOR. †† Absolutus a crimine.—POLUS et GERERO.

of transgression." "To have the sin taken away, to be eased and unburdened of the transgression," what is it more than "to have the sin forgiven?" forasmuch as the weight and load of guilt is by forgiveness removed, whereby alone the conscience is truly eased; and so "to be absolved from crime" is as much as "to be acquitted from all obligation of punishment;" and this is done in forgiveness of sin.

*Whose sin is covered,* כִּסִּי יִקְרָא—He is blessed whose sin is covered; not he whose sins are covered by himself. So, Prov. xxviii. 13: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper." All ought to acknowledge unto God without hiding any, as in the fifth verse of this psalm: "I acknowledged my sins unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid." But he is blessed whose sin is covered by God: "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin." (Psalm lxxxv. 2.) Sin is covered, when it is covered *by* God, and when it is covered *from* God. Not as if any sin were or could be covered from the eye and view of his omniscience; but sin is covered *from* him when "it is covered from his angry eye, and his wrathful, revengeful countenance;" \* that is, when God ceaseth to be angry for the sin, through his reconciliation to the sinner. Piscator noteth upon the place, that "sin is here compared to filthinesses, which use to be covered, that they may not offend the eye." † When the offence of God's eye is removed, then sin may be said to be covered. And it is observed, that in the Hebrew the same word, which signifieth "a covering," doth signify also "an expiation;" and the covering of the mercy-seat, which here may be alluded unto, which was called "the propitiatory," comes from the same root; which propitiation or covering did cover the tables of the law, "the hand-writing against us;" and this was a type of Christ, our propitiation, who, having appeased his Father's anger, doth cover our sins, that the law shall not accuse or condemn us. ‡ Sin is covered *by* God, when "he hides his face from it;" (Psalm li. 9;) when "he casts it behind his back;" (Isai. xxxviii. 17;) when he throws it "into the depth of the sea." (Micah vii. 19.) So that this *covering of sin* is of the same import as the former expression, namely, *the forgiving of it*.

QUESTION I. "Wherein doth appear the blessedness of forgiveness?"

QUESTION II. "How forgiveness may be obtained?"

QUESTION I. "Wherein the blessedness of forgiveness doth appear?"

To evidence this, I shall give the REASONS why such must needs be blessed whose transgressions are forgiven.

REASON I. *Such must needs be blessed whose transgressions are forgiven, because God doth pronounce them blessed.*—As in the text: "Blessed is he whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered." David wrote these words not from himself, but as he was inspired by

\* *Tectum ab iræ vel ultionis Dei facie.*—POLUS ex GEIERO. † *Peccatum comparatur sordibus, quæ tegi solent, ne oculos offendant.*—PISCATOR. ‡ *Ut operculo illo læs tegebatur per quam cognitio peccati, sic Christus peccata tegit, remittit, et expiat, ne lex ultra accuset et condemnet; placatum Dei Patris iræ per Filium, tectum est (seu opertum) peccatum per Christum, scilicet propitiatorium nostrum.*—MERCERUS in Pasco. "As that covering over-spread the law, by which comes the knowledge of sin; so Christ covers, remits, and expiates sins, that the law may proceed no further in accusing and condemning: the wrath of God the Father is appeased through his Son, and sin is covered or hidden through Christ, who is our propitiation."—EDIT.

the Holy Ghost ; and if any saying in the whole book of the scriptures be the word of God, (as all of them are,) this is his word, and this is his sentence, which is confirmed in the New Testament, the apostle Paul quoting these very words to prove the doctrine of justification by faith without works. (Rom. iv. 7.) God pronounceth such to be blessed whose iniquities are forgiven ; and therefore they must needs be blessed, because God speaketh of things as they are : never did a lie, falsehood, or mistake, proceed out of his mouth. God, who alone giveth the blessing, pronounceth pardoned persons "blessed," and therefore they are blessed. When Isaac gave his fatherly blessing unto Jacob, though it were upon a mistake, he supposing him to have been Esau his first-born son ; yet afterward did not, he would not, retract it, but telleth Esau, who too late sought for it, "I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed." (Gen. xxvii. 33.) Surely then, where God, who never mistaketh, doth pronounce the blessing upon any, he doth not, he will not, retract it ; but they are blessed, and shall be blessed.

REASON II. *Such must needs be blessed whose iniquities are forgiven, because they are delivered from the greatest evil, and that which doth expose them to the greatest misery, and which alone can deprive them of eternal happiness.*—Pardoned persons are delivered from the greatest evil, and that is sin ; which is the greatest evil in itself, because most opposite to the chiefest good, and forasmuch as it is the cause of all other evils that either do or can befall mankind. Beside the miseries of this life, it is sin, and only sin, which exposes unto future miseries, and the vengeance of eternal fire in hell. The curse of the law is for sin, whereby the law is broken : "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. iii. 10.) The threatenings of eternal destruction are for sin, especially for sins against the gospel : "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ : who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (2 Thess. i. 7—9.) Guilt for sin, in the nature of it, is *obligatio ad penam*, "an obligation to punishment," not temporal only, but such as may bear proportion to the demands of God's infinite justice, which therefore must be eternal. Such whose iniquities are forgiven, are delivered from the guilt of sin ; they are free from obligation to punishment, and so are no longer exposed thereunto : through Christ they have remission, being by faith interested in his merit and satisfaction ; and God's justice cannot require the satisfaction again of them, which he hath already received of Christ, and accepted for them. Christ is their Surety, who hath paid their debts ; in forgiveness they are discharged, and God will not require the debt any more of them. "Therefore there is no condemnation to them ;" (Rom. viii. 1 ; ) Jesus having "delivered them from the wrath to come." (1 Thess. i. 10.) It is sin also which can alone deprive any of eternal happiness. In the first covenant, God promised life and everlasting felicity upon the condition of perfect obedience ; it is only disobedience which doth hinder the fulfilling of this promise. It was sin which threw man at the first

out of Paradise, and which still doth keep men out of heaven. Nothing doth hinder men's happiness here, nothing can deprive them of happiness in the other world, but this evil of evils, sin: hence, then, it will undeniably follow, that pardoned persons, who are delivered from sin, must needs be blessed, there being nothing which can procure their misery or prevent their blessedness, because in the forgiveness of sin their sin is removed with the evil consequences and effects thereof. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm ciii. 12.)

REASON III. *Such men must needs be blessed whose iniquities are forgiven, because they are taken into covenant with God; God is their God, and they are his people.*—The promise of the new covenant, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more," is coupled with the other promises, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.) Wherever God fulfils the one promise, he doth fulfil the other too. God forgiveth iniquity to none, but at the same time he becometh their God, and brings them into the blessed relation of his covenant-people. They are blessed that have the Lord for their God: "Happy is that people that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." (Psalm cxliv. 15.) "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance." (Psalm xxxiii. 12.) Such as are taken into covenant with God are blessed, because, 1. *They are taken into God's favour.* 2. *They are taken into God's family.* 3. *They are under God's providence.* 4. *They have free access unto God in prayer.* 5. *They have communion with God in all his ordinances: and thus it is with all pardoned persons, and therefore they are blessed.*

1. *Pardoned persons, being taken into covenant, are taken into God's favour.*—Nothing doth hinder God's special favour but unpardoned sin, nothing but that which is the only object of his hatred, and cause of his displeasure; and this is nothing else but sin. Although God's love have many objects, yet his hatred hath but one, and that is sin. God hateth none of his creatures, as they are creatures, but as they are sinful. Never did any thing offend or displease God but sin; nothing else hath power to enkindle God's anger, and to blow it up into a flame. When God forgiveth sin, his hatred ceaseth, his anger is removed, and he receiveth them whom he pardoneth into the arms of his special love. God's favour is the peculiar privilege of God's pardoned people; "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour which thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation." (Psalm cvi. 4.) Therefore all pardoned persons being in God's favour, they are blessed: because his favour is the fountain of blessedness: "In his favour is life." (Psalm xxx. 5.) Yea, "his loving-kindness is better than life." (Psalm lxiii. 3.) The favour of an earthly king is counted a great privilege, but the favour of the King of heaven is really a great blessedness. The God of heaven, who is so powerful, wise, faithful, good, merciful, hath a special favour and kindness for them, and doth love them with an incomparable, incomprehensible, unchangeable, and eternal love; therefore they must needs be the happiest people on the earth.

2. *Pardoned persons, being in covenant, are taken into God's family.*

—Being “reconciled by the cross” of Christ, they “are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” (Eph. ii. 16, 19.) And being of God’s household, they are God’s children: “I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (2 Cor. vi. 18.) This is a privilege which rendereth all those, ‘above all others, most blessed who partake of it: “To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” (John i. 12.) *To them gave he power*—The original word, *ἐξουσία*, signifieth “right or privilege.” It is the greatest privilege in the world to be numbered amongst God’s children; hence it is that John, writing of it in his epistle, doth break forth into an exclamation of joy and wonder: “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” (1 John iii. 1.) He seems to be in an ecstasy of joy at the greatness of this privilege, and the happiness of such as had attained it. If beggars were lifted up from the dunghill to be adopted children of the greatest prince upon the earth, it would not be so great an honour to them, as this honour and dignity which is conferred upon pardoned persons, in their being advanced into the number of the adopted children of the great Jehovah, the Lord of heaven and earth. And will any question whether they are blessed?

