

1. Matthew 6:12

2. Luke 11:4

3. Matthew 6:12

*Ans.* 1. Think with ourselves, some have been much lower than we, who have been better than we. Jacob, an holy patriarch, goes over Jordan with his staff, and lived in a mean condition a long time; he had the clouds for his canopy, and stone for his pillow. Moses, that might have been rich, some historians say, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him for her son, because king Pharaoh had no heir, and so Moses was like to have come to the crown, yet leaving the honour of the court, in what a low mean condition did he live in, when he went to Jethro his father-in-law? Musculus, famous for learning and piety, was put to great straits, he was put to dig in a town ditch, and had scarce daily bread, yet content. Nay, Christ, who was heir of all, yet, for our sakes, became poor, 2 Cor. viii. 9. Let all these examples make us content.

2. Let us labour to have the interest cleared between God and our souls. He who can say, 'My God hath enough to rock his heart quiet in the lowest condition: what can he want who hath *El-Shaddai*, the all-sufficient God for his portion? Though the nether-springs fail, yet he hath the upper-springs: though the bill of fare grow short, yet an interest in God is a pillar of support to us, and we may, with David, encourage ourselves in the Lord our God.



## OF THE FIFTH PETITION IN THE LORD'S PRAYER.

MATTH. vi. 12. *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

BEFORE I speak strictly of the words, I shall take notice,  
1. That in this prayer there is but one petition for the body, 'Give us our daily bread,' but two petitions for the soul, 'Forgive us our trespasses, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:' Hence observe, that we are to be more careful for our souls, than for our bodies: more careful for grace than for daily bread; more desirous to have our souls saved, than our bodies fed. In the law, the weight of the sanctuary was twice as big as the common weight, to typify that spiritual things must be of far greater weight with us than earthly. The excellency of the soul may challenge our chief care about it.

1. The soul is an immaterial substance; it is an heavenly spark, lighted by the breath of God. It is the more refined spiritual part of man, it is of an evangelical nature; it hath some faint resemblance of God. The body is the more dreggish part, it is but the cabinet, which though curiously wrought,

the soul is the jewel ; the soul is near a-kin to angels, it is *capax beatitudinis* capable of communion with God in glory.

2. It is immortal ; it doth never expire. It can act without the body ; though the body dissolve into dust, the soul lives, Luke xii. 4. The essence of the soul is eternal, it hath a beginning, but no end ; it is a blossom of eternity. Sure, then, if the soul be so ennobled and dignified, more care should be taken about the soul than the body. We make but one petition for the body, but two petitions for the soul.

*Use. 1.* It reproves them that take more care for their bodies, than their souls. The body is but the brutish part, yet they take more care, 1. About dressing their bodies, than their souls. They put on their best clothes, are dressed in their richest garb, but care not how naked or undrest their souls are ; they do not get the jewels of grace to adorn their inner man. 2. About feeding their bodies, than their souls, they are caterers for the flesh, they do make provision for the flesh, Rom. xiii. 14. they have the best diet, but let their souls starve ; as if one should feed his hawk, but let his child starve. The body must sit in the chair of state, but the soul, that princely thing, is made a lackey to run on the devil's errand.

*Use. 2.* Let us be more careful for our souls, — *omnia si perdas animam servare memento.* If it be well with the soul, it shall be well with the body. If the soul be gracious, the body shall be glorious, for it shall shine like Christ's body. Therefore it is wisdom to look chiefly to the soul, because in saving the soul, we secure the happiness of the body. And we cannot shew our care for the body more than in taking all seasons for our souls ; reading, praying, hearing, meditating. O look to the main chance, let the soul be chiefly tended ; the loss of the soul would be fatal ; other losses may be made up again. If one loseth his health, he may recover it again ; if he lose his estate, he may get it up again : but if he lose his soul, this loss can never be made up again. The merchant that ventures all he hath in one ship, if that that ship be lost, he is quite broken.

2. From the connection in the text, as soon as Christ hath said give us 'daily bread,' he adds, 'and forgive us.' Christ joins this petition of forgiveness of sin, immediately to the other of daily bread, to shew us, that though we have daily bread, yet all is nothing without forgiveness. If our sins be not pardoned, we can take but little comfort in our food. As it is with a man that is condemned, though you bring him meat in prison, yet he takes little comfort in it without a pardon ; so, though we have daily bread, yet it will do us no good unless sin be forgiven. What though we should have manna, which was called angel's food, though the rock should pour out rivers of oil, Job xxix. 6. all is nothing unless sin be done away.

When Christ had said, 'Give us our daily bread,' he presently adds, and 'forgive us our trespasses.' Daily bread may satisfy the appetite, but forgiveness of sin satisfies the conscience.

*Use.* 1. It condemns the folly of most people: if they have daily bread, the delicious things of this life, they look no further, they are not solicitous for the pardon of sin; if they have that which feeds them, they look not after that which should crown them. Alas! you may have daily bread, and yet perish. The rich man in the gospel had daily bread, nay, he had dainties, he fared 'deliciously every day, but in hell he lift up his eyes,' Luke xvi. 19.

*Use.* 2. Let us pray, that God would not give us our portion in this life, that he would not put us off with daily bread, but that he would give forgiveness. This is the sauce that would make our bread relish the sweeter. A speech of Luther *valde protestatus sum me nolle se satiare ab illo*. I did solemnly protest, that God should not put me off with outward things. Be not content with that which is common to the brute creatures, the dog or elephant, to have your hunger satisfied: but, besides daily bread, get pardon of sin. A drop of Christ's blood, a dram of forgiving mercy, is infinitely more valuable than all the delights under the sun. Daily bread may make us live comfortably, but forgiveness of sin will make us die comfortably. So I come to the words of the petition, 'forgive us our debts.' &c.

1. Here is a term given to sin, it is a debt. 2. The confessing the debt, 'our debt.' 3. A prayer, 'forgive us.' 4. A condition on which we desire forgiveness, 'as we forgive our debtors.'

I shall speak of the term given to sin, it is a debt. That which is here called a debt is called sin, Luke xi. 4. 'Forgive us our sins.' So then sin is a debt, and every sinner is a debtor. Sin is compared to a debt of ten thousand talents, Matth. xviii. 24.

1. Why is sin called a debt? 2. Wherein sin is worse than other debts we contract? 3. Wherein sinners have the property of bad debtors?

*Qu.* 1. *Why is sin called a debt?*

*Ans.* Because it so fitly resembles it.

1. A debt ariseth from non-payment of money, or the not paying that which is one's due. So we owe to God exact obedience, and not paying what is due, thus we come to be in debt. 2. As in case of non-payment, the debtor goes to prison; so, by our sin, we become guilty, and stand obliged to God's curse of damnation. Though God doth a while grant a sinner a reprieve, yet he stands bound to eternal death, if the debt be not forgiven.

2. *In what sense sin is the worst debt ?*

*Ans.* 1. Because we have nothing to pay ; if we could pay the debt, what need we pray, ‘ forgive us ?’ We cannot say, as he in the gospel, ‘ have patience with me, and I will pay thee all ;’ we can neither pay principle nor interest. Adam made us all bankrupts ; in innocency, Adam had a stock of original righteousness to begin the world with, he could give God personal and perfect obedience ; but, by his sin, he is quite broken, and hath beggared all his posterity. We have nothing to pay, all our duties are mixed with sin, and so we cannot pay God in current coin.

2. Sin is the worst debt, because it is against an infinite majesty. An offence against the person of a king, is *crimen læsæ majestatis*, it doth enhance and aggravate the crime. Sin wrongs God, and so it is an infinite offence. The schoolmen say, *omne peccatum contra conscientiam est quasi Deicidium*, i. e. Every known sin strikes at the Godhead. The sinner would not only unthrone God, but ungod him, this makes the debt infinite.

3. Sin is the worst debt, because it is not a single, but a multiplied debt : forgive us ‘ our debts ;’ we have debt upon debt, Psal. xl. 12. ‘ Innumerable evils have compassed me about.’ We may as well reckon all the drops in the sea, as reckon all our spiritual debts ; we cannot tell how much we owe. A man may know his other debts, but we cannot number our spiritual debts. Every vain thought is a sin, Prov. xxiv. 9. ‘ The thought of foolishness is sin.’ And what swarms of vain thoughts have we ? The first rising of corruption, though it never blossom into outward act, is a sin ; ‘ then, who can understand his errors ?’ We do not know how much we owe to God.

4. Sin is the worst debt ; because it is an inexcusable debt in two respects ; 1 There is no denying the debt. 2. There is no shifting it off.

