

SERMON XVI.

Enforcing the general Exhortation, by a seventh Motive drawn from the first Benefit purchased by CHRIST.

EPH. i. 7.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.

SIX great motives have been presented already from the titles of Christ, to draw the hearts of sinners to him; more are now to be offered from the benefits redounding to believers by Christ; essaying, by all means, to win the hearts of men to Christ. To this end I shall in the first place, open that glorious *privilege of gospel-remission*, freely and fully conferred upon all that come to Christ by faith, “in whom we have redemption by faith,” &c.

In which words we have, *first*, a singular benefit, or choice mercy bestowed, viz. *redemption*, interpreted by way of *opposition*, the *remission of sins*: this is a privilege of the first rank, a mercy by itself; none sweeter, none more desirable among all the benefits that come by Christ. And therefore,

Secondly, You have the price of this mercy, an account what it cost, even the *blood of Christ*, in whom we have redemption [through his blood:] precious things are of great price; the blood of Christ is the *meritorious cause* of remission.

Thirdly, You have here also the *impulsive cause*, moving God to grant pardons at this rate to sinners, and that is said to be the *riches of his grace*: where, by the way, you see that the freeness of the grace of God, and the fulness of the satisfaction of Christ, meet together without the least jar in the remission of sin, contrary to the vain cavil of the Socinian adversaries: “In whom we have redemption, even the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”

Fourthly, You have the *qualified subjects* of this blessed privilege, viz. *Believers*, in whose name he here speaks, [*we*] *have remission*, i. e. We the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus, ver. 1. We whom he hath chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and predestinated unto the adoption of children, ver. 4, 5. We that are made accepted in the beloved, ver. 6. It is *we*, and *we* only, who have redemption through his blood. Hence observe,

Doct. *That all believers, and none but believers, receive the remission of their sins through the riches of grace, by the blood of Jesus Christ.*

In the explication of this point three things must be spoken to.

1. That all that are in Christ are in a pardoned state.
2. That their pardon is the purchase of the blood of Christ.
3. That the riches of grace are manifested in remission.

First, That all that are in Christ are in a pardoned state: where I will first shew you what pardon or remission of sin is.

Secondly, That this is the privilege of none but believers.

First, Now remission of sin is the gracious act of God, in and through Christ, discharging a believing sinner from all the guilt and punishment of his sin, both temporal and eternal.

It is the act of God; he is the author of remission; none can forgive sins but God only, Mark ii. 7. Against him only, i. e. principally and especially, the offence is committed, Psal. li. 4. To his judgment guilt binds over the soul; and who can remit the debt but the creditor? Matth. vi. 12.

It is an act of God, discharging the sinner; it is God's loosing of one that stood bound, the cancelling of his bond or obligation, called therefore remission or releasing in the text; the blotting out of our iniquities, or the removing of our sins from us, as it is called in other scriptures; see Psal. ciii. 11. Micah vii. 18, 19.

It is a gracious act of God, the effect of pure grace, done for his own name's sake, Isa. xliii. 25. discharging us without any satisfaction at all by us: there is much grace in that; and providing a surety for us every way able to pay our debt, there is more grace in that.

It is the gracious act of God in and through Christ: the satisfaction of Christ is the procuring cause of our remission, and so God declares himself just in the remission of our sin, Rom. iii. 25. "Gracious is the Lord and righteous," Psal. cxvi. 5. Justice and mercy meet here, and embrace each other; "in whom (saith the text) we have remission:" no other price could purchase this privilege, Micah vi. 6, 7. not rivers of oil, or of human blood.

And this gracious act of God discharges the pardoned soul both from guilt and punishment. Guilt is nothing else but the force and power that is in sin, to oblige the sinner to undergo the penalty due to sin; therefore sinners are said to be *guilty of hell-fire*. Matth. v. 22. *Guilty of eternal judgment*, Mark iii. 29. To be under the judgment of God, Rom. iii. 19. Remission takes away both guilt and punishment together; it takes away all guilt, Acts xiii. 38, 39. and all punishment. And so much of the first thing to be opened, namely, what the remission of sin is.

Secondly, Now that this remission of sin is the privilege of believers, is most apparent, for all the causes of remission are in conjunction to procure it for them; the love of God, which is the impulsive cause of pardon; the blood of Christ, which is the meritorious cause of pardon; and saving faith, which is the instrumental cause of pardon, do all co-operate for their remission, as is plain in the text.