3. *Pardoned persons, being in covenant, are under God’s special providence.*—There is a general providence that doth attend all the children of men; but God’s especial providence doth attend his own children, and his peculiar people, who are reconciled unto him by Jesus Christ. Such are under God’s especial providence; “they dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” (Psalm xci. 1.) God’s name is their “strong tower, unto which they run and are safe.” (Prov. xviii. 10.) God is frequently called their Rock, and Fortress, Buckler, Shield, and Deliverer; and hath made many promises unto them of defence and deliverance. They are under God’s special provision. As a father provideth for his children, so God provideth for his people: He provideth for their bodies: when “the young lions lack, and suffer hunger, **THEY** shall not want any good thing.” (Psalm xxxiv. 10.) He promiseth to feed them, and clothe them, and to “withhold no good thing from them:” and if they always have not as much in the world as they wish, they shall be sure to have as much as God seeth they do really need. But more especially he provideth, for their souls, the robes of his Son’s righteousness to clothe them, sweet and precious promises to feed and nourish them, jewels of grace to enrich and adorn them, the guard of angels to attend them, Himself and his Son to be companions to them, the peace and joys of the Holy Ghost to cheer them, and to sweeten their passage through the valley of the world, and the dark entry of death. This is the privilege of pardoned persons; and surely then they are blessed.

4. *Pardoned persons, being in covenant, have free access unto God in prayer.*—“Through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” (Eph. ii. 18.) “In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.” (Eph. iii. 12.) “Let us therefore come boldly to

the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. iv. 16.) Being pardoned and reconciled through Christ, they may with boldness and confidence come daily to the throne of grace, and there "by prayer and supplication make known their requests unto God;" and they shall be sure to have both acceptance and audience. God who hath given them a pardon, will deny them nothing that is really for their good. Having interest in Christ, who hath such interest in heaven, whatever they ask of the Father in his name, if it is according to his will, they may be assured, because Christ hath faithfully promised it, that he will do it for them. Surely then such persons are happy.

5. *Pardoned persons, being in covenant, have communion with God in all his ordinances.*—Not only in prayer, but hearing of the word, singing, and at the table of the Lord: when others rest in the outside of ordinances, they meet with God there. Sin being removed, which before made a separation, they now attain communion with God, and their hearts close with him as their Chief Good. There is nothing more sweet in the world than communion with God; hence David doth account those most happy that had the liberty of God's house and ordinances, where they did or might enjoy so great a privilege: "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house." (Psalm lxxiv. 4.) And, Psalm lxx. 4: "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: he shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." Such only are truly blessed that find satisfaction: it is not the enjoyment of creatures [which] will give this. But in the enjoyment of and communion with God in his ordinances, which is "the goodness of God's house," true satisfaction may be found; and therefore pardoned persons, who do attain this, are truly and the only blessed persons.

REASON IV. *Such must needs be blessed whose iniquities are forgiven, because they are in a better state than Adam was in his first creation.*—None will deny, who read and believe the scriptures, that Adam was blessed before he sinned. There was no curse of the law upon man, until the law was broken by him; and as God made all other things good, so man, as he came out of God's hand, was made both good and happy.

The primitive blessedness of Adam consisted chiefly in two things: First. *In the innocency which was in him.* Secondly. *In the image of God which was upon him;* whereby he was capacitated for, and had a nearness of communion and fellowship with, God. In both respects pardoned persons are in a better estate than Adam.

First. *In respect of innocency.*—Although they cannot so properly be called "innocent" in themselves, doubtless they are not so innocent as Adam before his fall; yet, upon their pardon, they are guiltless, they are reputed innocent in the sight of God, and (however God may chastise them for sin here) they shall no more be punished for any sin in the other world, than if they had never offended, than if they had never committed any the least sin from their birth unto their death, but had been as white and clean, as pure and innocent, as the first Adam before his fall, or the second Adam who never fell. And herein their con-

dition is better than that of Adam in innocency, because no guilt shall be charged upon them unto their condemnation; whereas Adam had no such security against condemnation; for afterwards he, falling into sin, would certainly have fallen into hell, had not pardoning mercy prevented it.

Secondly. *In regard of the image of God, that is repaired in all those that are pardoned.*—When God forgiveth their sin, he changeth their nature; and that faith which justifieth the person doth also “purify the heart.” (Acts xv. 9.) Indeed, pardoned persons are renewed but in part; and the inherent righteousness and holiness, which they attain unto in this life, is but imperfect. Yet in this they are in a better condition than Adam was at first; because, although Adam’s inherent righteousness were perfect, yet it was left to his own keeping, and he quickly lost it, and fell quite off from God, putting himself out of God’s favour and out of covenant together; and there was no salvation attainable by him, until God had promised Christ, and made a new covenant of grace with him. But the inherent righteousness of pardoned persons, although it be far short, many degrees, of absolute perfection, yet it is committed to the keeping of Christ by the Spirit in them, who is both able and hath promised to bring it unto perfection: so that they shall never totally fall from grace, but grow-up from one degree of grace unto another, until they arrive unto heaven, where they shall be absolutely perfect both in holiness and happiness; and, in the mean time, they are accepted as complete and perfect in their Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose perfect righteousness is through faith imputed unto them, whereby the defects of their righteousness are supplied, and they adopted to eternal life. Pardoned persons are in a better state than Adam, therefore they are blessed.

REASON v. *Such whose iniquities are forgiven are blessed because they shall be blessed.*—The blessedness of pardoned persons is chiefly in hope of future blessedness, without which hope in some circumstance of time, they would be, as the apostle saith, “of all men most miserable;” (1 Cor. xv. 19;) and therefore I shall chiefly speak of the future blessedness of the pardoned; and here, **FIRST.** *Show what the future blessedness is which pardoned persons shall have.* **SECONDLY.** *Prove that pardoned persons shall most assuredly attain this blessedness.* **THIRDLY.** *Show how this future blessedness doth render them blessed at the present;* and this will be a full proof that pardoned persons are blessed.

**FIRST.** The first thing is, *to show what the future blessedness is which pardoned persons shall have.*—And here I must premise that there is but little of this future blessedness revealed in comparison of what it really is, and what pardoned persons will find it to be. Ministers have preached and written much concerning it; but they have not told one half, no, nor the thousandth part of the glory and excellency thereof: and it must be but little, then, that I have time or room to speak of it in this discourse. Yet something I must say; and it is no difficult thing to set it forth, by scripture-light and in a few words, as far exceeding all outward happiness and earthly felicity. The blessedness which pardoned persons shall have doth lie in three things: 1. *In the blessed and glorious*



*place where they shall live.* 2. *In the blessed and glorious company which they shall converse withal.* 3. *In the blessed and glorious state which they shall attain to.*

1. *Pardoned persons shall live and take-up their eternal abode in a most blessed and glorious place.*—"Here they have no continuing city, but they seek one to come." (Heb. xiii. 14.) The most strong and flourishing cities in the world may be demolished by the hands of men, or overthrown by earthquakes, or consumed and turned into ashes by the devouring flames of fire. But the city they shall dwell-in cannot be demolished, overthrown, or consumed; that city will abide and continue so long as God shall abide, the maker of it. "They look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Heb. xi. 10.) The foundations of this city are sure and strong, such as shall never be moved. The cities and houses they now dwell-in are made by man, and therefore are but mean; but the city they shall dwell-in is of God's building and making, and therefore is very glorious. It is "the New Jerusalem" which they shall hereafter inhabit, "the Jerusalem which is above;" the walls and gates thereof are pearls, and "the streets thereof pure gold;" as it is described, Rev. xxi., at the latter end of that chapter. But the place is beyond all comparison, and doth exceed in glory whatever description may be made of it.

2. *Pardoned persons shall have most blessed and glorious company to converse withal in heaven.*

(1.) *In heaven pardoned persons will have the company of all the saints.*—There they will find all their godly friends and acquaintance, and that both such as die before them, and those that die after them; in whose society they will have a mutual sweet complacency, and their joy one in another will exceed what tongues can express. There they shall have the company of all those godly ministers, either whom they have known and heard, or whose writings only they have seen and read. And how will the spiritual children delight to see the glory, and live always in the company, of their spiritual fathers, whom God hath made instrumental for their conversion! Then they will rejoice indeed that ever they saw their face, that ever they heard their voice, that ever they believed their report, that ever they were persuaded by them to repent of their sins, and to accept of God's Son, to come into and to keep in God's ways, when they see whither those ways have brought them. There they will meet with all the holy martyrs, so famous in their generations for their courage and constancy; with all the holy prophets and apostles; the penmen of the scriptures, so famous in their time for the large and plentiful effusion of the Spirit of God upon them; with all the good kings and princes, and all the righteous persons whatever, that have lived in all ages and generations, of all kindreds, nations, and languages: they shall then be gathered all into one body under Christ their Head, and join together in blessing, and praising, and singing Hallelujahs unto the Lord for ever.

(2.) *In heaven pardoned persons will have the company of all the glorious angels.*—Here the angels guard them, and are ministering spirits unto them. (Heb. i. 14.) Hereafter they will be their companions, and there will be mutual and most sweet converse between them. Some

delight in the company of nobles, and the great ones which belong to the courts of great princes: they shall have the company and conversation of the glorious angels, who are the nobles of heaven, and courtiers of the King of kings. How the angels and saints will converse together, and communicate their minds one to another, is too high for us to conceive, and too difficult for us to determine; but, surely, the converse will be very sweet and full of love and delight.

(3.) *In heaven pardoned persons will have the company and fellowship of the glorious Spirit, the Holy Ghost.*—Here they have his presence and powerful operations; they feel now, especially at some times, his sweet breathings and powerful operations, which do wonderfully enlighten them, greatly quicken and inflame their hearts with divine love, yea, and fill their hearts with spiritual and heavenly joy. But in heaven they shall have a fuller, sweeter, more powerful and constant presence of the glorious Spirit; they shall there be filled with the Holy Ghost, as full as they can hold, yea, beyond their present capacity; they shall be under the sweet breathings of the Spirit, whereby the flame of divine love will be kept alive in them perpetually in the greatest height and heat of it: and this shall abide to eternity.

(4.) *In heaven pardoned persons shall have the company of the Lord Jesus Christ in his glory.*—Here they have heard of him, there they shall see him. Here they see him with the eye of faith, there they shall see him eye to eye, and face to face. Austin did wish to have seen three things, above all other things that were to be seen in the world,—Rome in its glory, Paul in the pulpit, and Christ in the flesh. The righteous in heaven will see that which is far beyond Austin's wish,—they will see Zion in its glory, Paul in his glory, and Christ in his glory.