(1.) There is no denying the debt ; other debts men may deny. If money be not paid before witnesses, or if the creditor lose the bond, the debtor may say he owes him nothing ; but there is no denying this debt of sin. If we say we have no sin, God can prove the debt, Ps. l. 21. ‘ I will set thy sins in order before thee.’ God writes down our debts in his book of remembrance ; and God’s book, and the book of conscience do exactly agree, so that this debt cannot be denied.

(2.) There is no shifting off the debt ; other debts may be shifted off.

1. We may get friends to pay them, but neither man nor angel can pay this debt for us : if all the angels in heaven should go to make a purse, they cannot pay one of our debts.

2. In other debts men may get a protection, so that none can

touch their persons, or sue them for the debt; but who shall give us a protection from God's justice? Job x. 7. 'There is none that can deliver out of thine hand.' Indeed the Pope pretends that his pardon shall be men's protection, and now God's justice shall not sue them; but that is only a forgery, and cannot be pleaded at God's tribunal.

3. Other debts, if the debtor dies in prison, cannot be recovered, death frees them from debt; but if we die in debt to God, he knows how to recover it; as long as we have souls to strain on, God will not lose his debt. Not the death of the debtor, but the death of the surety, pays a sinner's debt.

4. In other debts men may flee from their creditor, leave their country, and go into foreign parts, and the creditor cannot find them; but we cannot flee from God. God knows where to find all his debtors, Ps. cxxxix. 7. 'Where shall I flee from thy presence? if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the utmost parts of the sea, there shall thy right-hand hold me.'

5. Sin is the worst debt, because it carries men, in case of non-payment, to a worse prison than any upon earth, to a fiery prison; and the sinner is laid in worse chains, chains of darkness, where the sinner is bound under wrath for ever.

Qn. 3. *Wherein have we the properties of bad debtors?*

Ans. 1. A bad debtor doth not love to be called to an account. There is a day coming when God will call his debtors to account, Rom. xiv. 12. 'So then, every man shall give an account for himself to God.' but we play away the time, and do not love to hear of the day of judgment; we love not that ministers should put us in mind of our debt, or speak of the day of reckoning. What a confounding word will that be to a secure sinner, *redde rationem*, give an account of your stewardship?

2. A bad debtor is unwilling to confess his debt, he will put it off, or make less of it; so we are more willing to excuse sin, than confess it. How hardly was Saul brought to confession; 1 Sam. xv. 20. 'I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, but the people took of the spoil.' He rather excuseth his sin than confesseth it.

3. A bad debtor is apt to hate his creditor, debtors with their creditors dead; so wicked men naturally hate God, because they think he is a just judge, and will call them to an account; Gr. God-haters. The debtor doth not love to see his creditor.

Use 1. It reproves them who are loth to be in debt, but make no reckoning of sin, which is the greatest debt; they use no means to get out of it, but run still further in debt to God. We would think it strange, if writs or warrants were out against a man, or a judgment granted to seize his body and estate, yet he

is secure and regardless, as if he were unconcerned. God hath a writ out against a sinner, nay, many writs, for swearing, drunkenness, sabbath-breaking, yet the sinner eats and drinks, and is quiet, as if he were not in debt; what opium hath Satan given men?

*Use 2. Exhortation.* If sin be a debt. 1. Let us be humbled. The name of debt (saith St. Ambrose) is *grave vocabulum*, grievous.

Men in debt are full of shame, they lie hid, and do not care to be seen. A debtor is ever in fear of arrest, *Canis latrat & cor palpitat*. O let us blush and tremble, who are so deeply indebted to God. A Roman dying in debt, Augustus the emperor sent to him for his pillow, because (saith he) I hope it hath some virtue in it to make me sleep, on which a man so much in debt could take his ease. We that have so many spiritual debts lying upon us, how can we be at rest till we have some hope that they are discharged.

2. Let us confess our debt. Let us acknowledge that we are run in arrears with God, and deserve that he should follow the law upon us, and throw us into hell-prison. By confession we give glory to God, Josh. vii. 19. ‘My son give glory to the God of Israel, and make confession to him.’ Say that God were righteous if he should strain upon all we have: if we confess the debt, God will forgive it, 1 John ii. 9. ‘If we confess our sins, he is just to forgive.’ Do but confess the debt, and God will cross the book, Ps. xxxii. 5. ‘I said, I will confess my transgression to the Lord, and thou forgavest me.’

3. Labour to get our spiritual debts paid, that is, by our surety Christ. Say, “Lord, have patience with me, and Christ shall pay thee all. He hath laid down an infinite price.” The covenant of works would not admit of a surety, it demanded personal obedience: but this privilege we have by the gospel, which is a court of chancery to relieve us, that if we have nothing to pay, God will accept of surety. Believe in Christ’s blood, and the debt is paid.



LUKE XI. 4. *And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.*

IN the words are two parts; 1. A petition, ‘forgive us our sins.’ 2. A condition, ‘For we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.’ Our forgiving others is not a cause of God’s forgiving us, but it is a condition without which God will not forgive us.

*First.* I begin with the first, the petition, ‘Forgive us our

fin;’ a blessed petition! the ignorant world say, ‘Who will shew us any good?’ Pf. iv. 6. meaning a good lease, a good purchase; but our Saviour teacheth us to pray for that which is more noble, and will stand us in more stead, the pardon of sin, ‘forgive us our sins.’ Forgiveness of sins is a primary blessing, it is one of the first mercies God bestows, Ezek. xxx. 25. ‘I will sprinkle clean water upon you; that is, forgiveness. When God pardons, there is nothing he will stick at to do for the soul; he will adopt, sanctify, crown.

Qu. 1. *What forgiveness of sin is?*

Ans. It is God’s passing by sin, Mic. vii. 18. his wiping off the score, and giving us a discharge.

The nature of forgiveness will more clearly appear, 1. By opening some scripture-phrases.

2. By laying down some divine aphorisms and positions.

(1.) By opening some scripture-phrases. 1. To forgive sin, is to take away iniquity, Job vii. 21. ‘Why dost thou not take away my iniquity?’ Heb. lift off. It is a metaphor taken from a man that carries an heavy burden ready to sink him, and another comes, and lifts off this burden; so, when the heavy burden of sin is on us, God in pardoning, lifts off this burden from the conscience, and lays it upon Christ, Isa. liii. 6. ‘He hath laid on him the iniquities of us all.’

2. To forgive sin, is to cover sin, Pf. lxxx. 2. ‘Thou hast covered all their sin.’ This was typified by the mercy-seat covering the ark; to shew God’s covering of sin through Christ. God doth not cover sin in the Antinomian sense, so as he sees it not, but he doth so cover it, as he will not impute it.

3. To forgive sin, is to blot it out, Isa. xliii. 25. ‘I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions.’ The Hebrew word, to blot out, alludes to a creditor, who, when his debtor hath paid him, blots out the debt, and gives him an acquittance; so God, when he forgives sin, blots out the debt, he draws the red lines of Christ’s blood over our sins, and so crosseth the debt book.

4. To forgive sin, is for God to scatter our sins as a cloud, Isa. xlv. 22. ‘I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions.’ Sin is the cloud interposeth, God dispels the cloud, and breaks forth with the light of his countenance.

5. To forgive sin, is for God to cast our sins into the depths of the sea, Micah vii. 19. which implies God’s burying them out of sight, that they shall not rise up in judgment against us. ‘Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.’ God will throw them in, not as cork that riseth again, but as lead that sinks to the bottom.

(2.) The nature of forgiveness will appear, by laying down some divine aphorisms or positions.

*Aphorism* 1. Every sin is mortal, and needs forgiveness; I



say, mortal, that is, deserves death. God may relax the rigour of the law, but every sin merits damnation. The Papists distinguish of mortal sins, and venial : some sins are *ex surreptione*, they creep unawares into the mind, (as vain thoughts, sudden motions of anger and revenge) these, saith Bellarmine, are in their own nature venial. It is true, the greatest sins are in one sense venial, that is, God is able to forgive them ; but the least sin is not in its own nature venial, but deserves damnation. We read of the lusts of the flesh, Rom. xiii. 14. And the works of the flesh, Gal. v. 19. The lusts of the flesh are sinful, as well as the works of the flesh. That which is a transgression of the law merits damnation ; but the first stirrings of corruption are a breach of the royal law, Rom. vii. 7. Prov xxiv. 9. therefore they merit damnation. So that the least sin is mortal, and needs forgiveness.

*Aphorism 2.* It is God only that forgives sin. To pardon sin is one of the *jura regalia*, the flowers of God's crown, Mark ii. 7. ' Who can forgive sins but God only ? ' It is most proper for God to pardon sin, only the creditor can remit the debt. Sin is an infinite offence, and no finite power can discharge an infinite offence. That God only can forgive sin, I prove thus :

No man can take away sin, unless he is able to infuse grace ; for (as Aquinas saith) with forgiveness is always infusion of grace ; but no man can infuse grace, therefore no man can forgive sin. He only can forgive sin, who can remit the penalty, but it is only God's prerogative royal to forgive sin.