Besides, all the promises of pardon are made to them, Jer. xxxi. 34. Micah vii. 18. And, lastly, all the signs of pardon are found in them, and in them only, that love God, Luke vii. 47. Mercifulness to others, Matth. vi. 14. A blessed calmness and peace in the conscience, Rom. v. 1. So that it is a truth beyond controversy, that all that are in Christ are in a pardoned state.

Secondly, Next I will shew you, that the pardon of believers is the purchase of the blood of Christ: nothing but the blood of Christ is a price equivalent to the remission of sin, for this blood was innocent and untainted blood, 1 Pet. i. 19. the blood of a Lamb without spot; this blood was precious blood, blood of infinite worth and value, the blood of God, Acts xx. 28. It was prepared blood for this very purpose, Heb. x. 5. Prepared by God's eternal appointment; prepared by Christ's miraculous and extraordinary production by the operation of the Spirit; prepared by his voluntary sequestration, or sanctification of himself to this very use and purpose.

The blood of Jesus is not only innocent, precious, and prepared blood, but it is also blood actually shed and sacrificed to the justice of God, for the expiation of guilt, and procurement of our discharge, Isa. liii. 5. To conclude, the severe justice of God could put in no exception against the blood of Christ; it is unexceptionable blood, being, (as before was noted,) untainted by sin, and dignified above all estimation by the person whose blood it was. Justice required no less, and could demand no more; and this is the price at which our pardons are purchased, and without which no sin could be pardoned; for "without shedding of blood, (such blood as this) there is no remission," Heb. ix. 22.

Thirdly, The last thing to be opened is, That God hath manifested the riches of his grace, in the remission of our sins. So speaks the apostle, Rom. v. 20. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: And, 1 Tim. i. 14. "The grace of our Lord (viz. in the pardon of sin) was exceeding abundant." Which will appear, if we bring our thoughts close to the matter. in several particulars.

First, From the nature of the mercy, which is the richest of all mercies, except Christ the purchaser of it: No mercy sweeter than a pardon to a condemned sinner; no pardon like God's par-

don to a man condemned at his bar; all the goodness of God is made to pass before our eyes in his pardoning acts of grace, Exod. xxxiii. 19.

Secondly, The very riches of grace must needs be in the pardon of sin, if we consider the method in which pardons are dispensed, which is, as the text speaks, "through his blood." Herein "God commends his love to us," Rom. v. 8. He commends it more than if he had pardoned sin without such a sacrifice; for then he had only displayed his mercy, but not caused mercy and justice to meet and triumph together.

Thirdly, The riches of his grace shine forth in the peculiarity of the mercy. Remission is no common favour; it is never extended to the fallen angels, nor to the greater part of the children of men, but only to a little flock, a small remnant of mankind, Luke xii. 32. John xvii. 9.

Fourthly, The riches of grace are manifested in remission, if we consider the subjects of this privilege, who are not only equally plunged into sin and misery with others by nature, Eph. ii. 3. but many of the Lord's pardoned ones have been actually guilty of a deeper-dyed abomination than many unpardoned ones, in the civilized world, are defiled with. "To me, (saith Paul), the greatest of sinners, one that was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, &c. yet to me is this grace given; I obtained mercy," 1 Tim. i. 15. "And such were some of you, but ye are justified," 1 Cor. vi. 11. Yea, God singles out the most base, despised, poor, and contemptible ones among men, to be the subjects of this glorious privilege, 2 Cor. i. 26. "You see your calling, brethren," &c.

Fifthly, More of the riches of grace still appear, if we view the latitude and extent of this act of grace. O how innumerable are our transgressions! "Who can understand his errors?" Psal. xix. 12. "Yet the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin," 1 John i. 7. Small and great sins, open and secret sins, old and new sins, all pardoned without exception. O the riches of grace! O the unsearchable goodness of God! "With the Lord there is mercy, and with him there is plenteous redemption; and he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities," Psal. cxxx. 7, 8.

Sixthly, and *lastly*, The riches of grace shine forth in the irrevocableness and perpetuity of remission. As grace pardons all sins without exception, so the pardons it bestows are without revocation: The pardoned soul shall "never come into condemnation," John v. 24. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us," Psal. ciii. 10. The *east* and *west* are the two opposite points of heaven, which can never come together; neither shall the pardoned soul and its sins ever

meet any more. "Thou hast cast, (saith Hezekiah) all my sins "behind thy back." The penitent believer sets his sins before his face, but the merciful God casts them all behind his back, never to behold them more, so as to charge them upon his pardoned people. And thus you see what the pardon of sin is, what the price that purchaseth pardon is, and what riches of grace God manifesteth in the remission of a believer's sins; which were the things to be explained and opened in the doctrinal part. The improvement of the whole you will have in the following uses.

