

SERMONS UPON 1 JOHN II. 12-14.

SERMON I.

I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.—1 JOHN ii. 12.

IN these words we have—(1.) A friendly compellation, 'Little children.' (2.) A serious exhortation, 'I write unto you.' (3.) The reason of his writing to that end and purpose, 'Because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.' Or, if you will take notice—(1.) Of a privilege, 'Your sins are forgiven.' (2.) The persons interested 'Little children.' (3.) The exhortation to duty built thereupon, 'I write unto you.'

1. We must state the persons; such as are 'little children.' Sometimes the word is taken in a peculiar and restrained sense for babes in grace, as ver. 13, 'I have written unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.' Only the word is different in the original; here it is, 'little children;' there it is, 'young men.' This verse is spoken in common of all believers; whether they be fathers, or young men, or babes, they are all in the sense of the text 'little children.' He speaketh to all christians in common under this title: ver. 1, 'My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not.' So ver. 18, 'Little children, it is the last time.' By this title he speaketh to all christians, of what age or growth soever. The matter also concerneth all in common, and according to this interpretation the order of setting down the several ages is regular. Beginning with fathers, proceeding with young men, ending with infants or babes in grace. Our Lord Jesus useth the same language, John xiii. 33, 'Little children, yet a little while I am with you.'

2. The privilege, 'Pardon of sins for his name's sake;' that is, upon the account of Christ made known in the gospel, and apprehended by faith; for he is the 'advocate' spoken of ver. 1, 2; and ver. 6, 'He that abideth in him, ought himself also to walk as he walked.' So that in the whole context Christ is the antecedent. His name's sake implieth his merit and satisfaction, as also our faith in him: Acts x. 43, 'To him give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.'

3. The exhortation grounded thereon, 'I write unto you.' What to do? 'Not to sin,' ver. 1; 'To keep his commandments,' ver. 3-5; 'To walk as he walked,' ver. 6; 'To love the brethren,' ver. 7-11; 'Not to love the world,' ver. 15. So that the sum of all is, we may gather that the faithful of all ages and sizes have their sins pardoned, and are thereby bound to holiness, which is here represented under several notions, some of which are more general, others concern particular duties.

The points of doctrine are three—

1. That christians of all ages and ranks are and should be as little children.

2. Such who are in the gospel-sense as little children have obtained remission of sins for Christ's name's sake.

3. Those who have obtained remission of sins are bound to express their gratitude and thankfulness to God by new obedience.

The first point, being but a metaphorical description of the faithful, will be soon despatched. The term implieth—

1. Their new birth. As little children are newly entered into the world, and beginning their lives, all things are new to them, so who-soever will be saved entereth into a new state, becometh as a little child, by being renewed by the Holy Ghost, and participating of the divine nature. In this sense it is said, Mat. xviii. 3, 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of God;' where by conversion they become as little children, that is, enter into a new state, and carry on a new life and trade, with which they were never acquainted before. The same is pressed in other scriptures: Rom. vi. 6, 'Knowing that our old man is crucified with him;' Eph. iv. 22, 'That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man;' ver. 24, 'And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' When converted, they are not the same men they were before. So 2 Cor. v. 17, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' All things are become new, he hath new thoughts, new desires, new delights, new discourses, new designs, new employments. If you have your old thoughts still, your old passions, and old affections still, it is a sign you are not converted.

2. Having a new life, they look after that which will maintain and keep it up in good plight and vigour; for all creatures that have life have something put into them which attracteth and draweth the nourishment proper to that life. The plants have an attractive power to draw from the earth that moisture which feedeth them. The beasts have an appetite; and man, who hath this faculty in common with the beasts, hath also an attractive appetite given with his life. So christians: 1 Peter ii. 2, 'As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.' They long after spiritual food, puke at that which is not their natural milk. They have a spiritual taste, which distinguisheth doctrines, as the mouth doth meat.