Obj. 1. *But a Christian is charged to forgive his brother*, Col. iii. 13. ' *Forgive one another.*'

*Ans.* In all second-table sins, there are two distinct things ; 1. Disobedience against God. 2. Injury to man. That which man is required to forgive, is the wrong done to himself : but the wrong done to God, he cannot forgive. Man may remit a trespass against himself, but not a transgression against God.

Obj. 2. *But the scripture speaks of the power committed to ministers to forgive sin*, John xx. 23. ' *Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them.*'

*Ans.* Ministers cannot remit sin authoritatively and effectually, but only declaratively. They have a special office and authority to apply the promises of pardon to broken hearts. When a minister sees one humbled for sin, yet is afraid God hath not pardoned him, and is ready to be swallowed up of sorrow ; in this case, a minister, for the easing of this man's conscience, may, in the name of Christ, declare to him, that he is pardoned ; the minister doth not forgive sin by his own authority, but as an herald, in Christ's name, pronounceth a man's pardon. As it was with the priest in the law, God did cleanse the leper, the priest only did pronounce him clean, so it is God, who, by his

prerogative, doth forgive sin, the minister only pronounceth forgiveness to the sinner, being penitent.

Power to forgive sin authoritatively in one's own name, was never granted to any mortal man. A king may pardon a man's life, but not pardon his sin: popes' pardons are insignificant, like blanks in a lottery, good for nothing but to be torn.

*Aphorism 3.* Forgiveness of sin is purely an act of God's free grace. There are some acts of God which declare his power, as making and governing the world; other acts that declare his justice, as punishing the guilty; other acts that declare his free grace, as pardoning of sinners, Isa. xliii. 25. 'I am he that blotteth out sin for my own name sake.' As when a creditor freely forgives a debtor, 1 Tim. i. 15. 'I obtained mercy.' I was all over besprinkled with mercy. When God pardons a sin, he doth not pay a debt, but give a legacy. Forgiveness is spun out of the bowels of God's mercy; there is nothing we can do can deserve it: it is not our prayers, or tears, or good deeds, can purchase pardon. When Simon Magus would have bought the gift of the Holy Ghost with money, 'thy money (saith Peter) perish with thee,' Acts viii. 20. So they who think they can buy pardon of sin with their duties and alms, their money perish with them: forgiveness is an act of God's free-grace, here he displays the banner of love. This is that will raise the trophies of God's glory, and will cause the saints triumph in heaven, that when there was no worthiness in them, when they lay in their blood, God took pity on them, and held forth the golden sceptre of love in forgiving: forgiveness is a golden thread spun out of the bowels of free-grace.

*Aphorism or position 4.* Forgiveness is through the blood of Christ. Free grace is the inward cause moving, Christ's blood is the outward cause meriting pardon, Eph. i. 7. 'In whom we have redemption through his blood.' All pardons are sealed in Christ's blood; the guilt of sin was infinite, and nothing but that blood which was of infinite value could procure forgiveness.

*Obj.* But if Christ laid down his blood as the price of our pardon, then how can we say, God freely forgives sin? If this be a purchase, how is it by grace?

*Ans.* 1. It was God's free grace that found out a way of redemption through a Mediator. Nay, God's love appeared more in letting Christ die for us, than if he had forgiven us without exacting any satisfaction.

2. It was free grace moved God to accept of the price paid for our sins; that God should accept a surety: that one should sin, and another suffer, this was free-grace. So that forgiveness of sin, tho' it be purchased by Christ's blood, yet it is by free-grace.

*Aphorism 5.* In forgiveness of sin, God remits the guilt and penalty. *Remissa culpa, remittitur pœna.* Guilt is an obligation to punishment, guilt cries for justice : now God in forgiving doth indulge the sinner as to the penalty : God seems to say to the sinner thus, “ tho’ thou art fallen into the hands of my justice, and deservest to die, yet I will take off the penalty ; whatever is charged upon thee shall be discharged.” When God pardons a soul, he will not reckon with him in a purely vindictive way, he stops the execution of justice.

*Aphorism 6.* By virtue of this pardon God will no more call sin into remembrance, Heb. viii. 12. ‘ Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.’ God will pass an act of oblivion, he will not upbraid us with former unkindnesses ; when we fear God will call over our sins again after pardon, look into this act of indemnity, ‘ their iniquities will I remember no more.’ God is said therefore ‘ to blot out our sin.’ A man doth not call for a debt, when he hath crossed the book ; when God pardons a man, his former displeasure ceaseth, Hos. xiv. 4. ‘ Mine anger is turned away.’

Qu. *But is God angry with his pardoned ones ?*

Ans. Though a child of God, after pardon, may incur God’s fatherly displeasure, yet God’s judicial wrath is removed ; though God may lay on the rod, yet he hath taken away the curse : correction may befall the saints, but not destruction, Ps. lxxxix. 31. ‘ My loving kindness I will not take away.’

*Aphorism or position 7.* That sin is not forgiven till it be repented of ; therefore they are put together, Luke xxiv. 47. ‘ Repentance and remission.’ *Domine, da pœnitentiam & postea indulgentiam*, Fulgentius. 9. Now in repentance there are three main ingredients, and all these must be before forgiveness. 1. Contrition, 2. Confession. 3. Conversion. (1.) Contrition, or brokenness of heart, Ezek. vii. 16. ‘ They shall be like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning every one for his own iniquity.’ This contrition or rending of the heart, is expressed sometimes by smiting on the breast, Luke xviii. 13. sometimes by plucking off the hair, Ezra ix. 3. sometimes by watering the couch, Ps. vi. 6. But all humiliation is not contrition ; some have only pretended sorrow for sin, and so have missed of forgiveness ; Ahab humbled himself, his garments were rent not his heart.

Qu. *What is that remorse and sorrow which goes before forgiveness of sin ?*

Ans. It is an holy sorrow, it is a grieving for sin, *quatenus* sin, as it is sin, and as it is a dishonouring of God, and a defiling of the soul. Though there were no sufferings to follow, yet the true penitent would grieve for sin, Ps. li. 3. ‘ My sin is ever before me.’ This contrition goes before remission, Jer.

xxxi. 18, 19. 'I repented, I smote upon my thigh, is Ephraim my dear son? my bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him.' Ephraim was troubled for sinning, and God's bowels were troubled for Ephraim: the woman in the gospel stood at Jesus' feet weeping, and a pardon followed, Luke vii. 47. Wherefore I say 'her sins which are many, are forgiven her.' The seal is set upon the wax when it melts, God seals his pardon upon melting hearts.

(2.) The second ingredient into repentance is confession, Ps. li. 4. 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned.' This is not auricular confession, this the papists make a sacrament, and affirm, that without confession of all ones sins in the ears of the priests, no man can receive forgiveness of sin; the scripture is ignorant of it, nor do we read of any general council till the Lateran council, which was about twelve hundred years after Christ, did ever decree auricular confession.

Obj. *But doth not the scripture say, James v. 15. 'Confess your sins one to another?'*

Ans. This is absurdly brought for auricular confession; for by this, the priest must as well confess to the people, as the people to the priest. The sense of that place is, in case of public scandals, or private wrongs, here confession is to be made to others; but chiefly confession is to be made to God, who is the party offended; 'against thee, thee only have I sinned.' Confession gives vent to sorrow: confession must be free without compulsion, ingenuous without reserve, cordial without hypocrisy; the heart must go along with the confession. This confession makes way for forgiveness, Ps. xxxii. 5. 'I said I would confess my sins, and thou forgavest me.' When the publican and thief on the cross confessed, they had that pardon; the publican smote upon his breast, there was contrition; and said, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' there was confession; he went away justified, there was forgiveness: and the thief on the cross, 'We indeed suffer justly,' There was confession: and Christ absolved him before he died, Luke xxiii. 41. 'This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' Which words of Christ might occasion that saying of St. Austin, confession shuts the mouth of hell, and opens the gate of paradise.

3. The third ingredient in repentance is, conversion, or turning from sin, Judges x. 15. 'We have sinned,' there was confession; ver. 16. 'They put away their strange gods,' there was conversion. And it must be an universal turning from sin, Ezek. xviii. 31. 'Cast away from you all your transgressions.' You would be loth God should forgive only some of your sins; would you have God forgive all, and will not you forsake all? He that hides one rebel, is a traitor to the crown; he that lives in one known sin, is a traitorous hypocrite. And it must not

only be a turning from sin, but a turning unto God : therefore it is called ‘ repentance (Acts xx. 20.) towards God.’ The heart points towards God, as the needle to the north pole. The prodigal did not only leave his harlots, but did arise and go to his father, Luke xv. 17. This repentance is the ready way to pardon, Isa. lv. 7. ‘ Let the wicked forsake his way, and turn to the Lord, and he will abundantly pardon.’ A king will not pardon a rebel, whilst he continues in open hostility. Thus you see repentance goes before remission : they who never repented, can have no ground to hope that their sins are pardoned.