*They will see Zion in its glory.*—Which will far exceed Rome in its greatest splendour, when it was most illustrious for wealth and riches, through the spoils of so many conquered kingdoms which were brought into it; when it was most illustrious for stately houses and sumptuous buildings, for wise and learned men, famous and valiant captains and soldiers. The New Jerusalem, Mount Zion which is above, will outshine Rome in glory, more than the sun doth outshine the smallest star in heaven, or the faint light of a candle here upon earth.

*They shall see Paul in his glory.*—They shall hear him praising God with triumphant acclamations of joy; which will be far more than to hear him preach in a state of weakness and infirmity.

*But chiefly they shall see Christ in his glory.*—The sight of Christ in his humiliation was nothing in comparison of a sight of him in his state of exaltation. They shall see him then as he is: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John iii. 2.) Christ was never seen on earth "as he is." His glory was shadowed, his Divinity was veiled, and his humanity was most evident to the view, which had its infirmities. But hereafter his humanity will appear to be lifted up into such glory as doth exceed all created glory of men or angels: and his Divinity will be most illustrious to the view of the saints; at the sight of which they will be

astonished with admiration and love. And O how will they gaze and wonder at his marvellous beauty and shining excellency, when they see him come down from heaven attended by all the holy angels, and when they shall not only see him, but meet with him, be owned and welcomed by him, and be taken to live with him! "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.) It was a great privilege which the apostles had, to live with Christ when he was humbled and vilified here on earth. What a privilege, then, will it be, which all the righteous shall have, to live with Christ when he is glorified in heaven, and that not for a few years, but for ever! What a happiness will it be, to see the glory which Christ had with the Father before the world was, and not only to see it, but to share in it!

(5.) *In heaven pardoned persons shall have the company of the Father.*—They have his *gracious* presence here on earth, they shall have his *glorious* presence in heaven: there they shall have the immediate *beatifical vision* of him, and the full, most *blessed fruition* of him. The sight of God's back-parts, the glimpses and glances of the eye at a distance, the mediate enjoyment of him in and by ordinances, doth sometimes even transport them, and strangely fill them with wonder and delight. But O what soul-ravishing admirations, what transports and ecstasies of joy, will they have, when in heaven they shall behold God's face, be always under the beams of the light of his countenance, and have continual, close, intimate, full enjoyment of him, fellowship and communion with him, and this to abide for ever and ever! In heaven they shall dwell with God, and God will dwell with them: "I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God." (Rev. xxi. 3.) This, this will be happiness indeed, to have God himself to dwell with them, and manifest himself not only in his *grace*, but in his *glory*, unto them: therefore it followeth: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes;" there will be no grief where God's presence is, in his presence there being fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore; "and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither any more pain;" (verse 4;) the full sight of God will cure of all pain and sorrow, and fill with delight and joy; as Herbert, in his poem called "The Glance:"—

"If thy first glance so powerful be,  
A mirth but open'd, and seal'd up again;  
What wonders shall we feel, when we shall see  
Thy full-eyed love!  
When thou shalt look us out of pain,  
And one aspect of thine spend in delight,  
More than ten thousand suns disperse\* in light,  
In heaven above!"

3. *Pardoned persons shall in heaven attain a blessed and glorious state.*—A state of peace and tranquillity; a state of wealth and plenty;

\* "Disburse" is the word in the tenth edition of Herbert, 1674 — EDIT.

a state of honour and dignity ; a state of holiness and purity ; a state of perfect happiness and glory, in soul and body.

(1.) *In heaven pardoned persons shall attain a state of peace, of perfect peace and tranquillity.*—They shall have perfect peace without them, and they shall have perfect peace within them. Here they have wars about them, and rumours of wars ; and when they do not hear of wars, except it be afar off, they have jars near at hand, and that every day : they see men and women fighting, wounding, and murdering one another with the sword of the tongue, and many are the thrusts which they themselves have received on every side ; and howsoever desirous they are of peace, and follow after it, yet they cannot attain it, but are forced to complain, with David, “ My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am for peace : but when I speak, they are for war.” (Psalm cxx. 6, 7.) But in heaven they shall be hid for ever from the wounds and scourge of the tongue. Heaven is a kingdom wherein dwells righteousness, and wherein dwells peace. In heaven they shall be freed from all strife and contention, from all bitterness, clamour, and evil-speaking. No unpeaceable spirit shall be admitted into the New Jerusalem ; and never shall any the least quarrel arise between the inhabitants of that place. And as they shall have perfect peace without them, so they shall have perfect peace within them. Here they are often wounding themselves, and that more deeply and sorely than any man can do ; I mean, they too often wound their consciences by their sins ; and if peace be attained by them, through faith in Christ’s blood, this peace is often interrupted and broken by them through their renewed provocations ; and at the best their peace,—it is but imperfect in this life. But in heaven they shall have perfect peace within, such a calm and serenity, such a quiet and tranquillity of spirit, as shall never have the least disturbance any more. In the upper region of the air there are no storms or tempests ; all that be are in the middle or lower region : and when they are exalted unto the highest heavens, that region which is beyond the stars, they shall be removed beyond all those storms of consciences within, and all those tempests of troubles without, which are common and ordinary in the lower region of this world. There they shall have most sweet rest for their souls for ever in the bosom of God.

(2.) *In heaven pardoned persons shall attain a state of wealth and plenty.*—However poor some of them are as to this world’s riches, yet they shall be rich, yea, they are rich in faith. The riches which they have in hand, or heart rather, are great ; but the riches which they have in their eye or hope are far greater. Their grace is beyond the worldling’s gold ; their peace is beyond the worldling’s jewels ; the privileges which they are here invested with, are far more excellent than the largest earthly possessions which any worldlings have or hope to have. But the riches which they shall have are far more transcendent. Here they have only an earnest-penny ; in heaven they shall have large sums. Here they have the first fruits ; in heaven they shall reap the harvest. Here they have the deeds of conveyance which give them title ; in heaven they shall have possession of the uncorrupted and glorious inheritance. (1 Peter i. 4.) They shall have “ treasures in heaven,” which “ neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor thieves break through ” to steal them away. (Matt. vi. 20.) In heaven every want will be supplied, every defect removed,

every desire satisfied. In their Father's house there is plenty, and bread enough, which they shall be enriched and filled with, and which they shall live upon to all eternity. When death shall turn others out of their houses, rob them of their estates, and bereave them of all that they have in the world; death will befriend them, and convey them to the place where their treasure and inheritance lies, which they then shall be admitted to the possession of, and never be turned out of possession.

(3.) *In heaven pardoned persons shall attain a state of honour and dignity.*—Here some of them, yea, all of them, are slighted and disesteemed, vilified and “accounted as the filth and offscouring of the world;” and yet they are really and in God's esteem the most honourable: they are the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, as hath been said. But they shall be advanced far higher than they are, not to a high seat upon earth, but a high seat above the earth, yea, above the stars and visible heavens: they shall sit with Christ on his throne. (Rev. iii. 21.) They shall have a crown; not an earthly crown, but a heavenly; not a crown of gold, but “a crown of glory, which fadeth not away.” (1 Peter v. 4.) They shall have a kingdom, in comparison of which all the kingdoms of the world are not worthy to be named: it is the kingdom that is promised to them, Matt. v. 3. At the day of Christ's second appearance they shall be honoured, when they are sent-for by the angels, and caught-up in the clouds to meet their Lord in the air; then he will own and crown them, and take them to live and reign with him for ever in heaven.

(4.) *In heaven pardoned persons shall attain a state of holiness and purity.*—Here they are renewed but in part, and their holiness is imperfect: they find corruption remaining, and feel it daily working in them, which is the greatest grief and trouble to them in the world. But in heaven they shall be made perfect in holiness; they shall have not only perfect peace, but also perfect purity; the being of sin shall be removed, and all the spots and stains of it shall be washed away. In heaven, as they shall sigh no more, so they shall sin no more; as they shall grieve no more, so they shall offend no more; nothing in heaven shall offend them, and in heaven they shall no more offend God; nothing in heaven shall break their peace, and they shall no more break God's laws. In heaven they shall be like the angels, not only without marriage, but without sin; they shall be like to them in holiness and in happiness; and this will be their happiness,—to attain perfection in holiness.

(5.) *In heaven pardoned persons shall attain a state of perfect happiness and glory in soul and body.*—Their souls shall be glorified and their bodies glorified in heaven.

(i.) *In heaven the souls of pardoned persons shall be glorified.*—A shining excellency and marvellous spiritual beauty shall be put upon them; the image of God will then and there be drawn to the life in them. All the faculties of their souls will there be elevated, ennobled, and beautified with wonderful perfections, and filled brim-full with glory, such as doth far exceed their present capacity. They shall have the brightest beams of light in their minds, the purest and sweetest flames of love in their hearts, and that with such heart-ravishing joy as is to us unconceivable, but to them will both be full and everlasting. (Psalm xvi. 11.)

(ii.) *In heaven the bodies of pardoned persons will be glorified.*—Their vile bodies will be fashioned into the likeness of Christ's most beautiful and glorious body. (Phil. iii. 21.) All the defects and deformities which some of their bodies have here will be removed, and they shall shine like the new-burnished heavens. What a rare mixture of colours, what an exact symmetry of parts their bodies shall have, what lovely proportion and feature in their face, what sparkling motions in the eye, what graceful gestures in the whole body there will be,—it is not for us to describe; for the beauty of glorified bodies will be beyond all descriptions. And thus much concerning the future blessedness itself which pardoned persons shall have.

SECONDLY. The second thing is, *to prove that pardoned persons shall assuredly attain this future blessedness.*—This will appear by several scriptures, and several arguments drawn from the scriptures.