Inference 1. If this be so, that all believers, and none but believers, receive the remission of their sins through the riches of grace, by the blood of Christ; *What a happy condition then are believers in!* Those that never felt the load of sin may make light of a pardon; but so cannot you, that have been in the deeps of trouble and fear about it; those that have been upon the rack of an accusing and condemning conscience, as David, Heman, and many of the saints have been, can never sufficiently value a pardon. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity," Psal. xxxii. 1, 2. or, O the blessedness and felicities of the pardoned man! as in the Hebrew*. Remission cannot but appear the wonder of mercies, if we consider through what difficulties the grace of God makes way for it to our souls; what strong bars the love of God breaks asunder, to open our way to this privilege; for there can be no pardon without a Mediator; no other Mediator but the Son of God: the Son of God cannot discharge our debts, but by taking them upon himself as our surety, and making full payment, by bearing the wrath of God for us; and when all this is done, there can be no actual pardon, except the Spirit of grace open our blind eyes, break our hard hearts, and draw them to Christ in the way of believing. And as the mercy of remission comes to us through wonderful difficulties, so it is in itself a complete and perfect mercy: God would not be at such vast expence of the riches of his grace; Christ would not lay out the invaluable treasures of his precious blood to procure a cheap and common blessing for us. Rejoice then, ye pardoned souls, God hath done great things for you, for which you have cause to be glad.

Inf. 2. Hence it follows, *That interest in Christ by faith, brings the conscience of a believer into a state of rest and peace, Rom. v. 1.* "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." I say not that every believer is presently brought into actual peace and tranquillity of conscience; there may be many fears, and much trouble even in a pardoned soul; but this is an undoubted truth, that

* אשרי הישׁ O ceteri beatitudines!

faith brings the pardoned soul into that condition and state, where he may find perfect rest in his conscience, with respect to the guilt and danger of sin. The blood of Christ sprinkles us from an evil (that is, an accusing, condemning) conscience. We are apt to fear, that this or that special sin, which has most terrified and affrighted our conscience, is not forgiven: but if there be riches enough in the grace of God, and efficacy enough in the blood of Christ, then the sins of believers, all their sins, great as well as small, one as well as another, without limitation or exception, are pardoned.

For let us but consider, If Christ remits no sin to any man, but with respect to the blood of Christ, then all sins are pardoned, as well as any one sin; because the dignity and desert of that blood is infinite, and as much deserves an universal pardon for all sins, as the particular pardon of any, even the least sin: moreover, remission is an act of God's fatherly love in Christ; and if it be so, then certainly no sin of any believer can be retained or excluded from pardon; for then the same soul should be in the favour of God, so far as it is pardoned, and out of favour with God, so far as it is unpardoned, and all this at one and the same instant of time: which is a thing both repugnant to itself, and to the whole strain of the gospel.

To conclude: What is the design and end of remission, but the saving of the pardoned soul? But if any sin be retained or excluded from pardon, the retaining of that sin must needs make void the pardon of all other sins; and so the acts of God must cross and contradict each other, and the design and end of God miscarry and be lost; which can never be. So then we conclude, faith brings the believing soul into a state of rest and peace.

Inf. Hence it also follows, *That no remission is to be expected by any soul, without an interest by faith in Jesus Christ: no Christ, no pardon; no faith, no Christ.* Yet how apt are many poor deluded souls to expect pardon in that way, where never any soul yet did, or ever can meet it. Some look for pardon from the absolute mercy of God, without any regard to the blood of Christ, or their interest therein: we have sinned, but God is merciful! Some expect remission of sin by virtue of their own duties, not Christ's merits: I have sinned, but I will repent, restore, reform, and God will pardon! But little do such men know how they therein diminish the evil of sin, undervalue the justice of God, slight the blood of Christ, and put an undoing cheat upon their own souls for ever. To expect pardon from absolute mercy, or our own duties, is to knock at the wrong door, which God hath shut up to all the world, Rom. iii. 20. Whilst these two principles abide firm, that the price of pardon is only in the blood of Christ, and

the benefit of pardon, only by the application of his blood to us; this must remain a sure conclusion, that no remission is to be expected by any soul, without an interest by faith in Jesus Christ. Repentance, restitution, and reformation are excellent duties in their kind, and in their proper places, but they were never meant for saviours, or satisfaction to God for sin.