7. *Aphorism* or *position* is, that sin is not forgiven till it be repented of.

*Caution.* Not that repentance doth merit the forgiveness of sin ; to make repentance satisfactory is popish ; by repentance, we please God but we do not satisfy him : Alas ! ‘ Christ’s blood must wash our tears.’ Repentance is a condition, not a cause ; God will not pardon for repentance, nor yet without it : God seals his pardons on melting hearts : repentance makes us prize pardon the more. He who cries out of his broken bones, will the more prize the mercy of having them set again ; when there is nothing in the soul but clouds of sorrow, and now God brings a pardon (which is a setting up of a rainbow in the cloud, to tell the soul the flood of God’s wrath shall not overflow), O what joy at the sight of this rainbow ! the soul now burns in love to God.

8. *Aphorism* or *position*. The greatest sins come within the compass of forgiveness. Incest, sodomy, adultery, theft, murder, which are sins of the first magnitude, yet these are pardonable. Paul was a blasphemer, and so sinned against the first table ; a persecutor, and so he sinned against the second table ; yet he obtained mercy, 1 Tim. i. 13. I was all ‘ besprinkled with mercy.’ Zaccheus, an extortioner, Mary Magdalene, an unchaste woman, out of whom seven devils were cast, Manassah, who made the streets run with blood, yet had their pardon. Some of the Jews, who had a hand in crucifying of Christ, were forgiven. God blots out not only the cloud, but the thick cloud, Isa. xlv. 22. Enormities as well as infirmities. The king in the parable forgave his debtor that owed him 10 000 talents, Matth. xviii. 27. a talent weighed 3000 shekels, 10,000 talents contained almost 12 ton of gold. This was an emblem of God’s forgiving great sins, Isa. i. 18. ‘ Though your sins were as scarlet, yet they shall be white as snow.’ Scarlet, in the Greek, is called twice dipped, and the art of man cannot wash out the dye again. But though our sins are of a scarlet dye, God’s mercy can wash them away : the sea can as well cover great rocks as little sands. This I mention that sinners may

not despair. God counts it a glory to him to forgive great sins ; now mercy and love ride in triumph, 1 Tim. i. 14. ' The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant,' it was exuberant, it did overflow as Nilus. We must not measure God by ourselves : God's mercy excel our sins, as much as heaven doth earth, Isa. v. 57. If great sins could not be forgiven, then great sinners should not be preached to ; but the gospel is to be preached to all. If they could not be forgiven, it were a dishonour to Christ's blood ; as if the wound were broader than the plaister. God hath first made great sinners ' broken vessels,' he hath broken their hearts for sin, and then he hath made them ' golden vessels,' he hath filled them with the golden oil of pardoning mercy ; this may encourage great sinners to come in and repent. Indeed the sin against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable, not but that there is mercy enough in God to forgive it, but because he who hath committed this sin will have no pardon ; he despises God, scorns his mercy, spills the cordial of Christ's blood, and tramples it under foot, he puts away salvation from him ; but else, the greatest sins are pardonable. When a poor sinner looks upon himself, and sees his guilt, and when he looks on God's justice and holiness, he falls down confounded ; but here is what may be as a cork to the net, to keep him from despair, if thou wilt leave thy sins and come to Christ, mercy can seal thy pardon.

*Aphorism* 9. When God pardons a sinner, he forgives all sins, Jer. xxxiii. 8. ' I will pardon all your iniquities,' Col. ii. 13. ' Having forgiven you all trespasses.' The mercy-seat covered the whole ark ; the mercy-seat was a type of forgiveness, to shew that God covers all our transgressions. He doth not leave one sin upon the score : he doth not take his pen, and for fourscore sins write down fifty, but blots out all sin, Ps. ciii. 3. ' Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.' When I say, God forgives all sins, I understand it of sins past ; but sins to come are not forgiven till they are repented of. Indeed God hath decreed to pardon them : and when God forgives one sin, he will in time forgive all : but sins future are not actually pardoned, till they are repented of ; it is absurd to think sin should be forgiven, before it is committed.

1. If all sins past and to come are at once forgiven, then, what need a man pray for the pardon of sin ? It is a vain thing to pray for the pardon of that which is already forgiven.

2. This opinion, that sins to come (as well as past are forgiven, doth take away and make void Christ's intercession : Christ is an advocate to intercede for daily sins, 1 John ii. 1. But if sin be forgiven before it be committed, what need is there of Christ's daily intercession ? what need have I of an advocate if sin be pardoned before it be committed ? So that

God, though he forgives all sins past to a believer, yet sins to come are not forgiven, till repentance be renewed.

*Aphorism 10.* Faith doth necessarily antecede forgiveness; there must be believing on our part, before there is forgiving on God's part, Acts x. 43. 'To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.' So that faith is a necessary antecedent to forgiveness. There are two acts of faith, to accept Christ, and to trust in Christ, to accept of his terms, to trust in his merits: and he who doth neither of these, can have no forgiveness, he who doth not accept Christ, cannot have his person; he that doth not trust in him, cannot have benefit by his blood. So that, without faith, no remission.

*Aphorism 11.* Though justification and sanctification are not the same, yet God never pardons a sinner, but he doth sanctify him. Justification and sanctification are not the same.

1. Justification is without us, sanctification is within us. The one is by righteousness imputed, the other is by righteousness imparted.

2. Justification is equal, sanctification is gradual. Sanctification doth *recipeae majus et minus*; one is sanctified more than another, but one is not justified more than another; one hath more grace than another, but he is not more a believer than another.

3. The matter of our justification is perfect, viz. Christ's righteousness: but our sanctification is imperfect, these are the 'spots of God's children,' Deut. xxxii. 5. Our graces are mixed, our desires are defiled. Thus justification and sanctification are not the same: yet, for all that, they are not separated: God never pardons and justifies a sinner, but he doth sanctify him, 1 Cor. vi. 11. 'But ye are justified, but ye are sanctified.' 1 John v. 6. 'This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ.' Christ comes to the soul by blood, that denotes remission; and by water, that denotes sanctification. Let no man say he is pardoned, that is not made holy. And this, I the rather urge against Antinomians, who talk of being forgiven their sin, and having a part in Christ, and yet remain unconverted, and live in the grossest sins. Pardon and healing go together, Isa. lxvii. 19. 'I create the fruit of the lips, peace. And I will heal him.' Peace is the fruit of pardon, and then it follows, 'I will heal him.' Where God pardons he purifies: as in the inauguration of kings, with the crown there is the oil to anoint: so when God crowns a man with forgiveness, there he gives the anointing oil of grace to sanctify, Rev. ii. 17. 'I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name.' A 'white stone,' that is absolution: and a 'new name' in the stone, that is sanctification.

1. If God should pardon a man, and not sanctify him, this would be a reproach to him; then he should love and be well pleased with men in their sins, which is diametrically contrary to his holy nature.

2. If God should pardon, and not sanctify, then he could have no glory from us. God's people are formed to shew forth his praise, Isa. xliii. 21. but if he should pardon and not sanctify us, how could we shew forth his praise? How could we glorify him? What glory can God have by a proud, ignorant, profane heart?

3. If God should pardon, and not sanctify, then that should enter into heaven which defileth; but Rev. xxi. 27. 'Nothing shall enter that defileth.' Then God should settle the inheritance upon men before they are fit for it, contrary to that, Col. i. 12. 'He hath made us meet for the inheritance;' how is that but by the divine unction? So that, whoever God forgives, he transforms. Let no man say his sins are forgiven, who doth not find an inherent work of holiness in his heart.

*Aphorism 12.* Where God remits sin he imputes righteousness. This righteousness of Christ imputed, is a salvo to God's law, and makes full satisfaction for the breaches of it. This righteousness procures God's favour; God cannot but love us, when he sees us in his Son's robe, which both covers and adorns us. In this spotless robe of Christ we outshine the angels: theirs is but the righteousness of creatures, this is the righteousness of God himself, 2 Cor. v. 21. 'That we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' How great a blessing then is forgiveness? With remission of sin is joined imputation of righteousness.