The scriptures which prove that pardoned persons shall assuredly attain future blessedness are these: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance." (Eph. i. 7, 11.) This inheritance here spoken of can be no other than the heavenly inheritance; and the apostle plainly asserteth, that such who had obtained the forgiveness of sin, they had also obtained the inheritance: "In whom we have obtained," that is, they shall as certainly obtain it as if they had it already in possession. A more full proof is in Rom. viii. 30: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." This is that golden chain so much spoken of by divines, the links of which are so fast joined together, that all the power of men or devils can never be able to pluck them asunder. As such whom God hath predestinated *before* time shall certainly be called and justified *in* time; so those who are called and justified and so pardoned *in* time shall certainly be glorified *at the end* of time, and when time shall be no more. And the third scripture to prove this is Rom. v. 10: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Pardoned persons are reconciled persons; and if when they were sinners they were reconciled through Christ's death and satisfaction, surely, when reconciled, taken into favour and become friends, they shall be saved not with a temporal, but with an eternal salvation, by Christ's life and intercession, which hath sufficient efficacy and prevalency to effect this thing for them. Here, beside the apostle's assertion, he doth insinuate an argument for the proof of it. But I shall add some other scripture-arguments to prove, that pardoned persons shall most assuredly attain future blessedness.

ARGUMENT 1. The first argument may be drawn from *God's decree of predestination or election.*—Whom God hath predestinated or elected to the blessedness of heaven, they shall most assuredly attain it: But God hath predestinated or elected all pardoned persons to the blessedness of heaven: Therefore they shall certainly attain it. That all such whom God hath predestinated or elected unto the blessedness of heaven shall certainly attain it, is evident to any who impartially do read and weigh the scriptures, which clearly do reveal the eternity of God's decree of

particular predestination or election. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world: having predestinated us, according to the good pleasure of his will." (Eph. i. 4, 5.) God's decree of predestination or election,—which is to eternal happiness, therefore called "an ordination to eternal life," (Acts xiii. 48,) "an appointment and election to salvation," (1 Thess. v. 9; 2 Thess. ii. 13,)—being eternal, is therefore unchangeable, and therefore shall certainly be accomplished.

If any thing hinder the accomplishment of God's decree, it must be either *something within him, or something without him.*

1. *Nothing within him can hinder its accomplishment.*—Unless he should change his own mind, and alter his decree; and this would infer a changeableness in God, which is against both reason and scripture; and, beside other imperfection, it would infer an imperfection in God's knowledge and wisdom, that he did not foresee or consider those after-reasons which should incline him unto a change from his first determination; and this is inconsistent with his infinite foreknowledge, and eternal counsel of his wisdom, in his willing and decreeing this thing. Men may change their purposes upon this account; but God, so infinitely wise and foreknowing, cannot do it. If he had foreseen reason to have altered the thing, he would never have decreed or determined it.

2. *Nothing without God can hinder the accomplishment of his decree.*—Because of his infinite power to effect what he hath designed; and against infinite power no resistance can be made. The elect whom the apostle Peter writeth unto, as they are chosen "to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them;" so they are sure to be "kept by the power of God to salvation." (1 Peter i. 2, 4, 5.) And, surely, there can be no hindering of the salvation and blessedness of the elect, who are kept for it, or unto it, by the almighty power of God. And thus I think it is very clear, that all whom God hath predestinated or elected to blessedness shall certainly attain it. Hence are the words of the apostle, which may put all out of doubt: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." (Eph. i. 11.)

That all pardoned persons are predestinated or elected unto the blessedness of heaven, is also evident, because pardon of sin is the effect of predestination: "Whom he hath predestinated, them he also called and justified." (Rom. viii. 30.) Because pardon of sin is the means, and a necessary means, of obtaining the blessedness of heaven, which God doth elect some of the children of men unto; and as wherever God doth elect to the end, he doth elect to the means, without which the end could not be accomplished; so wherever he doth elect to the means, he doth elect to the end, without which the means would be in vain; pardoned persons having therefore obtained the means of blessedness, which is remission of sin, without which they could have no admission into heaven, it is an evident sign that they are chosen to this blessedness of heaven: and, moreover, all pardoned persons are true believers, it being alone through faith that any are justified and pardoned: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

(Rom. v. 1.) "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts x. 43.) And all true believers are elected, true faith being called "the faith of God's elect." (Titus i. 1.) And such are ordained to eternal life: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." (Acts xiii. 48.) Faith is the fruit of our election; and our Saviour telleth the Jews, they did not believe because they were not of his sheep. (John x. 26.) Therefore all pardoned persons, being true believers, are elected; and therefore they shall certainly be saved, and attain the eternal blessedness of heaven.

ARG. II. The second argument may be drawn from *God's covenant and promise*.—All those to whom God is engaged by covenant, and hath promised to give eternal blessedness, they shall certainly attain eternal blessedness: But God is engaged by covenant, and hath promised to give eternal blessedness unto all pardoned persons: Therefore all pardoned persons shall certainly attain eternal blessedness. That all such to whom God is engaged by covenant, and hath promised to give eternal happiness, shall certainly attain it, is evident, because of God's truth and faithfulness: "He is faithful that hath promised." (Heb. x. 23.) "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: Hath he said it, and will he not do it? Hath he spoken it, and will he not make it good?" (Num. xxiii. 19.) "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised." (Titus i. 2.) "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation." (Heb. vi. 17, 18.) Therefore God's covenant is called "an everlasting covenant," and the mercies thereof, "sure mercies," because of his faithfulness: "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." (Isai. lv. 3.) It is clear then, that all those to whom God is engaged by covenant, and hath promised to give eternal blessedness, they shall certainly attain it; because otherwise God would prove unfaithful and a liar; which is impossible. And it is clear that God hath engaged by covenant, and hath promised to give eternal blessedness to all pardoned persons, because they are all taken into covenant, as hath been already proved: God is engaged by covenant to be their God; and as our Saviour doth prove the resurrection of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because God was their God, so might I, by the same argument, prove the eternal blessedness of all pardoned persons, because God is their God, which relation doth engage him to make them perfectly and eternally happy. But, beside this, God hath expressly promised eternal happiness: "This is the promise which God hath promised us, even eternal life." (1 John ii. 25.) "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.) Many other promises there are of the same import, all belonging to the covenant of grace; and all pardoned persons being in this covenant, they belong to them. They are made to believers, and all pardoned persons are believers, therefore God is engaged by covenant, and hath promised to give eternal life and blessedness unto them; and therefore they shall certainly attain it.

ARG. III. The third argument may be drawn from *the union of all pardoned persons unto Christ, and his undertaking for them, to bring*



*them unto eternal blessedness.*—All those who are united unto Christ, and whom he hath undertaken to bring to eternal blessedness, they shall certainly attain eternal blessedness : But all pardoned persons are united unto Christ, and he hath undertaken to bring them to eternal blessedness : Therefore they shall certainly attain eternal blessedness. All pardoned persons being true believers, are by faith united unto Christ, and so made members of the body, whereof Christ is the Head ; and Christ will not suffer any of his members to perish. His body would not be complete in heaven, if he should miss any of his members there : they are espoused unto Christ, and Christ will certainly bring his spouse to his Father's house. The union between Christ and believers is indissoluble ; and therefore as certainly as Christ is there, he will bring them thither too in the appointed time. They, by virtue of this union, are said to be already "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus ;" (Eph. ii. 6 ;) they are there in their Head, who hath for them taken possession of those places ; and therefore he will surely give them possession. He hath undertaken to do it : "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me : and I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of mine hand." (John x. 27, 28.) And Christ will make good his undertaking. As he hath made good his undertaking in purchasing blessedness for them, so he will make good his undertaking to give them possession of this blessedness ; therefore pardoned persons shall certainly attain unto it.

ARG. IV. The fourth argument may be drawn from *the right which pardoned persons have unto eternal blessedness.*—Having a right to it, they shall certainly attain it. God will not, cannot do them that wrong to keep them out of that inheritance, or deny them that blessedness, which they can show a right unto. Pardoned persons have a double right to eternal blessedness : 1. The right of justification. 2. The right of adoption.

1. *They have a right of justification.*—Wherein they are not only acquitted from guilt, but accepted as perfectly righteous in God's sight, through the imputation of Christ's perfect righteousness : and so they have received in the second Adam that right to eternal life, which they lost in the first Adam ; and it is a righteous thing with God to give them this eternal life and blessedness, which perfect righteousness doth entitle unto.

2. *They have the right of adoption as believers.*—They are the children of God : "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal. iii. 26.) And as children they are heirs : "If children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ ;" (Rom. viii. 17 ;) and as heirs they have right to the eternal inheritance, and they shall certainly attain it.

ARG. V. The fifth argument may be drawn from *the certainty of all pardoned persons' perseverance in grace unto the end.*—All such as persevere in grace unto the end, shall certainly obtain eternal blessedness : "He that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved." (Matt. xxiv. 13.) "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. ii. 10.) "Who will render to every man according to his deeds : to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory

and honour and immortality, eternal life." (Rom. ii. 6, 7.) All pardoned persons shall persevere in grace unto the end: they shall not only persevere through faith, (1 Peter i. 5,) but they shall persevere in it: God will "fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness in believers, and the work of faith with power." (2 Thess. i. 11.) God will keep them in his hand, "out of which none is able to pluck them." (John x. 29.) "He that hath begun a good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. i. 6.) God hath promised them to enable them to persevere: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." (Jer. xxxii. 40.) The scripture is very full and clear in the doctrine of the true believers' perseverance: And, all pardoned persons being believers, as I have already showed, all pardoned persons shall persevere to the end, and therefore shall certainly attain [the] future eternal blessedness of heaven.