3. In regard of humility, and designs, and contrivances after greatness in the world. They that become as little children seek not after dominions, and dignities, and honours. For, Mat. xviii. 1-3, when

the disciples were striving who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Christ calleth a little child, and setteth him in the midst of them, and saith, 'Except ye be converted, and become as a little child, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' As if he had said, You strive for pre-eminence and worldly greatness in my kingdom; I tell you, my kingdom is a kingdom of babes, and containeth none but the humble, and such as are little in their own eyes, and are contented to be small and despised in the eyes of others, and so do not look after great matters in the world. A young child knoweth not what striving for state meaneth. Thus by an emblem and visible representation would Christ take them off from the vain ambitious expectation and pursuit of a carnal kingdom. One part of the work of grace is to take down our pride, and to humble us, and make us little in our own eyes. David, when he would free himself from the crime of aspiring, and seeking great matters in the world, expresseth himself thus, Ps. cxxxii. 1, 2, 'Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty, neither do I exercise myself in great matters, nor in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child.' He was not covetous nor ambitious. David proveth himself to be a child of God by the lowliness of his heart, the sobriety of his carriage, and submission to all God's dispensations, and desired no higher condition than God would, by the fair invitation of his providence, call him unto. He was as a feeble, impotent child, looking wholly to be directed, supported, and enabled by God, with the greatest obedience, dependence, self-denial, and resignation that can be. A weanling, though he begin to go and speak, and live without the teat, yet wholly dependeth on the mother's aid, teaching, and provision for each of these: such a weanling was David, casting his affairs on the Lord as a child doth on the mother.

4. Innocent and harmless as a child, who, though infected with sin, and must be saved by Christ as others of grown age, yet cannot act sin. So saith the apostle, 1 Cor. xiv. 20, 'Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.' A man is a child in understanding when he hath no more use of spiritual knowledge than a child hath of natural reason; so we must not be children, but we must be harmless as children. It is a happy ignorance to be ignorant of sin, to be babes in mischief and evil; not merely because we cannot act it, but because we would not: Rom. xvi. 19, 'I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.' Better be a bungler in sin than that our souls should enter into that secret.

I will press the similitude no further, only see from thence who are not God's faithful ones. All such as are not born again, and brought into a new state; all such as have no spiritual relish and gust; all such as please themselves with a vain confidence, and cannot submit to be handled and dealt with as the Lord pleaseth; all such as are more crafty to do evil than wise to do good.

Doct. 2. That such who are as little children have obtained remission of sins for Christ's name's sake.

Here I shall inquire—(1.) What is forgiveness of sins; (2.) How it is obtained, and for whom.

First, What is forgiveness of sins? It is the judicial action of God, by which he doth fully release the penitent believer from the guilt of all the things committed against his law, without requiring satisfaction or punishment at his hands.

1. It is a judicial action of God. One man forgiveth another; for our heavenly Father requireth that 'every one should forgive his brother their trespasses,' Mat. xviii. 35. But our forgiveness is an act of charity or duty imposed upon us. God's forgiveness is an act of authority, as he is the governor and judge of the world. We may forgive the wrong done to us, when God doth not forgive the sin; for an act of our charity doth not evacuate God's authority. Stephen forgave his enemies their wrongs done to him; but he could not forgive their sin against God; only prayed, Acts vii. 60, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' So for us; the wrong to be forgiven is an offence against God. We have not power to forgive it, nor meddle with it any further than by prayer to God. In all sin God is the wronged party, and God is the highest judge, whose act is authoritative, and can only give satisfaction to the conscience. God's solemn judgment is at the last day, but he is a judge now: 'Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth,' Ps. lviii. 11; his private judgment passeth upon every one. Now every one is forgiven or not forgiven; the last day's action is but a promulgation and execution of this sentence. Now God justifieth or condemneth men by his word, and doth either remit or retain their sins. But there is a threefold difference—

[1.] Now within time the sentence may be repealed, but then it is definitive and peremptory. A man that is condemned by the law may be pardoned and absolved afterwards. Every one of us 'is condemned already,' John iii. 18; and we bind this condemnation upon us if we die in our infidelity and impenitency, and contempt of the Lord's grace, ver. 19. But our estate is capable of alteration: John v. 24, 'He that believeth on me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but hath passed from death to life;' hath changed his copy, and is translated from the sentence and state of death to a sentence of life passed in his favour.

[2.] The sentence is now private, but then public. It is passed in the believer's conscience according to the word of God; but then it is pronounced by the judge's own mouth *pro tribunali*, when he sitteth on the throne: Acts iii. 19, 'That your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshment shall come from the presence of the Lord.' It is now stated; we have the grant of it in the word upon the terms of the new covenant, but then it shall be confirmed and ratified in court by an open and visible sentence, our judge publicly absolving us.