*Aphorism 13.* They whose sins are forgiven, must not omit praying for forgiveness, 'Forgive us our trespasses.' Believers who are pardoned, must be continual suitors for pardon. When Nathan told David, 'The Lord hath put away thy sin,' 2 Sam. xii. 13. yet David, after that, composed a penitential psalm for the pardon of his sin. Sin, after pardon, rebels. Sin, like Samson's hair, though it be cut, will grow again. We sin daily, and must as well ask for daily pardon, as for daily bread. Besides, a Christian's pardon is not so sure, but he may desire to have a clearer evidence of it.

*Aphorism 14.* A full absolution from all sin is not pronounced till the day of judgment. The day of judgment is called 'a time of refreshing,' when sin shall be completely blotted out, Acts iii. 19. Now God blots out sin truly, but then it shall be done in a more public way; God will openly pronounce the saints' absolution before men and angels: their happiness is not completed till the day of judgment, because then their pardon shall be solemnly pronounced, and there shall be the triumphs



of the heavenly host. At that day it will be true indeed, that God sees no sin in his children : they shall be as pure as the angels ; then the church shall be presented without wrinkle, Eph. v. 27. She shall be as free from stain as guilt ; then Satan no more accuse, Christ will shew the debt-book crossed in his blood ; therefore the church doth so pray for Christ's coming to judgment, Rev. xxii. 17. ' The bride saith, Come, Lord Jesus : ' light the lamps, then burn the incense.

*Use 1.* Of information. From this word, ' Forgive,' we learn that if the debt of sin be no other way discharged but by being forgiven, then we cannot satisfy for it. Among other damnable opinions of the church of Rome, this is one, man's power to satisfy for sin. The council of Trent holds, that God is satisfied by our undergoing the penalty imposed by the censure of priests : and, again, we have works of our own, by which we may satisfy for our wrongs done to God : by these opinions, let any judge what the popish religion is. They intend to pay the debt they owe God themselves, to pay it in part, and do not look to have it all forgiven : but why did Christ teach us to pray, ' Forgive us our sins,' if we can of ourselves satisfy God for the wrong we have done him ? This doctrine robs God of his glory, Christ of his merit, and the soul of salvation. Alas ! is not the lock cut where our strength lay ? Are not all our works fly-blown with sin, and can sin satisfy for sin ? This doctrine makes men their own saviours : it is most absurd to hold ; for, can the obedience of a finite creature satisfy for an infinite offence ? Sin being forgiven, clearly implies we cannot satisfy for it.

2. From this word *us*, ' forgive us,' we learn that pardon is chiefly to be sought for ourselves : for though we are to pray for the pardon of others, James vi. 16. ' Pray one for another,' yet in the first place, we are to beg pardon for ourselves. What, will another's pardon do us good ? Every one is to endeavour to have his own name in the pardon. A son may be made free by his father's copy, but he cannot be pardoned by his father's pardon, he must have a pardon for himself. In this sense, selfishness is lawful, every one must be for himself, and get a pardon for his own sins. ' Forgive us.'

3. From this word *our*, ' our sins,' we learn how just God is in punishing us. The text says, ' our sins ; ' we are not punished for other men's sins, but our own. *Nemo habet de proprio, nisi peccatum* Augustine. There is nothing we can call so properly ours, as sin. Our daily bread we have from God, our daily sins we have from ourselves. Sin is our own act, a web of our own spinning ; how righteous therefore is God in punishing of us ? we sow the seed, and God only makes us reap what we sow, Jer. xvii. 10. ' I give every man the fruit of his

own doings.' When we are punished, we but taste the fruit of our own grafting.

4. From this word *sins*, see from hence the multitude of sins we stand guilty of. We pray not, forgive us our sin, (as if it were only a single debt,) but sins, in the plural: so vast is the catalogue of our sins, that David cries out, 'Who can understand his errors?' Psal. xix. 12. Our sins are like the drops in the sea, like the atoms in the sun, they exceed all arithmetic. Our debts we owe to God, we can no more number, than we can satisfy; which, as it should humble us, to consider how full of black spots our souls are, so it should put us upon seeking after the pardon of our sins. And this brings to the second *use*.

*Exhortation.* To labour to have the forgiveness of sin sealed up to us. How can we eat, or drink, or sleep without it? It is sad dying without a pardon; this is to fall into the labyrinth of despair; of this the next time.

*Use 2.* Let us labour for the forgiveness of sin. If ever this was needful, then now, when the times ring changes, and danger seems to be marching towards us. Labour, I say, for the forgiveness of sin: this is a main branch of the charter or covenant of grace, Heb. x. 12. 'I will be merciful to your unrighteousness, and your sins and iniquities I will remember no more.' It is mercy to feed us, but it is rich mercy to pardon us; this is spun and woven out of the bowels of free-grace. Earthly things are no signs of God's love; he may give the venison, but not the blessing: but when God seals up forgiveness, he gives his love and heaven with it, Ps. xxi. 3. 'Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.' A crown of gold was a mercy, but if you look into Ps. ciii. you shall find a greater mercy, ver. 3, 4. 'Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who crowneth thee with loving-kindness.' To be crowned with forgiveness and loving-kindness, is a far greater mercy than to have a crown of pure gold set upon the head. It was a mercy when Christ cured the palsy man; but when Christ said to him, 'thy sins are forgiven,' Mark ii. 5. this was more than to have his palsy healed: forgiveness of sin is the chief thing to be sought after; and sure, if conscience be once touched with a sense of sin, there is nothing a man will thirst after more than forgiveness, Psal. li. 3. 'My sin is ever before me.' This made David so earnest for pardon, Psal. li. 1. 'Have mercy upon me, O God, blot out my transgressions.' If one should have come to David, and asked him, David, where is thy pain? what is it troubles thee? is it the fear of shame which shall come on thee and thy wives? is it the fear of the sword which God hath threatened shall not depart from thy house? He would have said, No, it is only my sin pains me; 'My sin is ever before me.' Were but this remov-

ed by forgiveness, though the sword did ride in circuit in my family, I would be well enough content. When the arrow of guilt flicks in the conscience, nothing is so desirable as to have this arrow plucked out by forgiveness. O therefore seek after 'forgiveness of sin.' Can you make a shift to live without it? but how will you do to die without it? will not death have a sting to an unpardoned sinner? how do you think to get to heaven without forgiveness? As at some solemn festivals, there is no being admitted unless you bring a ticket: so, unless you have this ticket to shew, 'forgiveness of sin,' there is no being admitted into the holy place of heaven. Will God ever crown those that he will not forgive? O be ambitious of pardoning grace. When God had made Abraham great and large promises, Abraham replies, 'Lord, what is all, seeing I go childless?' Gen. xv. 2. So, when God hath given thee riches, and all thy heart can wish, say to him, Lord, what is all this, seeing I want forgiveness? Let my pardon be sealed in Christ's blood. A prisoner in the tower is in an ill case, notwithstanding his brave diet, great attendance, soft bed to lie on, because, being impeached, he looks every day for his arraignment, and is afraid of the sentence of death; in such a case, and worse, is he, that swims in the pleasures of the world, but his sins are not forgiven: a guilty conscience doth impeach him, and he is in fear of being arraigned and condemned at God's judgment seat. Give not then sleep to your eyes, or slumber to your eye-lids, till you have gotten some well-grounded hope that your sins are blotted out. Before I come to press the exhortation to seek after forgiveness of sin, I shall propound one question.

*Qu. If pardon of sin be so absolutely necessary, without it no salvation, what is the reason that so few in the world seek after it? If they want health, they repair to the physician; if they want riches, they take a voyage to the Indies; but if they want forgiveness of sin, they seem to be unconcerned, and do not seek after it: whence is this?*

*Ans.* 1. Inadvertancy, or want of consideration: they do not look into their spiritual estate, or cast up their accounts to see how matters stand between God and their souls, Isa. i. 3. 'My people do not consider:' they do not consider they are indebted to God in a sum of ten thousand talents, and that God will, ere long, call them to account, Rom. xiv. 12. 'So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.' But people shun serious thoughts; 'my people do not consider.' Hence it is they do not look after pardon.

3. Men do not seek after forgiveness of sin, for want of conviction. Few are convinced what deadly evil sin is, it is the spirits of mischief distilled, it turns a man's glory into shame, it

brings all plagues on the body, and curses on the soul. Unless a man's sin be forgiven, there is not the vilest creature alive, the dog, serpent, toad, but is in a better condition than the sinner; for when they die, they go but to the earth; but he dying without pardon goes into hell-torments for ever. Men are not convinced of this, but play with the viper of sin.