THIRDLY. The third participle to be spoken unto is, *to show how this future eternal blessedness of heaven doth render pardoned persons blessed here upon the earth.*—This will appear in these following particulars:—

1. *Pardoned persons have a sight of their future blessedness, and the excellency of it.*

(1.) *They have a sight of the eternal blessedness itself.*—"Christ hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (2 Tim. i. 10.) The Lord hath made a clear revelation, in his gospel, unto them, of that eternal life and blessedness which he hath laid up in heaven for them. This in former ages and generations was not made known to the sons of men, as now it is made known unto them by the Spirit of Christ in the gospel. Man, by his fall, hath lost his eyes, and cannot find the way unto Paradise; and this is one part of his misery,—that he doth not know what his chief happiness is, nor how it is to be obtained. The heathen philosophers have had several hundred opinions concerning the chief good, and in all mistaken. The heathen poets had foolish and groundless fancies of the Elysian pleasures and delights, which the souls of the virtuous should enjoy in the other world; but they were in the dark as to the true discovery of heaven. The saints themselves had the future happiness of heaven discovered in a dark way, under types, figures, and shadows; the earthly Canaan typifying the heavenly Canaan; the Jerusalem below shadowing forth the Jerusalem which is above; the holy of holies, in the temple made with hands, figuring the holy place made without hands, eternal in the heavens. But now the darkness is past, and the true light shineth, the shadows are fled, the veil before the holiest is rent, and the cloud in the temple removed; so that now with open face, though still in a glass, the glory which is above may be seen. The gospel doth reveal what man's chiefest happiness is, and wherein it doth consist; that it doth not consist in earthly riches, nor worldly honours, nor Epicurean pleasures, nor the Stoic's apathy, nor the Platonist's dark contemplation of ideas, nor the Peripatetic's exercise of moral virtues; but that God is the Chief Good of the children of men: the gospel reveals God in the face of Jesus Christ; and that man's chief happiness doth consist in the vision and fruition of him begun here, and which will be perfected in glory hereafter. The

gospel reveals heaven to pardoned sinners, discovers the holy of holies that is above, and the way to it, as well as the glories that are in it. And pardoned sinners have not only a notional knowledge of the chief happiness hereafter, but,

(2.) *They have a sight of the excellency thereof.*—Which cannot be seen by any carnal eye : and this they have by the eye of faith and the light of the Spirit. By the eye of faith, heaven is realized to them, and made evident to their view in its transcendent excellency ; “ faith being the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.” (Heb. xi. 1.) But this, as the eye of faith, is enlightened by “ the Spirit of wisdom and revelation,” whereby they perceive “ the riches of the glory of his inheritance.” (Eph. i. 17, 18.) When the apostle, speaking of those things which God hath prepared for them that love him, saith, that “ neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him ;” yet, “ God,” saith he, “ hath revealed these things to us by his Spirit. (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.) This foresight of heaven, and something (although comparatively little) of the glory and excellency thereof, do render pardoned persons blessed even in this world.

2. That which doth further contribute to the present blessedness of pardoned persons, is not only their foresight of future blessedness, but also *their hopes of it, that they shall one day have possession of so great felicity.*—They are blessed now in hopes of what they shall be : they carry about with them in their bosoms the greatest hopes of any in the world ; and their hopes are such as shall “ not make them ashamed.” (Rom. v. 5.) The hopes of worldlings make them ashamed, in that either they fall short of the thing which they hope for, God’s providence oftentimes bringing upon them unthought-of crosses and unexpected disappointments, yea, (that which is quite contrary to their hopes,) disgrace instead of honour, poverty instead of riches, trouble instead of peace, pain instead of pleasure ; yea, sudden death, which cuts off them and their hopes together. Or if they attain the thing which they hoped for, they are ashamed of their hopes, in that they are always disappointed of that satisfaction and contentment which they looked for in the thing. The waters of the cistern cannot quench the thirst of man’s desire ; the creatures cannot give more than they have ; and they who hope for contentment in any thing beneath the Chief Good, must needs meet with a disappointment. Riches may fill the house, gold and silver may fill the bags ; but none of these things can fill the heart. Honour and esteem of men may swell and puff up the mind, but the soul cannot be filled unto satisfaction with air and wind. Sensual delights may cloy the appetite, but the desires of the soul are too high and capacious for such things to fill up. So that worldlings’ hopes must needs one way or other make them ashamed, and so will the hopes of the hypocrite too. But the hopes of pardoned persons, which they have of future blessedness, have an excellency in them beyond the hopes of all others, and they shall never be ashamed of them. The happiness [which] they hope for, they shall certainly have ; none can deprive them of it. Men cannot deprive them : they may take away their earthly inheritance, but they cannot touch their heavenly inheritance. Devils cannot deprive them : they may

attempt it, but they cannot effect it. Death cannot deprive them : death will bereave of whatever riches of the world any of them have ; but it will put them into the possession of their treasures in heaven. None can deprive them but God : and God will not do it, as hath been already proved ; and therefore their hopes are of a certain thing, which they shall not fail of ; and withal they know that the happiness of heaven will exceed all their expectations, even the highest, which ever they have had of satisfaction and contentment there ; that they shall find more sweetness and joy there than ever hath entered into their hearts to conceive ; and therefore their hopes shall not make them ashamed ; yea, in their very hopes of heaven, especially at some times, they find more real satisfaction, than ever was found by any in the fullest and sweetest enjoyment which they have had of the good things of this life.

3. *Pardoned persons have the beginnings of future blessedness here, in this life, in the work of grace, and sometimes foretastes and first-fruits of it, through the witness, seal, and earnest of the Spirit ; and this renders them blessed in this life.*

(1.) *They have the beginnings of heaven in the work of grace upon their hearts.*—Grace is the beginning of glory. Grace is glory in the bud ; glory is grace in the flower : and when the work of grace is carried on, the scripture saith, that they proceed from glory to glory : “ But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor. iii. 18.) They are happy here, as they have some degrees of that holiness and likeness unto God, in the perfection of which hereafter in heaven their perfect happiness doth consist.

(2.) *They have the beginnings of heaven in the first-fruits and foretastes of it through the witness, seal, and earnest of the Spirit.*—God sometimes gives them first-fruits of the heavenly Canaan. He sends in a few bunches of those sweet grapes that are there, and lets them have some foretastes of those soul-ravishing heavenly joys which hereafter will be full and for ever abiding. He sometimes takes them up into the mount, and gives them a Pisgah-sight of the Land of Promise, through the prospective-glass of his ordinances. He brings some even to the gate of the New Jerusalem in their heavenly contemplations, and lets out such beams of that glorious heavenly light, and drops into their hearts such taste of future joys, through the sudden illapses of the Spirit of glory upon them, that they are rapt up into an ecstasy ; and such a sweetness they feel in their spirits as is ineffable, such as words cannot utter, nor the minds of any conceive, but those that have had the like. When God giveth them the witness of his Spirit that they shall assuredly attain eternal life, and sealeth them up by his Spirit to the day of redemption, he doth commonly give the earnest also of the Spirit in some soul-ravishing joys ; in comparison of which, the softest pleasures of the flesh, and the sweetest delights that can arise from any objects of sense, are most vain, thin, empty, and not worthy to be named with them. And thus the eternal blessedness which pardoned persons shall have, doth render them blessed here in this life beyond all others, whatever confluence of good things they be surrounded withal. The foresight, first-fruits, hopes, and sweet foretastes of this future blessedness, do sweeten their life ; but especially

they do sweeten their death,—they knowing that death will be their friend, and prove an outlet to all earthly misery, and an inlet to their heavenly glory ; that death will open the prison-doors of this world unto them, and usher them into the palace of the great King. They know, their death will be like a ship to convey them over sea, as it were, from the far, strange, and enemies' country, unto the heavenly country, where their glorious Jehovah their heavenly Father, where the Lord Jesus Christ their elder Brother and dear Saviour, and where the departed saints their chief kindred, are together ; and where their inheritance doth lie, and where they shall take-up their eternal abode. Where pardoned persons have a clear foresight and strong hope of this, death is no more to them than a sleep : they can as willingly put-off their flesh and go into their graves, as they can put-off their clothes at night to go into their beds ; they can as willingly compose themselves to die, as they can compose themselves to sleep after a weary day.

Thus much for the proof of the blessedness of forgiveness, or of all those persons whose sins are pardoned.

QUESTION II. The second question, wherein I must be more short, is, "How this blessedness of forgiveness may be attained ?"

That this blessedness of forgiveness may be attained, there are *some things [which] must be known and believed*, and there are *some things [which] must be done and practised*.

1. *Some things must be believed*.—I shall instance in one or two chief doctrines of the gospel, which all sinners must know and believe, if they would attain forgiveness of sin. The first is, *the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction unto God's justice for the sins of men*. The second is, *the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ*.

(1.) *Sinners must know and believe the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction unto the justice of God for the sins of men*.—To discourse fully of this great doctrine of Christ's satisfaction, would require a treatise which might fill a great volume. But I must comprise it within a little room, who am to speak of it only in the direction of a sermon.

Briefly : (i.) That there is absolute need of satisfaction to God's justice for the sins of men, without which forgiveness of sins would be impossible and utterly unattainable, is evident both from the nature of God's justice, which doth oblige him to punish all sinners eternally without it, and from the truth of God's threatenings, wherein he hath revealed that he will thus punish them without it.

(ii.) That there is need of the satisfaction of Christ is evident, because sinners themselves, being finite, cannot give that satisfaction unto God, which shall bear any proportion to the demands of his infinite justice ; and if any be in a capacity to give it, it must be such an one as is both innocent, and so cannot suffer for his own faults, and whose person is of infinite dignity, that thence may arise [such] an equivalency of merit in his sufferings as may prove satisfactory to God's infinite justice : and because no mere man, being a finite creature, hath this dignity, and God cannot suffer, because this would argue weakness and infirmity, which is infinitely removed from him ; therefore, it is requisite that the person who can satisfy should be God-man, that as in one nature he may be capable of suffering, so the other nature

may put a virtue and efficacy upon it; and such a person was Jesus Christ.