[3.] Then there shall be an execution, both of justification and condemnation. Now in time there is *sententia lata*, but not *dilata*; it is past, but not executed: Eccles. viii. 11, 'Because sentence against an evil-doer is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.' When a sinner dieth, it is executed in part upon his soul, but not upon his whole person. So the godly have their sentence passed, but they have not the full effect of it till then. It is said, John v. 27, 'God hath given him authority to execute judgment.' The punishment which belongeth to sinners is all kind

of misery in this world and the next. God now judgeth the world in patience, then in righteousness. Then the pardoned shall have their consummate happiness, but the wicked be cast body and soul into hell-fire.

2. By which he doth freely and fully release from the guilt of all our transgressions.

[1.] Freely. God doeth it, and that without any cost to us: Isa. lii. 3, 'Ye have sold yourselves for nought, and ye shall be redeemed without money.' As the sale was without any gain and benefit to us, so the redemption and recovery was neither any cost to us; it cost Christ dear. The debtor did not provide the ransom, but the creditor; and the price was paid out of God's own treasury. And freely also; for though we penitently and humbly sue out our pardon, and it is not forgiven without our desiring, yet without our deserving. The Lord saith, Isa. xliii. 25, 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own sake, and will remember thy sins no more.' Whatever God doth in our salvation, he doth it for his name's sake, pitying our misery, and for the glory of his own mercy, pardoning our sins; thus in the text, 'Because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.' We must ask it, and seek; but God giveth it for Christ's sake. We cannot merit it, and we must seek it in such a way as may be most honourable to God and Christ, judging ourselves, condemning ourselves, giving him the glory of his justice by humble and broken-hearted confession, admiring his grace, acknowledging our great debt to our Redeemer, forsaking our way and our thoughts. Yet these things do not satisfy for the wrong done to God, only render our condition compassionate. David saith, Ps. xxv. 11, 'For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.' The penitent believer hath no other plea but the honour of God's grace engaged in the covenant. God's free pardon is the saint's encouragement.

[2.] It is full; as God pardoneth freely, so also fully, and not by halves; irrevocably, and not for a time only; universally, and not a few sins only; and therefore he is said to 'remove our sins from us as far as the east is from the west,' Ps. ciii. 12; 'To cast our sins into the depths of the sea,' Micah vii. 18. The sin forgiven shall not be remembered or laid to our charge any more.

3. It is a release from the guilt of our transgressions. There is in sin *reatus culpe*, the fault; and *reatus pœne*, the guilt. God doth not make the sin to be no sin, or the fault to be no fault, but he will not charge it to our condemnation and confusion. Properly, it is the obligation to punishment which God releaseth us from. Sin is compared to a chain, as hell to a prison: Lam. i. 14, 'The yoke of my transgression is bound by his hand; they are wretched and come upon my neck.' Now God, when he pardons sin, looseth this chain. So to a debt: Mat. vi. 12, 'Forgive us our debts.' The sinner is discharged from his obligation to punishment. It is a forgiveness of the debt, or an exemption from payment. When God pardoneth, he doth not only respite or withhold the execution, but withdraweth the obligation to punishment. It is one thing for the creditor to give a further day of payment, another to cancel the bond; one thing to loosen the chain, and another to break it. God doth not only forbear, but forgive; not

only spare us for a while, but save us for ever. A reprieve only suspendeth and deferreth execution, but a pardon wholly preventeth it.

4. The object of this pardon is the penitent believer ; and that faith is required, see Acts x. 43, 'To him gave all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins;' Acts x. 38, 39, 'By this man we preach unto you forgiveness of sin ; and whosoever believeth in him is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses.' It is necessary that those who have benefit by Christ should own the author of their deliverance, and give up themselves to him, both in a way of dependence and obedience. In a way of dependence, putting their cause into his hands, that he may reconcile them to God. And also obedience is needful, that they may for the future devote themselves to God by Christ. And repentance is required : Acts iii. 19, 'Repent, that your sins may be blotted out ;' and Luke xxiv. 47, 'That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.' And it is also required that we may acknowledge the obligation in his law, bemoaning our former misery, and consecrating ourselves anew to God, to do his will, and walk in his ways. Repentance is our return to God, from whom we have departed by sin : Acts xx. 21, 'Testifying both to the Jews and Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.'