3. Men do not seek earnestly after forgiveness, because they are seeking other things: they seek the world immoderately. When Saul was seeking after the asses, he did not think of a kingdom. The world is a golden snare. *Divitiæ sæculi sunt laquei diaboli*, Bern. The wedge of gold hinders many from seeking after a pardon. Ministers cry to the people, get your pardon sealed: but if you call to a man that is in a mill, the noise of the mill drowns the voice, that he cannot hear: so, when the mill of a trade is going, it makes such a noise, that the people cannot hear the minister when he lifts up his voice as a trumpet, and cries to them to look after the sealing of their pardon. He who spends all his time about the world, and doth not mind forgiveness, will accuse himself of folly at last. You would judge that prisoner very unwise, that should spend all his time with the cook to get his dinner ready, and should never mind getting a pardon.

4. Men seek not after the forgiveness of sin, through a bold presumption of mercy; they conceit God to be made up all of mercy; and that he will indulge them, though they take little or no pains to sue out their pardon. It is true God is merciful, but withal he is just, he will not wrong his justice by shewing mercy. Read the proclamation, Exod. xxxiv. 6. 'The Lord, the Lord God merciful;' ver. 7. 'and that will by no means clear the guilty.' Such as go on in sin, and are so slothful or wilful, that they will not seek after forgiveness, though there be a whole ocean of mercy in the Lord, not one drop shall fall to their share, 'he will by no means clear the guilty.'

5. Men seek not earnestly after forgiveness, out of hope of impunity. They flatter themselves in sin, and because they have been spared so long, therefore sure, God never intends to reckon with them, Ps. x. 11. 'He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten, he hides his face he will never see it.' Atheists think, either the judge is blind, or forgetful; but let sinners know, that long forbearance is no forgiveness, God did bear with Sodom a long time, but at last rained down fire and brimstone upon them, the adjourning of the assizes doth not acquit the prisoner: the longer God is taking the blow, the heavier it will be at last, if sinners repent not.

6. Men do not seek earnestly after forgiveness through mistake; they think getting a pardon is easy, it is but repenting

at the last hour, a sigh, or a Lord have mercy, and a pardon will drop into their mouths. But, is it so easy to repent, and have a pardon? tell me, O sinner, is regeneration easy? are there no pangs in the new birth? Is mortification easy? is it nothing to pluck out the right eye? is it easy to leap out of Dalilah's lap into Abraham's bosom? This is the draw-net, by which the devil drags millions to hell, the facility of repenting and getting a pardon.

7. Men do not look after forgiveness through despair. Oh, faith the desponding soul, it is a vain thing for me to expect pardon; my sins are so many and heinous, that sure God will not forgive me, Jer. xviii. 12. 'And they said, There is no hope.' My sins are huge mountains, and, can they ever be cast into the sea? Despair cuts the sinews of endeavour; who will use means that despairs of success? The devil shews some men their sins at the little end of the perspective-glass, and they seem little, or none at all: but he shews others their sins at the great end of the perspective, and they fright them into despair. This is a soul-damning sin, Judas' despair was worse than his treason. Despair spoils the cordial of Christ's blood: this is the voice of despair, Christ's blood cannot pardon me. Thus you see whence it is that men seek not more earnestly after the forgiveness of sin. Having answered this question, I shall now come to press the exhortation upon every one of us, to seek earnestly after the forgiveness of our sins.

1. Our very life lies upon the getting of a pardon: it is called the 'justification of life,' Rom. v. 18. Now, if our life lies upon our pardon, and we are dead and damned without it, doth it not concern us above all things to labour after forgiveness of sin? Deut. xxxii. 47. 'For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life.' If a man be under a sentence of death, he will set his wits a-work, and make use of all his friends to get the king to grant him a pardon, because his life lies upon it: so we are, by reason of sin, under a sentence of damnation: now, there is one friend at court we may make use of to procure our pardon, namely, the Lord Jesus: how earnest then should we be with him to be our Advocate to the Father? for us, and that he would present the merit of his blood to the Father, as the price of our pardon?

2. There is that in sin may make us desire forgiveness. Sin is the only thing that disquiets the soul. 1. Sin is a burden, it burdens the creation, Rom. viii. 22. it burdens the conscience, Ps. xxxviii. 4. A wicked man is not sensible of sin, he is dead in sin; and if you lay a thousand weight upon a dead man, he feels it not. But to an awakened conscience there is no such burden as sin; when a man seriously weighs with himself the glory and purity of that Majesty which sin hath

offended, the preciousness of that soul which sin hath polluted, the loss of that happiness which sin hath endangered, the greatness of that torment which sin hath deserved, to lay all this together, sure must make sin burdensome : and should not we labour to have this burden removed by pardoning mercy ? 2. Sin is a debt, Matth. vi. 13. 'Forgive us our debts ;' and every debt we owe, God hath written down in his book. Isa. lxiv. 6. 'Behold it is written before me,' and one day God's debt-book will be opened, Rev. xx. 12. 'The books were opened.' And, is not this that which may make us look after forgiveness ? Sin being such a debt as we must eternally lie in the prison of hell for, if it be not discharged ; shall not we be earnest with God to cross the debt-book with the blood of his Son ? There is no way to look God in the face with comfort, but by having our debts either paid, or pardoned.

3. There is nothing but forgiveness can give ease to a troubled conscience. There is a great difference between the having the fancy pleased, and having the conscience eased : worldly things may please the fancy, but not ease the conscience : nothing but pardon can relieve a troubled soul. It is strange what shifts men will make for ease when conscience is pained, and how many false medicines they will use, before they will take the right way for a cure. When conscience is troubled, they will try what merry company can do ; they may perhaps drink away trouble of conscience ; perhaps they may play it away at cards ; perhaps a lent-whipping will do the deed ; perhaps multitude of business will so take up their time, that they shall have no leisure to hear the clamours and accusations of conscience : but how vain are all these attempts ! still their wound bleeds inwardly, their heart trembles, their conscience roars, and they can have no peace. Whence is it ? Here is the reason, they go not to the mercy of God, and the blood of Christ, for the pardon of their sins ; and hence it is they can have no ease. Suppose a man hath a thorn in his foot, which puts him to pain ; let him anoint it, or wrap it up, and keep it warm ; yet till the thorn be plucked out, it aches and swells, and he hath no ease : so when the thorn of sin is gotten into a man's conscience, there is no ease till the thorn be pulled out ; when God removes iniquity, now the thorn is plucked out. How was David's heart finely quieted, when Nathan the prophet told him, 'The Lord hath put away thy sin,' 2 Sam. xii. 13. How should we therefore labour for forgiveness ! till then we can have no ease in our mind : nothing but a pardon sealed with the blood of the Redeemer, can ease a wounded spirit.

4. Forgiveness of sin is feasible ; it may be obtained. Impossibility destroys endeavour ; but, as Ezra x. 2. 'There is hope in Israel concerning this.' The devils are past hope ; a

sentence of death is past upon them, which is irrevocable ; but there is hope for us of obtaining a pardon, Psal. cxxx. 4. ‘ There is forgiveness with thee.’ If pardon of sin were not possible, then it were not to be prayed for ; but it hath been prayed for, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. ‘ I beseech thee, O Lord, take away mine iniquity ;’ and Christ bids us pray for it, ‘ Forgive us our trespasses.’ That is possible which God hath promised, but God hath promised pardon upon repentance, Isa. lv. 7. ‘ Let the wicked forsake his way, and return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.’ Hebrew, He will multiply to pardon. That is possible which others have obtained ; but others have arrived at forgiveness, therefore it is haveable, Psal. xxxii. 5. Isaiah xxxviii. 17. ‘ Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.’ This may make us endeavour after pardon, because it is feasible it may be had.

5. Consideration to persuade to it, is, forgiveness of sin is a choice eminent blessing : to have the book cancelled, and God appeased, is worth obtaining ; which may whet our endeavour after it. That it is a rare transcendent blessing, appears by three demonstrations.

1<sup>st</sup>, If we consider how this blessing is purchased, namely, by the Lord Jesus. There are three things in reference to Christ, which set forth the choiceness and preciousness of forgiveness.

1. No mere created power in heaven or earth could expiate one sin, or procure a pardon : only Jesus Christ. 1 John ii. 2. ‘ He is the propitiation for our sins.’ No merit can buy out a pardon. Paul had as much to boast of as any man, his high birth, his learning, his legal righteousness ; but he disclaims all in point of justification, and lays them under Christ’s feet to tread upon. No angel could, with all his holiness, lay down a price for the pardon of one sin, 2 Sam. iii. 25. ‘ If a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him ?’ What angel durst be so bold, as to open his mouth to God for a delinquent sinner ? Only Jesus Christ, who is God-man, could deal with God’s justice, and purchase forgiveness.