(iii.) That Jesus Christ hath done that which is sufficient to satisfy God's justice for the sins of men, is evident from his death and other sufferings which we have upon record in the gospel: which sufferings were not for himself, he being an innocent person; and it would have argued injustice in God, had he permitted such sufferings to have been laid on his body, especially had he himself inflicted such dreadful inward sufferings on his soul, were it not that he stood in the room of sinners, and endured all these sufferings for their sins, that he might give satisfaction to his justice hereby.

(iv.) That Christ's sufferings have given to God satisfaction, and that he hath accepted of this satisfaction in the behalf of sinners, is evident from the compact and covenant which he made with Christ, that if he would offer-up this sacrifice of himself, he would be well-pleased, and sinners should hereby be justified; from his sending his Son into the world for this very end, and anointing him to the office of High-Priest, that he might first make satisfaction, and then intercession, for the people; from his owning him when here, raising him when dead, receiving him to glory when raised, which he would not have done, had not he accepted his satisfaction; from his covenant [which] he hath through him made with man, and promises therein of remission of sins through his blood; which he would never have made, had not Christ's death given him satisfaction. Moreover, all those places of scripture which speak of Christ's death as a sacrifice, as a ransom, as a punishment, which he endured that sinners might be, and whereby believers are, actually reconciled unto God, do clearly and abundantly prove that Christ hath given satisfaction to God's justice, and which God is well-pleased withal.

(v.) That all sinners must know and believe this doctrine of Christ's satisfaction, that they may attain remission of sins, is evident, because God never did, never will, forgive any sin without respect unto it. This way of remission is the chief thing which he hath revealed in the scriptures. In the Old Testament, it was shadowed under the sacrifices for sin which were offered; in the New Testament, it is the end of the revelation of Christ, this being the chief design of his sufferings and death, to give satisfaction to God's justice, in order to the forgiveness of man's sin. And they that are ignorant hereof, or do not believe this, do not know nor believe in Jesus Christ, and him crucified; and therefore cannot obtain forgiveness by his death.

(2.) *Sinners must know and believe the doctrine of justification by Christ's righteousness, that they may attain remission of sins.*

(i.) They must know the nature of justification itself, that it doth consist in the remission of our sins, and the acceptation of our persons as perfectly righteous in God's sight.

(ii.) They must know that they have no righteousness of their own to present God withal, because guilty of sin, and the least guilt is inconsistent with a perfect righteousness; and therefore if they were, as some are, really holy, yet that they could not be accepted as perfectly righteous in God's sight upon the account of a perfect righteousness of their

own, which none here do attain unto ; much less when they are naturally void and empty of all good and real holiness, and polluted all over with sin.

(iii.) They must know that the righteousness of Christ is perfect, and was intended for them, and held forth to them ; which they must submit unto, and accept of, if they would be justified in God's sight.

(iv.) That the righteousness of Christ is made theirs by faith, God imputing it and accounting it unto believers, as if it were their own, and they had wrought it out in their own persons. This way of justification by Christ, all must know, and be persuaded of, that would obtain justification, which doth include forgiveness of sin.

2. *Some things must be done and practised by sinners, that they may attain this blessedness of forgiveness.*

(1.) They must get conviction of sin. (2.) They must make confession of sin. (3.) They must by faith make application of Jesus Christ. (4.) They must forsake sin. (5.) They must make supplication and earnest prayer unto God for pardoning mercy. (6.) They must forgive others.

(1.) Sinners, would you attain the blessedness of forgiveness? *Labour to get conviction of sin.*—Get conviction of your original sin, the guilt of Adam's first sin, in which you are involved, your present emptiness of all spiritual good, and the universal depravation of all the powers and faculties of your souls with inherent pollution, which renders you opposite unto all real good, and naturally prone unto nothing but evil. Get conviction of your actual sins, of all your heinous breaches of God's law, whether the first or second table of it ;—whether sins against God more immediately, his nature, his worship, his name, his day ; or against your neighbour, whether relative sins, or sins against the life or chastity or estate or good name of any ;—and get conviction that all inordinate motions that have not the consent of the will, and much more inordinate affections which are influenced by it, are sinful and provoking unto God. Get also convictions of your more heinous disobedience to the gospel, —what an aggravation it is of all your other sins that you have repented of none, when you have so much need, and have been so often called hereunto ; what an affront is it unto God, a disparagement unto Christ, that you have neglected your salvation by him, and have been guilty of unbelief in not receiving, yea, refusing Christ, so able and willing to save you, and when you have had such frequent and earnest as well as gracious and free tenders of him ! Get conviction of the guilt of your sins, and what an obligation you are under hereby to undergo eternal destruction in the flames of hell-fire for it ; and let this awaken you out of your security. Let the thoughts of this pierce and wound your consciences, and make you cry out, with those sinners who were convinced by Peter's sermon : " When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do ? " (Acts ii. 37.) Get conviction also of the horrid baseness and ungratefulness of sin, as it dishonours and displeases that God by whom you were at first created, are continually preserved and maintained ; and who, though he could so easily destroy you, and

glorify his justice hereby, yet is both patient with you, and willing also to be reconciled unto you, and sends his ambassadors in his name to tell you that he entreats you that you would be reconciled ; and let these considerations affect you with ingenuous grief for sin. Lastly : Get conviction of the defilement of sin, how your souls are stained by it, and hereby degenerated and debased into a lower degree of vileness than is in the beast that perisheth ; yea, that hereby you are become, without regeneration, and until your souls are washed, more loathsome in the eyes of God than the most nasty thing in the world is in your eyes.

(2.) *Make confession of sin.*—In some cases it is requisite you should confess some sins unto man ; but it is absolutely, universally necessary in order to forgiveness, that you should confess your sins unto God ; the promise of pardoning mercy is made to confession : “ He that covereth his sins shall not prosper : but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” (Prov. xxviii. 13.) David found by experience the evil of covering and keeping close his sins, and the benefit of acknowledgment and confession : “ When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thine hand was heavy upon me : my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord ; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.” (Psalm xxxii. 3—5.) Sinners, make a full confession of your sins, that you may have a full pardon and discharge. Do not hide any sin as a sweet morsel under your tongue. It is a vain thing to seek and endeavour the hiding of any sin from Him who is omniscient : God hath knowledge of all your iniquities, do you therefore acknowledge all unto him. Make free confession of your sins. Stay not till God force you by his scourges, and even drag you unto it by his cords of affliction ; but let it be your voluntary act, and be ingenuous herein ; mingle not your confession with excuses and extenuations. Say not, though you are bad, yet you are not so bad as others ; that your hearts are good, though your lives have been naught ; that such and such gross sins were your slips and failings ; that you were overtaken, over-persuaded, and drawn unto such wicked practices by your companions ; and so, by transferring your guilt, endeavour to make yourselves as innocent as you can. This is abominable in the sight of God, and a certain sign of sin’s dominion ; which is inconsistent with the remission of it, and will shut you out from pardoning mercy. But, in confession of your sins, acknowledge yourselves to have been the chief of sinners. Sinners, take all the blame to yourselves, and set your sins out in the deepest crimson and scarlet colours, and with all their heinous circumstances and aggravations : tell God, that your heart is the worst part, and if there have been some abominations found in your lives, there are a thousandfold more abominations in your hearts. Confess your sins with humility and self-loathing ; say, with Agur : “ Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man ; ” (Prov. xxx. 2 ; ) with David, “ So foolish was I, and ignorant : I was as a beast before thee ; ” (Psalm lxxiii. 22 ; ) with Job, “ I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job xlii. 6.) Confess your sins with



shame, like Ezra : "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to thee, my God ; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." (Ezra ix. 6.) Confess your sins with grief and godly sorrow, like David : "I will declare mine iniquity ; I will be sorry for my sin." (Psalm xxxviii. 18.)

(3.) *Make application of Christ by faith, that you may attain forgiveness.*—"There is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby" you can be pardoned and "saved." (Acts iv. 12.) And "he is able to save" you, and procure a pardon for you in the uttermost extent of your most heinous guilt. (Heb. vii. 25.) And the reason is given in the same verse : "Because he ever liveth to make intercession" for sinners. It is his office as High-Priest, wherein he is most "merciful and faithful," to "make reconciliation for the sins of the people." (Heb. ii. 17.) Christ is near to the Father, being at his right hand in heaven ; and hath great interest in him, being his dearly-beloved Son ; and his intercession for pardon is always accepted, it being for no more than what himself hath purchased, and what his Father hath promised : and therefore you that are the worst of sinners have great encouragement to come unto Christ, and to make application of him. You have his promise, that whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out ; (John vi. 37 ;) and if you apply yourselves unto him, and apply unto yourselves his merits and righteousness by believing, you shall certainly attain the forgiveness of all your sins, however numerous and heinous they have been. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts x. 43.) And our Saviour himself telleth us : "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.) And the apostle doth discourse at large, in the former part of his epistle to the Romans, concerning justification, which he proveth by manifold arguments that it cannot be [by] works, that it must be by faith ; therefore by faith make application of Christ and his imputed righteousness, and rest therein only, that you may be justified, that you may be pardoned and saved.

(4.) *Forsake every sin, that you may attain the forgiveness of it.*—"He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy." (Prov. xxviii. 13.) "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" him. (Isai. lv. 7.) "Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isai. i. 16—18.) You must loathe your sins, that you may be pardoned ; and withal you must leave them, you must cease from doing evil, if you would have God cease from his displeasure : and unless you do forsake your sins, never expect that God should forgive them. There must be a returning to God, that you may be received unto favour ; and this cannot be without a turning from sin.

It would be a dishonour unto God to pardon you whilst that you continue in your rebellions, and wage war still against heaven by going on still in your trespasses.