5. This sin is forgiven without requiring satisfaction or punishment of the sinner.

[1.] Satisfaction to divine justice is not given by us for the wrongs we have done, but by Christ. God will have satisfaction, but not from us. Christ hath given it by his own blood. Therefore pardon of sins is made a special part of our redemption : Col. i. 14, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins ;' Eph. i. 7, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.' We are freely forgiven, yet the Lord required that provoked justice should have satisfaction, which is not exacted of us, but of Christ, who was made sin for us.

[2.] Punishment is not required of us ; for where he forgiveth the sin, he forgiveth¹ the punishment. It will not stand with God's mercy to forgive the debt, and yet require the payment ; as it is a mockage among men to forgive the debt, and yet to cast the debtor into prison, or to pardon a malefactor, and yet leave him liable to execution. God forgiveth us, as we are bound to forgive our brother, Mat. vi. 12. Now that is not in part, but in whole ; not to forgive the wrong, and yet take our full revenge of him. Surely as to eternal wrath the case is clear ; as to the afflictions of believers, there is some difficulty ; but our afflictions in this life are not for the satisfaction of offended justice, that is so fully done by Christ, that it needeth not be pieced up by our sufferings ; and therefore our afflictions are not needful to the completing of our justification and pardon, but as helps to the furtherance of our sanctification ; so they are of great use to make us hate sin more. If we only knew the sweetness of sin, and not the bitterness, we would not be so shy and cautious as we ought to be. Afflictions remain as monuments of God's displeasure against that which we are too apt to love and indulge : Jer. ii. 19, 'Thine own wickedness shall correct thee,

and thy backsliding shall reprove thee; know therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God.' They help us also to prize our deliverance by Christ. If afflictions be so grievous, what would hell be? 'When chastened, not condemned,' 1 Cor. xi. 32. Those whose garments were singed-knew in part what it was to be cast into the fiery furnace. We are scorched a little, singed a little; it is a fair warning or gentle remembrance to stand further off.

Secondly, How it is obtained. Take it in these propositions—

1. Sin is *ἀνομία*, a transgression of the law, a debt, as being a wrong done against God, obliging the sinner either to repair God in point of honour, or to lie under the wrath of God for evermore; for 'the wages of sin is death,' Rom. vi. 23.

2. There is no deliverance from this debt of sin, or obligation to wrath because of sin, but by pardon and forgiveness. The plea of innocency is lost, and there are but two pleas, guilty or innocent. Now to plead guilty without hope of pardon is but to condemn ourselves. What will stead us? On God's part no other thing will serve the turn. Not his patience, or forbearing mercy; forbearance is no discharge; the sentence is in force still, though execution be delayed. Not the bounty of his providence seen in outward blessings; these things may be given in wrath. Not deliverance from eminent dangers; that looks like a pardon, but is not. God seems to put the bond in suit, yet spareth for the time: Ps. lxxviii. 38, 'But he being full of compassion, forgave their iniquities, and destroyed them not; yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath;' Mat. xviii. 27, 'The lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave the debt.' Compared with ver. 34, 'And the lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due to him.' This is a reprieve, not a pardon. Nothing will stead us on our part. Not forgetting sin; for what are we the better if God remember it? Many sleep whose damnation sleepeth not, 2 Peter ii. 3, and turn off grief rather than put it away. It is no profit though forgotten, if not forgiven. Not denying sin. There are books of record, Rev. xx. 12, which will be opened at the last day, and then all our sins are set in order before us. Not excusing sin, or extenuating it; that is to aggravate our case, to hold neither by law nor gospel; for the law cannot save the sinner or the half innocent; and the gospel requireth that we should accuse ourselves, and judge and condemn ourselves: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess and forsake our sins, he is just and faithful to forgive us our sins;' 1 Cor. xi. 31, 'For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.' Nothing but forgiveness will do us good.

3. There is some hope of forgiveness, because God forbearth the worst, and doth not stir up all his wrath against them. They have food, and raiment, and ease, and liberty, and friends, and wealth, and honour: Rom. ii. 4, 'Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads thee to repentance?' All these forfeited mercies are continued to us. Therefore God deals not with them in utmost rigour; and while he waiteth to be gracious, he is willing to be appeased, ready to

forgive upon terms consistent with his honour and the common good. Yea, his commanding us to forgive one another is an argument that mercy and forgiveness are agreeable and pleasing unto God. We are yet *in via*, in the way, and under an obligation to use means for ourselves, and therefore our condition is not desperate, and past all hope. Everything about us proclaimeth the goodness of this God with whom we have to do: Acts xiv. 17, 'Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.'