2. Christ himself could not procure a pardon, but by dying ; every pardon is the price of blood. Christ’s life was a rule of holiness, and a pattern of obedience, Mat. iii. 15. ‘ He fulfilled all righteousness.’ And certainly, Christ’s active obedience was of great value and merit ; but here is that which raiseth the worth of forgiveness, Christ’s active obedience had not fully procured a pardon for us without the shedding of his blood : therefore our justification is ascribed to his blood, Rom. v. 9. ‘ Being justified by his blood.’ Christ did bleed out our pardon. There’s much ascribed to Christ’s intercession, but

his intercession had not prevailed with God for the forgiveness of one sin, had not he shed his blood. It is worth our notice, that when Christ is described to John as an intercessor for his church, he is represented to him in the likeness of a Lamb slain, Rev. v. 6. to shew that Christ must die, and be slain, before he can be an intercessor.

3. Christ, by dying, had not purchased forgiveness for us, if he had not died an execrable death: he endured the curse, Gal. iii. 13. All the agonies Christ endured in his soul, all the torments in his body, could not purchase a pardon, except he had been made a curse for us, Christ must be cursed, before we could be blessed with a pardon.

2dly, Forgiveness of sin is a choice blessing, if we consider what glorious attributes God puts forth in the pardoning of sin. (1.) God puts forth infinite power: when Moses was pleading with God for the pardon of Israel's sin, he speaks thus, 'Let the power of my Lord be great,' Numb. xiv. 17. God's forgiving of sin is a work of as great power as to make heaven and earth, nay, a greater: For, when God made the world, he met with no opposition; but, when he comes to pardon. Satan opposeth, and the heart opposeth. A sinner is desperate, and flights, yea, defies a pardon, till God, by his mighty power, convinceth him of his sin and danger, and makes him willing to accept of a pardon. (2.) God, in forgiving sins, puts forth 'infinite mercy,' Numb. xiv. 19. 'Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of thy mercy.' It is mercy to have a reprieve; and if there be mercy in sparing a sinner, what mercy then is in pardoning him? This is the *flos lactis*, the cream of mercy. For God to put up with so many injuries, to wipe so many debts off the score, this is infinite favour; forgiveness of sin is spun out of the bowels of God's mercy.

3dly, Forgiveness of sin is a choice blessing, as it lays a foundation for other mercies. It is a leading mercy. 1. It makes way for temporal good things. (1.) It brings health. When Christ said to the palsy man, 'Thy sins are forgiven,' this made way for a bodily cure, 'Arise, take up thy bed and walk,' Matth. ix. 6. The pardon of his sins made way for the healing of his palsy. (2.) It brings prosperity, Jer. xxxiii. 8. 9. 2. It makes way for spiritual good things. Forgiveness of sin never comes alone, but hath other spiritual blessings attending it. Whom God pardons, he sanctifies, adopts, crowns. It is a voluminous mercy, it draws the silver link of grace, and the golden link of glory after it. It is an high act of indulgence, God seals the sinner's pardon with a kiss. And should not we, above all things, seek after so great a blessing as forgiveness?



6. Consideration, that which may make us seek after forgiveness of sin is, 'God's inclinableness to pardon,' Neh. ix. 16. 'Thou art a God ready to pardon.' In the Hebrew it is, "A God of pardons." We are apt to entertain wrong conceits of God, that he is inexorable, and will not forgive, Mat. xxv. 24. 'I knew thou wert an hard man.' But God is a fin pardoning God, Exod. xxxiv. 6. 'The Lord, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.' Here is my name (saith God) if you would know how I am called, I tell you my name, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful, forgiving iniquity.' A pirate or rebel, that knows there is a proclamation out against him, will never come in; but, if he hears that the prince is full of clemency, and there is a proclamation of pardon to him, if he submit, this will be a great incentive to him to lay down his arms, and become loyal to his prince. See God's proclamation to repenting sinners, Jer. iii. 12. 'Go and proclaim these words, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon thee, for I am merciful.' God's mercy is a tender mercy. The Hebrew word for mercy signifies bowels. God's mercy is full of sympathy, he is of a most sweet indulgent nature, Psal. lxxxvi. 5. 'Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive.' The bee doth not more naturally give honey, than God shews mercy.

Obj. 1. *But doth not God seem to delight in punitive acts, or acts of severity?* Prov. i. 26. 'I will laugh at your calamity.'

Ans. Who doth God say so to? See verse 25. 'Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof.' God delights in their destruction who despise his instruction; but an humble penitentiary breaking off sin, and suing out his pardon, the Lord delights in shewing mercy to such an one, Micah vii. 18. 'He delighteth in mercy.'

Obj. 2. *But though God be so full of mercy, and ready to forgive, yet his mercy reacheth not to all; he forgives only such as are elected, and I question my election?*

Ans. 1. No man can say he is not elected: God hath not revealed this to any particular man, that he is a reprobate, excepting him only, who hath sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost: which sin thou art far enough from, [who mournest for sin, and seekest after forgiveness.

2. These thoughts of non-election, that we are not elected, and that there is no pardon for us, come from Satan, and are the poisoned arrows he shoots. He is the accuser; he accuseth us to God, that we are great sinners; and, he accuseth God to us, as if he were a tyrant. One that did watch to destroy his creature, these are diabolical suggestions; say, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.'

3. It is sinful for any to hold that he is not elected ; it would take him off from the use of means, from praying, and repenting ; it would harden him, and make him desperate : therefore pry not into the *arcana cœli*, the secrets of heaven. Remember what befel the men of Bethshemesh, for looking into the ark, 1 Sam. vi. 19. Know that we are not to go to God's secret will, but by his revealed will ; look into God's revealed will, and there we shall find enough to cherish hope, and encourage us to go to God for the pardon of our sins. God hath revealed in his word, ' that he is rich in mercy,' Eph. ii. 4. That he doth not ' delight in the destruction of a sinner,' Ezek. xviii. 32. *Jurat per essentiam*, (Musculus). He swears by his essence, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. ' As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.' Hence it is God waits so long, and puts off the sessions from time to time, to see if sinners will repent, and seek to him for pardon : therefore let God's tender mercies and precious promises encourage us to seek to him for the forgiveness of our sins.

Consideration 7. Not to seek earnestly for pardon, is the unspeakable misery of such as want forgiveness ; it must needs be ill with that malefactor that wants his pardon.

1. The unpardoned sinner (that lives and dies so) is under the greatest loss and privation. Is there any happiness like to the enjoying of God in glory ; this is the joy of angels, the crown of saints glorified : but the unforgiven sinner shall not behold God's smiling face ; he shall see God as an enemy, not as a friend ; he shall have an affrighting sight of God, not beatifical ; he shall see the black rod, not the mercy-seat. Sins unpardoned are like the angel with a flaming sword, who stopped the passage to paradise ; sins unpardoned stop the way to the heavenly paradise ; and how doleful is the condition of that soul which is banished from the place of bliss, where the King of glory keeps his court ?

2. The unpardoned sinner hath nothing to do with any promise ; the promises are *milk-trailia evangelii*, the breasts that hold the sincere milk of the word, which fills the soul with precious sweetness ; they are the royal charter : but what hath a stranger to do to meddle with the charter ? It was the dove plucked the olive-branch ; it is only the believer plucks the tree of the promise. Till the condition of the promise be performed, no man can have right to the comfort of the promise ; and how sad is that, not to have one promise to shew for heaven ?

3. An unpardoned sinner is continually in danger of the outcry of an accusing conscience. An accusing conscience is a little hell. *Siculi non invenire tyranni tormentum majus*. We tremble to hear a lion roar ; how terrible are the roarings of conscience ? Judas hanged himself to quiet his conscience : a sin-

ner's conscience at present is either asleep or feared ; but when God shall awaken conscience, either by affliction or at death, how will the unpardoned sinner be affrighted ? When a man shall have all his sins set before his eyes, and drawn out in their bloody colours, and the worm of conscience begins to gnaw ; sinner, here are thy debts, and the book is not cancelled, thou must to hell ; O what a trembling at heart will the sinner have !

4. All the curses of God stand in full force against an unpardoned sinner. His very blessings are cursed, Mal. ii. 2. 'I will curse your blessings.' His table is a snare ; he eats and drinks a curse. What comfort could Dionysius have at his feast, when he imagined he saw a naked sword hanging by a twine-thread over his head ? This is enough to spoil a sinner's banquet : a curse like a naked sword, hangs over his head : Cæsar wondered to see one of his soldiers so merry that was in debt. One would wonder that man would be merry who is heir to all God's curses ; he doth not see these curses, but is blinder than Balaam's ass, who saw the angel's sword drawn.