(5.) *Make your supplication unto God, and be earnest in prayer unto him, that he would forgive you your sins.*—It is against God that your sins have been committed, and it is God's prerogative to remit and pardon; and though he pardon freely for his name's sake, yet he will be inquired after and sought unto for his high favour: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance," &c. (Isai. xliii. 25, 26.) If you would have pardon, you must ask it; if you would find God's favour, you must seek it; if you desire the door of mercy to be opened unto you, you must knock at the door by earnest prayer. (Matt. vii. 7.) Hence are David's earnest cries in prayer for pardoning mercy, in so many of his psalms, especially Psalm li., in the first verse: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." "Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation," &c. (Verses 9, 14.) Be earnest in prayer at the throne of grace for this blessedness of forgiveness; wrestle with God by importunate supplications, fill your mouths with arguments. Plead the gracious disposition of God, the multitude of his tender mercies, and the riches of his free grace. Plead the glory of his name, which would greatly be advanced and admired, if your great sins might be pardoned. Plead the merits of Christ, and satisfaction given to his justice by his Son, together with his intercession for you at his right hand. Plead the promises of the covenant of grace, and his faithfulness, which doth engage him to fulfil them. Humble, believing, fervent prayer will prevail for forgiveness.

(6.) *Forgive others, if you would that God should forgive you.*—"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt. vi. 12, 14, 15.) If you do not forgive the hundred pence of smaller offences unto your fellow-servants, you will be called to an account, and imprisoned in hell, and there tormented, for the ten thousand talents of heinous transgressions which you have committed against your Lord. (Matt. xviii., at the latter end of that chapter.) If you bear hatred and malice and revenge in your hearts against others, (whatever their offences, their wrongs, or injuries have been,) you put yourselves out of capacity of obtaining pardoning mercy. Do not say, "I forgive such an one who hath wronged me, but I will never forget him." For this is a deceit of your hearts, whereby you seek to stop the mouth of your consciences, that they may not trouble you by these scriptures; for if you do not forget injuries, so as to carry it toward such persons as if they had not wronged you, so as to love them cordially, and to be ready to show kindness unto them, you do not forgive them, and so you cannot be forgiven by God. If then you would be pardoned by God, you must from the heart forgive others: receive the exhortation of the apostle: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour,

and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Eph. iv. 31, 32.) Thus I have finished my answer unto the two queries, *Wherein doth appear the blessedness of forgiveness?* and *How this blessedness may be attained;* and now give me leave to borrow a little room for some application.

## APPLICATION.

I might speak much here by way of comfort unto pardoned persons: but the most that I have already spoken, yea, all that I have spoken under the first query, may be turned into *an use of comfort* to yourselves; and therefore, referring you thither, I shall pass you by, and bend my speech only unto you that are unpardoned; too many of whom are to be found in every assembly, and therefore I cannot think that this assembly is free.

I shall take leave to chide you, in *an use of reproof*; endeavour to awaken you, in *an use of terror*; and, in the conclusion, press you to endeavour after this blessedness of forgiveness, in *an use of exhortation*.

USE I. *For reproof.* — Is there such blessedness in forgiveness? Whence is it then that so many of you neglect this blessedness, in the neglect of your pardon? Are not all of you sinners? Have not all of you need of forgiveness? Will not your own consciences tell you that forgiveness is a great privilege? And have not ministers often told you of this privilege, and the way of attaining it? Hath not God by them held forth a pardon to you, and used many arguments with you, that you would accept it? Whence is it then that so many of you slight and undervalue it, as if it were of no worth? Whence is it that so many of you are without pardon when proffered, when none of you are without sins often committed, and those highly aggravated, and whereby your souls are so greatly endangered? May not robbers, and murderers, and other notorious malefactors, rise up in judgment against you that are without a pardon? When such persons are apprehended, found guilty, and condemned, though but unto a temporal death, they will make all friends, and use all means to escape; and, O how welcome is a pardon to them! And yet, though you are all guilty of sin, and condemned for it unto eternal death, and a pardon is purchased, proclaimed, and proffered unto you, there are too many of you that slight and neglect it, that have no earnest desire after it, and hitherto have not been persuaded by any arguments to make use of the means which God hath appointed, with any diligence, for the obtaining of it. Who is there that to any purpose doth look after a pardon? Who do diligently hear for it, earnestly pray for it? Who do make full and free confession of sin, that you may attain remission of it? Who do prize Christ, and by faith make application of him, that they may have a pardon by him? Who do forsake sin, which God absolutely requires of all to whom he doth forgive sin? Who do, when injured, heartily forgive others, as they desire God would forgive them? Sinners, will not many of your consciences accuse you of unpardoned guilt, unto which you have added the neglect of forgiveness? And is not your sin

hereby doubled, and most highly aggravated, and the guilt of it fastened upon you?

USE II. Let me tell you, *by way of terror* for your awakening, that God is displeased with all workers of iniquity, but he is most highly displeased with you that slight his mercy.—Your sins are inexcusable, your condemnation is unavoidable, and your punishment hereafter in hell will be most dreadful and intolerable. Possibly now you are careless and secure; sin is sweet and conscience is quiet; you are at ease and conscience asleep; but will this ease and sleep always continue? Is there not a time coming when you shall be awakened? If you are not awakened under God's word, may not God awaken you under his rod? If you are not awakened under God's threatenings, will you not awake when he cometh to execution? If you are secure in the midst of outward peace and prosperity, can you be secure in the midst of trouble and adversity? Think what you will do when death doth approach. Think what a dreadful aspect unpardoned sin will have, when you are brought down unto the sides of the pit, to the brink and border of eternity, and when you are summoned to make your appearance before the Highest Majesty. O the horror that then will seize you! O the fearfulness that then will surprise you! To have the black guilt of drunkenness or swearing, of uncleanness or deceiving, or any other iniquity, to stare you then in the face, O how dismal will it be and affrighting! And think with what rage and fury your consciences will then reflect upon your fore-past sins! especially your neglect of a pardon, then unattainable; and how tormenting will this be unto you! You may then cry out, "Lord, have mercy on us! Christ, have mercy on us!" But will God then hear you who have refused to hearken unto him? Will Christ regard you, who have neglected, refused, and shut the door of your hearts against, him all your days?

But, sinners, what will you do at the day of judgment, when the Lord Jesus shall come in flaming fire to take vengeance upon you for unpardoned sins? That great day will certainly come, and it will quickly be here. Time runs away swiftly, and it will quickly be run out. Yet a little while and the angel will lift up his hand, and cry with a loud voice, "and swear by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that time shall be no longer." (Rev. x. 5, 6.) Then the mystery will be finished, the prophecy accomplished, and the whole frame of this visible world dissolved! The sun then and the moon will be darkened, and the stars will fall unto the earth, as the fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind; and the heavens themselves then shall be rolled together as a great scroll, and so pass away with a great noise. The earth and all the elements shall be on fire, and consume away, on that day, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall appear from heaven with millions of mighty angels, in power and brightness of majesty; and then you must come out of your graves, and will stand trembling before Christ's great tribunal, and none of you will be able to hide yourselves under any rock or mountain from his angry face. Then, then you will fully know what a privilege it is to be pardoned, when you see where pardoned persons are placed, when you see them gathered to the right hand of the great Judge, and there acquitted openly, owned

graciously, and crowned by him with honour and glory, and invited by him to take possession of those eternal habitations of rest and joy in his kingdom prepared for them by his Father. But, O the tearings of spirit, and heart-vexing, tormenting grief, which you will have, that no place is found for you amongst them, that through your neglect of pardoning mercy you have forfeited and eternally lost a share in eternal glory; and not only so, but have by sin also plunged yourselves into a bottomless gulf of endless misery! Think how dreadful the irreversible sentence of condemnation will be unto you: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Alas! alas! sinners, what will you do? No thought can conceive what your horror will be, when you come to reap the bitter fruit of all your unpardoned sins. It is the punishment of hell, sinners, which the guilt of sin unremoved doth oblige you to undergo; and therefore I am sent this day to forewarn you, and in the name of my Master to foretell you, that if you do not now sue out for and obtain this forgiveness of sin, your sin hereafter will bring eternal ruin and destruction of soul and body in hell.—Without a pardon, profaneness will be your ruin. Some of you, it may be, can swear, and curse, and blaspheme the name of God; hereafter God will swear in his wrath that you shall not enter into his rest, and you shall be banished out of Christ's presence with a curse: "Depart from me, ye cursed," &c. Those tongues which have been so liberal of oaths and blasphemies, must be tormented in flames of fire, without one drop of water to cool them.—Without a pardon, drunkenness will be your ruin. You that have so often inflamed yourselves with wine and strong drink, God will inflame you with the wine of his vengeance; he will make you to drink the dregs of his wrath, which is at the bottom of the cup of his indignation.—Without a pardon, uncleanness will be your ruin. Your pleasures are empty and of short continuance, but your pains will be full hereafter, and they will abide for ever.—Without a pardon, unrighteousness will be your ruin. Your unrighteous gains, one day, will prove your unspeakable loss; and God will be the avenger of all such upon you as have been wronged and defrauded by you.—Without a pardon, your neglect of Christ and salvation will be your ruin; and if you persevere in this neglect, it is impossible that you should escape.

Sinners, think seriously and think frequently of your unpardoned iniquities, and withal think of the dreadful punishment they will bring upon you; think of your eternal damnation unto the most exquisite torments of hell; and then drink on, swear on, and scoff your fill, be unholy and profane, unjust and unclean, if you think good: but know, that for all these sins God will bring you to judgment; know, that these iniquities, unpardoned, will be your ruin. Should I tell you of one that were condemned for some vile fact to be flayed alive, or burnt alive, or sawn asunder, or dragged to pieces with wild horses, or starved with hunger and cold, or any other ways cruelly tortured to death; but that he might escape all this misery, if he would accept of a pardon ready provided for him, and withal leave off such vile facts for the future; you would count him worse than mad, should he neglect his pardon, and

expose himself to ruin and misery through his carelessness and obstinacy. And yet, though you are condemned for sin to far worse torment and misery, that which is more dreadful than ten thousand painful deaths, and all this mischief and punishment may be avoided and escaped, if you will accept of the pardon which Christ hath provided, and in the gospel is proffered unto you, and withal [if you will] break off your sins by repentance; yet no words or arguments will persuade you to use the means of prevention, but still you live in the neglect of pardon and "so great salvation," and are secure, however great your danger be. O the folly and strange madness of unconverted sinners! O the unspeakable sottishness and senselessness they are under! Although we make it appear to their consciences that their condition is unutterably miserable, they are not moved, except it be with choler against the minister that warns them of the sword of God's vengeance which hangeth over them, and they champ at the bridle that would hold them from running to their destruction. But O that you would rather turn your anger against your sins, and say, "This iniquity will be my ruin; and that sin, without pardon, will be my damnation!"