4. Though forgiveness may be probably hoped for from God's goodness and mercy as represented in common providence, yet till there be a satisfaction for the offence, and we may have our pardon granted with the good leave of provoked justice, the soul can have no satisfaction. The grand scruple that haunts the guilty creature is, how God shall be appeased? Micah vi. 7. If God will pardon sinners, there must be fit means to keep up the honour of his justice and authority of his law, or else the engrafted notions concerning God would be violated, and the government of the world could not be kept up. Some way there must be to declare his holiness and righteousness: Rom. iii. 25, 'Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.' To leave a brand upon sin, Rom. iv. 27, and to check those thoughts of impunity, which indulgence to carnalities breedeth in the hearts of men, Deut. xxi. 19; and that God's law and government may not be brought into contempt, and that sinners may not take liberty to sin without fear. The devil at first endeavoured to persuade men that God meant not as he spake in the threatening of death to them: Gen. iii. 4, 5, 'Hath God said, Ye shall not surely die?' Now this evil suggestion would seem to be confirmed by God's providence, unless there were a course and way found out to save the honour of God's justice, the authority of his law and government. Now to all these ends Christ came, and purchased forgiveness at a dear rate; and so God appeareth fully just, as well as merciful, in that course of pardoning and forgiving which he hath instituted and set up.

5. It was agreeable to the honour and wisdom of God that those who would have benefit by this remedy should be sensible of the weight which is upon them, and humbly confess their sins, and with brokenness of heart sue out their pardon: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is just and faithful to forgive us our sins;' Neh. ix. 33, 'Howbeit, thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly;' Dan. ix. 7, 'O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face.' Acknowledge his justice, and implore his mercy in a submissive way. Self-condemning sinners are pardoned; for it was not meet that sin should be pardoned till the creature doth relent.

6. It is fit also that those who would sue out their pardon in this humble and submissive way should acknowledge their Redeemer, and thankfully accept of the benefit procured by him, and offered to them in his name; and heartily consent to his covenant to be brought home to God again, that they may be fully recovered out of their lapsed condition: Acts xx. 21, the sum of the gospel is, 'Repentance towards God

and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ;' 1 Peter iii. 18, ' For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.' Christ's business is to bring us back again to God, from whom we have strayed and fallen, to put us into a capacity of pleasing and enjoying God. Repentance is our consent of returning to God, as faith is our thankful owning of our Redeemer to this good end in pardoning, that we should put ourselves in a posture and capacity to please God and enjoy God, and this should be our end in accepting the Redeemer.

Doct. 3. Such as have obtained remission of sins are bound to express their gratitude and thankfulness to God by new obedience.

1. That they may not undo what is done, and so build again the things they have destroyed : Gal. ii. 17, 18, ' But if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners ; is Christ therefore the minister of sin ? God forbid ; for if I build again the things I have destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.' The objection against the grace of the gospel is, that it casteth off all care of holiness and new obedience, and so Christ is made a minister of sin. No ; this thought is to be rejected with horror : this is the objection of atheistical, loose, erring spirits, who are little acquainted with the heart of a pardoned and justified man. No, no ; pardon of sin doth not foster a man in sin. This is to make Christ a minister of sin, which all christians should abominate. But how doth he refute it ? Even by this argument, that we shall build again the things we have destroyed. A man that seeketh after pardon, seeks with it the ruin and destruction of sin. Sin was his greatest trouble, the burden that lay upon his conscience from whence he sought ease, the wound which pained him at heart, the disease that his soul was sick of ; and can a man delight in his sorest trouble, take up his burden that he groaned under, and prefer it before ease, tear open the wound which was in a fair way of healing, willingly relapse into the sickness he is recovered of with so much ado ? This is to undo all, and to desire our bonds and chains again after we are freed of them. What is it we complained of but the debt and burden of sin ? Now when Christ hath paid our debts, and set us free, and entrusted us with a new stock of grace to begin the world anew, shall we unfix all, as if we were deceived, when, in the anguish of our hearts, we groaned under sin as the heaviest and most intolerable evil that could lie upon our souls ?