Inf. 4. If the riches of grace be thus manifested in the pardon of sin, *How vile an abuse is it of the grace of God, to take the more liberty to sin, because grace abounds in the pardon of it!*

“Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid!” Rom. vi. 1, 2. Will nothing cheaper than the grace of God serve to make a cloak for sin? O vile abuse of the most excellent thing in the whole world? Did Christ shed his blood to expiate our guilt, and dare we make that a plea to extenuate our guilt? God forbid!

If it be intolerable ingratitude among men, to requite good with evil, sure that sin must want a name bad enough to express it, which puts the greatest dishonour upon God for the greatest mercy that ever was given by God to the world. “There is mercy with thee, (saith the Psalmist,) that thou mayest be feared,” not that thou mayest be the more abused, Psal. cxxx. 4. Nay, let me say, the devils never sinned at this rate; they cannot abuse the pardoning grace of God, because such grace was never offered unto them. And certainly, if the abuse of the common mercies of God, as meat and drink, by gluttony and drunkenness, be an heinous sin, and highly provoking to God; then the abuse of the riches of his grace, and the precious blood of his Son, must be out of measure sinful, and the greatest affront we can put upon the God of mercy.

Inf. 5. To conclude: *If this be so, as ever you expect pardon and mercy from God, come to Christ in the way of faith; receive and embrace him now in the tenders of the gospel.*

To drive home this great exhortation, I beseech you, as in the bowels of Christ Jesus, and by all the regard and value you have for your souls, let these following considerations sink down in your hearts.

First, That all christless persons are actually under the condemnation of God, John iii. 18. “He that believeth not is condemned already:” and it must needs be so, for every soul is concluded under the curse of the law, till Christ make him free, John viii. 36. Till we are in Christ, we are dead by law; and when we believe unto justification, then we *pass from death to life*. A blind mistaken conscience may possibly acquit you, but assure yourselves God condemns you.

Secondly, Consider what a terrible thing it is to lie under the con-

demnation of God ; the most terrible things in nature cannot shadow forth the misery of such a state ; put all sicknesses, all poverty, all reproaches, the torments invented by all tyrants into one scale, and the condemnation of God into the other, and they will be all found lighter than a feather. Condemnation is the sentence of God, the great and terrible God ; it is a sentence shutting you up to everlasting wrath : it is a sentence never to be reversed, but by the application of Christ in the season thereof. O souls ! you cannot bear the wrath of God ; you do not understand it, if you think it tolerable : One drop of it upon your consciences now, is enough to distract you in the midst of all the pleasures and comforts of this world : yet all that are out of Christ, are sentenced to the fulness of God's wrath for ever.

Thirdly, There is yet a possibility of escaping the wrath to come ; a door of hope opened to the worst of sinners ; a day of grace is offered to the children of men, Heb. iii. 15. God declares himself unwilling that any should perish, 2 Pet. iii. 9. O what a mercy is this ! Who, that is on this side heaven or hell, fully understands the worth of it ?

Fourthly, The door of mercy will be shortly shut, Luke xii. 25. God hath many ways to shut it : he sometimes shuts it by withdrawing the means of grace, and removing the *candlesticks* ; a judgment at this time to be greatly feared. Sometimes he shuts it by withdrawing the Spirit and blessing from the means, whereby all ordinances lose their efficacy, 1 Cor. iii. 7. But if he shut it not by removing the means of grace from you, certain it is, it will be shortly shut by your removal from all the means and opportunities of salvation by death.

Fifthly, When once the door of mercy is shut, you are gone beyond all the possibilities of pardon and salvation for evermore. The night is then come, in which no man can work, John ix. 4. All the golden seasons you now enjoy, will be irrecoverably gone out of your reach.

Sixthly, Pardons are now daily granted to others : some (and they once as far from mercy as you now are,) are at this day reading their pardons with tears of joy dropping from them. The world is full of the examples and instances of the riches of pardoning grace. And whatever is needful for you to do in the way of repentance and faith to obtain your pardon, how easily shall it be done, if once the day of God's power come upon you ? Psal. cx. 3. O therefore, lift up your cries to heaven, give the Lord no rest, take no denial till he open the blind eye, break the stony heart, open and bow the stubborn will, effectually draw thy soul to Christ, and deliver thy pardon signed in his blood.