USE III. Therefore, in the next place, *let me exhort all of you that lie under the guilt of sin, that you would labour after this blessedness of forgiveness.*—O that you would pity your own souls! Think what provision you have made for them. Think whither they are likely to go, upon their separation from your bodies; and what you will do, at the last day, when Christ cometh to judge and punish unpardoned sinners. Think how you will be able to dwell with devouring fire, to inhabit everlasting burnings. Methinks you should take-up such thoughts as these, and argue thus with yourselves:—

"What! shall I undo myself for a filthy lust? Shall I lose my soul to gain a little uncertain earthly riches? Shall I forfeit a crown of glory for the empty honour of this world? Shall I cast myself into everlasting horror and pain for a little vain, fading, carnal delight and pleasure? Can I be contented to be tormented for ever in hell to satisfy the desires of my flesh on earth, and that when they will never be satisfied? Shall I hug a viper in my bosom that will kill me? harbour lusts in my heart that will slay me? Shall I dishonour God, and damn my own soul, to gratify the devil my enemy, and please my flesh which will soon be turned into dirt and rottenness, and withal throw away the hopes of a glorious resurrection for my body hereby? Away then, ye foolish, filthy lusts! I will no more hearken to you, or be entangled or enslaved by you. Begone, thou deluding, tempting devil! I will lend my ear no longer to thy lying suggestions, nor yield any more to thy beguiling and bewitching temptations. Farewell, thou glozing, flattering world, with all thy charms and allurements! Thy gold is but dross, thy wine mixed with water, thy honour but wind and vanity, thy delights are bitter-sweets, such as will end in death and ruin. I will choose another portion, and look after a better blessedness, than thou canst give me, even the blessedness of forgiveness, which will bring me unto eternal blessedness."

Methinks you should take no sleep nor rest, and find no comfort in house, or trade, or friends, or any thing, until the anger of God be

appeased, your sins all pardoned, and so your souls set in safety from all that ruin unto which they are exposed by unpardoned iniquity. The absolute necessity of forgiveness should quicken you to look after it. You have not so much need of food to remove your hunger, as you have need of mercy to remove your guilt. You have not so much need of clothes to cover your bodies, as you have need of righteousness to cover your iniquities. Better be starved than damned; better be hanged than burned; better be exposed to the misery of the weather, and any bodily distemper, than to be exposed unto the storms and strokes of God's vengeance, and the eternal ruin of body and soul in hell, which there is no possibility of escaping without a pardon. And that which may encourage you to seek after forgiveness is the attainableness of it, and that by the vilest and most guilty amongst you. Others have obtained pardoning mercy that have been found as guilty: Manasseh was pardoned who was so heinous a transgressor; Paul, who was so zealous a persecutor; Mary Magdalene, who was possessed with seven devils; the Corinthians, some of whom were idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, extortioners, drunkards, revilers, yet they were "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus;" some of them who had imbrued their hands in Christ's blood, had the guilt of their sins washed away by it. There is mercy enough in God *to give* a pardon for the greatest transgression; there is merit enough in Christ *to purchase* a pardon, and prevalency in his intercession *to procure* it, whatever your offences have been. The invitation unto Christ for remission and salvation is general; none are excluded, but such as exclude themselves. The promises are full: crimson sins, such as are of the deepest dye, God promiseth to make as wool; and the promises are free; the acceptance of a pardon by faith makes it yours, without any price or merit on your part.

We ministers have a commission to preach remission of sins in the name of Christ, and to declare to you the glad tidings of salvation; yea, we have instructions, as ambassadors, in the name of God and Christ to beseech you that you would be reconciled, that you would accept of forgiveness: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God." (2 Cor. v. 20.) Give me leave to press this argument upon you: the great God of heaven and earth, so glorious in holiness and righteousness, is so infinitely merciful and gracious, as to beseech you that you would be reconciled, although you are so infinitely inferior unto him. He condescends to entreat you, not that you would show kindness unto him, but that you would show kindness to yourselves, and accept of the greatest kindness at his hands,—of forgiveness and reconciliation. God might command; and, upon once the least refusal, he might execute his vengeance upon you. But although some of you have stopped your ears so long, refused his gracious proffer so often; though you have abused his kindness, trampled upon his patience, slighted his invitations, despised his threatenings, disregarded his promises, and, turning all his rich grace into wantonness, do continue still in your disobedience; yet the Lord doth again make suit unto you, stretcheth forth his hands unto you, however disobedient and gainsaying you have been, and by me doth entreat you that you would be reconciled. Need we use entreaties with

condemned malefactors to accept of a pardon? If we had commission to preach pardoning mercy unto devils, would they need entreaties to accept? Would they be fooled-out of such a gracious proffer by any, as you hitherto have been by them? Sinners, I beseech you, in the name of the great and glorious Jehovah, and the Lord Jesus Christ your gracious Redeemer, that you would be reconciled, and that you would befriend yourselves, and accept of the forgiveness of all your sins. I entreat you that you would not, through neglect of pardon, and perseverance in a sinful course, irrecoverably ruin and damn your souls. Methinks my heart doth yearn over you, and bleed for you, who are wounding yourselves, and rushing-on inconsiderately toward the place of everlasting weeping and woe, from whence there is no coming back, no coming out for ever. Sinners, why should you be so hard to be persuaded, without any further delay, to be reconciled unto God? Why do I need to use so many entreaties? May I at length prevail with you, that you would not be miserable, and prove your own murderers; that you would be blessed here and hereafter, through your ready acceptation of pardoning mercy? What answer must I carry back to my Master, who sent me this day to proclaim in your ears the blessedness of forgiveness, and to use entreaties with you in his name that you would become thus blessed? Must I complain?—

“Lord, there are a company of obstinate sinners, whom I have entreated to accept of pardon. But there is not the least spark of ingenuity amongst them, nor the least sense of their sins upon them. Had I been to preach to beasts or fowls, to the earth or stones, they would have been as much moved as these sinners. Lord, I spent my strength and pains, my voice and lungs, for nought. I know not how to persuade, I know not which way to prevail with them. I thought, thy beseechings would have taken with them; that the entreaties of God, like a sweet flame, would have melted their hearts as wax within them. I thought, when thou didst vouchsafe by me to request them to leave their sins, and be reconciled unto thee, that this would marvellously have affected them, and that they would readily have complied in a thing so necessary for them, and so much for their own happiness. I did begin with terror to them, and yet they were not affrighted; but I hoped, when I came to end with mercy, and to speak in the soft and sweet language of thine entreaties, and to urge this most winning argument of thy requests unto them, that then they would immediately have yielded, and most thankfully have accepted so gracious proffers made unto them. But, alas, Lord! I found it far otherwise than I expected. If their ears were open, their hearts were shut up; and they would not receive my message, which from thee, in faithfulness and tenderness, I delivered unto them. And what may I farther hope will prevail with them, if thy entreaties be thus disregarded?”

Must I thus complain: or may I have occasion to say?—“Lord, I have been preaching the blessedness of forgiveness, which I backed with thine entreaties of sinners that they would accept of it; and, through thy blessing, the arguments I used were not altogether in vain. Some sinners, that had stouted it out a long time against thee, began at length to relent and yield, when they heard thine entreaties of them to be reconciled. Lord, I heard scalding sighs break forth from such and such,



whose hearts were breaking within them for their sins. I saw brinish tears trickling down from some eyes, proceeding from a spring of godly sorrow within, newly given them by the Spirit. How did they look and seem to long after thy salvation ! How greedily did they hearken, even like the condemned malefactor, when he hath first tidings of a pardon ! I hope, they are gone home to entreat that of thee which thou hast by me been entreating of them to accept of. O Lord, grant them their desires ! Be reconciled to that drunkard and unclean wretch ! Forgive the iniquities of that swearer, sabbath-breaker, and profane sinner !”

What do you say, sinners ? Will you send me back to my Master saddened or rejoiced ? Accept of my message, and it will be the joy of my heart ; yea, it will be the joy of angels in heaven ; and however it will cost you some grief and tears in your repentance of sin at the first, yet if you so seek after this blessedness of forgiveness as to obtain it, the issue will be joy to yourselves ; you will have the beginnings of joy here, and in the other world your joys will be full, ineffable, and eternal. Methinks some of you seem almost persuaded. O that you were quite persuaded, without further delay, to put in practice the directions given for the obtaining the blessedness of forgiveness !

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## SERMON XXX.

BY THE REV. MATTHEW SYLVESTER,

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HOW WE MAY OVERCOME INORDINATE LOVE OF LIFE AND FEAR  
OF DEATH.

*But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.—Acts xx. 24.*

THE context tells us, that the apostle was now at Miletus ; (verse 17 ;) and from hence he sends to Ephesus, and calls for the elders of the church. Now these elders were not Timothy and Trophimus ; for they were in his company already, and had been with him in his journey hither ; (verse 4 ;) but rather those twelve men on whom he laid his hands, and bestowed the Holy Ghost, in order to their ministry at Ephesus, (Acts xix. 1—7,) and the rest whom Timothy had ordained whilst he was there.

From verse 18 of this chapter, we have the apostle's farewell sermon ; wherein he clears himself, by close and smart addresses to their consciences and experiences, as to all charges and surmises of ministerial miscarriages among them, (verses 18, 27,) and works them all within the conscience of their ministerial charge and trust from God, to imitate