2. That we may make good our qualification. Certain it is that none are pardoned but those that are renewed and born again ; for the application of the merit of Christ and the gift of the Spirit are inseparable : 1 Cor. vi. 11, ' And such were some of you, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' By the fall we were both unholy and guilty, under the power of sin, and obnoxious to the wrath of God ; so that the plaster might be as broad as the sore, we must be sanctified and justified ; and as we were first unholy before we were guilty, so doth Christ regenerate us that he may pardon us, and pardon us that he may further sanctify us and make us fit for the Lord's use. First we are changed by repentance towards God and faith in the Redeemer, and then receive remission of sins : Acts xxvi. 18, ' To open their eyes, and turn them

from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith.' The one must be done that we may obtain the other. Certainly a man must be united to Christ, and engrafted into him, before he can have benefit from him. Christ is the common storehouse, in whom are treasured up all spiritual blessings. Therefore before we are united to him, and take our spiritual being from him, we cannot get these spiritual blessings to be applied to us; as Adam's posterity, before they take their natural being from him, receive not their original guiltiness, from whence all actual transgressions flow: Rom. v. 12, 'As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all, for that all have sinned.' Till we be in Christ, united to him by faith, the wrath of God abideth on us, John iii. 18. Well, then, those that are new creatures are strictly tied to new obedience, unless they will forfeit their claim.

3. To express their gratitude and thankfulness: 2 Cor. v. 14, 'The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then are all dead;' Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service,' Luke vii. 47, 'She wept much, because she loved much; and she loved much, because much was forgiven her. Our gratitude and thankfulness to God is expressed not only in word but in deed; not only if we bless him and praise him the more, but if we love him the more, and fear him the more, and honour him the more in our lives and conversations. This is the true way of expressing our thankfulness to God, if we walk fruitfully, and be the more abundant in his service.

4. Because they have great encouragements: Ps. cxxx. 4, 'There is forgiveness, wherefore thou shouldst be feared.' Mercy maketh God amiable to us; a condemning God is not so easily loved as a gracious and reconciled God. None are so encouraged to serve him as those that have found him gracious.

Use. Let me now exhort you to seek after the pardon of sins. To this end—

1. Consider your necessity. If you were only as you were by nature, 'Children of wrath,' Eph. ii. 3, yet you must be converted, and become as little children, that you may be capable of the pardoning mercy of God. There is enough in little children of that which is hateful to God. Surely it is through the blood of Christ, which washeth them from their uncleanness, that they are accepted with him, and the covenant of God that forgiveth them. There is no way of saving any that belong to mankind but by a redeemer and a recoverer, the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore they need a pardon. But this is not your case; but you have for a long time neglected God, and wronged him by the continual excesses and breakings out of your sin and folly. What have you to stead you but a pardon?

2. Consider the grounds and hopes of pardon; God's merciful nature and self-inclination to pity us. God hath made a way for it by the blood of Jesus, in the gospel-law or new covenant, if we will submit to the terms of it. There he hath bound his justice and faithfulness: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess and forsake our sins, he is just and

faithful to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' Nothing sets forth his glory so much as this. It is the glory of a man to pass by an offence; surely then it is a perfection to forgive sin; for whatever is excellent in man is much more in God.

3. Consider what a blessed comfort it is to have sin forgiven: Ps. xxxii. 1, 2, 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered: blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile.' Sin is a burden to a troubled conscience, too heavy to be borne. Oh, how great a blessing is it to be eased of this burden, and to have our filthiness covered, and not to have iniquity imputed to us, not to have our sins charged upon us to our condemnation!

Use 2. To stir us up not to offend God any more, or provoke him to anger by our sins. God's mercy in remission of sin should make us more cautious in committing it. Because the old score is wiped off, let us not run on upon a new one; being washed, let us not defile ourselves again, and wallow in that mire again out of which we were so lately drawn. If God forgets and remembereth our sins no more, let us not act them over again, as if we would strive to make work for pardoning mercy, and shame and sorrow to ourselves, and set our teeth on edge with the forbidden fruit of sin, whereof we are now ashamed.

SERMON II.

I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.—
1 JOHN ii. 13, 14.

OBSERVE in these words—

1. That there are three sorts of christians, 'fathers,' 'young men,' and 'little children.'

2. Several things are ascribed to them, correspondent and proper to every age—

[1.] To fathers, that 'they have known him that was from the beginning.' The knowledge of ancient things which are past is best befitting old men.

[2.] That which he ascribeth to young men is, that they 'are strong,' that 'the word of God abideth in them,' that they 'have overcome the wicked one.' Strength for war is fit for young men.

[3.] To babes and little children, 'because you have known the Father.' Little children acknowledge their parents are dear to them, hang about them, and cannot live without them.