5. The unpardoned sinner is in an ill case at death. Luther professed, there were three things which he durst not think of without Christ ; of his sins, of death, of the day of judgment. Death to a Christless soul is the 'king of terrors.' As the prophet Ahijah said to Jeroboam's wife, 1 Kings xiv. 6. 'I am sent to thee with heavy tidings ;' so death is sent to the unpardoned soul with heavy tidings ; it is God's jailor to arrest him. Death is a prologue to damnation : in particular,

(1.) Death is a voider, to take away all his earthly comforts, it takes away his sugared morsels ; no more drinking wine in bowls, no more mirth or music, Rev. xviii. 22. 'The voice of harpers and musicians shall be heard no more at all in thee.' The sinner shall never taste of luscious delights more to all eternity ; his honey shall be turned into the 'gall of asps,' Job xx. 14.

(2.) At death there shall be an end put to all reprieves. Now God reprieves a sinner, he spares him such a fit of sickness ; he respites him many years ; the sinner should have died such a drinking-bout, but God granted him a reprieve : he lengthened out the silver thread of patience to a miracle ; but the sinner dying without repentance, unpardoned, now the lease of God's patience is run out, and the sinner must appear in person, before the righteous God, to receive his sentence ; after which there shall be none to bail him : nor shall he hear of of a reprieve any more.

6. The unpardoned sinner, dying so, must go into damnation : this is the second death, *mors sine morte*. The unpardoned soul must for ever bear the anger of a sin-avenging God ;

as long as God is God, so long the vial of his wrath shall be dropping upon the damned soul ; this is an helpless condition. There is a time when a sinner will not be helped : Christ and salvation are offered to him, but he slights them, he will not be helped : and there is a time shortly coming, when he cannot be helped ; he calls out for mercy, O a pardon, a pardon ! but then it is too late, the date of mercy is expired ; O how sad then is it to live and die unpardoned ? you may lay a grave-stone upon that man, and write this epitaph upon it, ' It had been good for that man that he had never been born.' Now if the misery of an unpardoned state be so inexpressible, how should we labour for forgiveness, that we may not be ingulphed in so dreadful a labyrinth fire and brimstone to all eternity ?

7. Such as are unpardoned must needs lead uncomfortable lives, Deut. xxviii. 66. ' Thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt be in continual fears.' Thus the unpardoned sinner must needs have a palpitation and trembling at the heart ; he fears every bush he sees, 1 John iv. 18. ' Fear hath torment in it.' The Greek word for torment, *kolasís*, is used sometimes for hell ; fear hath hell in it. A man in debt fears every step he goes, lest he should be arrested : so the unpardoned sinner fears, what if this night death, which is God's serjeant, should arrest him ? Job. vii. 21. ' Why dost not thou pardon my sin ? For now shall I sleep in the dust ? as if Job had said, ' Lord, I shall shortly die, I shall sleep in the dust ? and what shall I do if my sins be not pardoned ?' What comfort can an unpardoned soul take in any thing ? Sure no more than a prisoner can take in meat or music, that wants his pardon. Therefore, by all these powerful motives, let us labour for the forgiveness of sin.

Obj. 1. *But I am discouraged from going to God for pardon, for I am unworthy of forgiveness ; what am I, that God should do such a favour for me ?*

Ans. God forgives, not because we are worthy, but because he is gracious, Exod. xxxiv. 6. ' The Lord, the Lord, merciful and gracious.' God forgives out of his clemency : acts of pardon, are acts of grace. What worthiness was there in Paul before conversion ? He was a blasphemer, and so he sinned against the first table ; he was a persecutor, and so he sinned against the second table : but free-grace sealed his pardon, 1 Tim. i. 13. ' I obtained mercy ;' I was all bestowed with mercy. What worthiness was in the woman of Samaria ? She was ignorant, John iv. 22. She was unclean, ver. 18. She was morose and churlish, she would not give Christ so much as a cup of cold water, ver. 9. ' How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria ?' What worthiness was here ? Yet Christ overlooked all, and pardoned her ingrati-

tude ; and though she denied him water out of the well, yet he gave her the water of life. *Gratia non invenit dignos, sed facit.* Free-grace doth not find us worthy, but makes us worthy. Therefore, notwithstanding unworthiness, seek to God, and your sins may be pardoned.

Obj. 2. *But I have been a great sinner, and sure God will not pardon me.*

*Ans.* David brings it as an argument for pardon, Pf. xxv. 11. ‘Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.’ When God forgives great sins, now he doth a work like himself. The desperateness of the wound doth the more set forth the virtue of Christ’s blood in curing it. Mary Magdalene, a great sinner, out of whom seven devils were cast, yet she had her pardon. Some of the Jews, who had an hand in crucifying of Christ, upon their repentance, the very blood they shed did seal their pardon. Consider sins either for their number, as the sands of the sea ; or for their weight as the rocks of the sea ; yet there is mercy enough in God to forgive them, Isa. i. 18. ‘Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow.’ Scarlet signifies twice dipped, which no art of man can get out ; yet God can wash out this scarlet dye. There is no sin excepted from pardon, but that sin which despiseth pardon, viz. the sin against the Holy Ghost, Mat. xii. 31. Therefore, O sinner, do not cast away thy anchor of hope, but go to God for forgiveness. The vast ocean hath bounds set to it, but God’s pardoning mercy is boundless. God can as well forgive great sins, as less ; as the sea can as well cover great rocks, as little sands. Nothing hinders pardon, but the sinner’s not asking it.

That a great sinner should not despair of forgiveness, consult that scripture, Isa. xliii. 25. ‘I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions.’ If you look on the foregoing words, you would wonder how this verse comes in, ver. 24. ‘Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thy iniquities ;’ and then it follows, ‘I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions.’ One would have thought it should have run thus, ‘Thou hast wearied me with thy iniquities ; I, even I, am he that will punish thy iniquities ;’ but God comes in a mild loving strain, ‘Thou hast wearied me with thy iniquities, I am he that blots out thy iniquities.’ So that the greatness of our sins should not discourage us from going to God for forgiveness. Though thou hast committed acts of impiety, yet God can come with an act of indemnity, and say, ‘I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions.’ God counts it his glory to display free grace in its orient colours, Rom. v. 20. ‘Where sin abounded grace did much more abound.’ When sin becomes exceeding sinful, free-grace becomes exceeding glorious. God’s pardoning love can conquer

the sinner, and triumph over the sin. Consider, thou almost despairing soul, there is not so much sin in man, as there is mercy in God : man's sin in comparison of God's mercy, is but as a spark to the ocean : and who would doubt whether a spark could be quenched in an ocean.

Obj. 3. *But I have relapsed into the same sins, and how can I have the face to come to God for pardon of those sins which I have more than once fallen into ?*

Ans. I know that the Novations held that after a relapse no forgiveness by the church. But, doubtless, that was an error : Abraham did twice equivocate, Lot committed incest twice, Peter sinned thrice by carnal fear ; but these, repenting, had their absolution.

There is a twofold relapse, 1. A wilful relapse, when, after a man hath solemnly vowed himself to God, he falls into a league with sin, and returns back to it, Jer. ii. 25. 'I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.'

2. There is a relapse through infirmity, when the bent and resolution of a man's heart is against sin, but, through the violence of temptation, and withdrawing of God's grace, he is carried down the stream against his will. Now, though wilful and continued relapses are desperate, and do *vastare conscientiam*, (as Tertul.) waste the conscience, and run men upon the precipice of damnation ; yet, if they are through infirmity, and we mourn for them, we may obtain forgiveness. A godly man doth not march after sin as his general, but is led captive by it ; and the Lord will pity a captive prisoner. Christ commands us to forgive a trespassing brother, seventy-times seven, Matth. xviii. 22. If he bids us do it, much more will he forgive a relapsing sinner in case he repent, Jer. iii. 22. 'Return, thou backsliding Israel, for I am merciful, saith the Lord.' It is not falling once or twice into the mire that drowns, but lying there ; it is not once relapsing into sin, but lying in sin impenitently, that damns.

Obj. 4. *But God requires so much sorrow and humiliation before remission, that I fear I shall never arrive at it.*

Ans. God requires no more humiliation than may fit a soul for mercy. Many a Christian thinks, because he hath not filled God's bottle so full of tears as others, therefore he is not humbled enough to receive a pardon. But we must know God's dealings are various ; all have not the like pangs in the new birth : some are won with love, the sense of God's mercy abused, causeth ingenuous tears to flow ; others are more flagitious and hardened, and these God deals more roughly with. This is sure, that soul is humbled enough to receive a pardon, who is brought to a thorough sense of sin, and sees the need of a Saviour, and loves him as the fairest of ten thousand : therefore

be not discouraged, if thy heart be bruised for sin, and broken off from it, thy sin shall be blotted out. No sooner did Ephraim fall a-weeping, but God's bowels fell a-working, Jer. xxxi. 20. 'My bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him.' Having answered these objections, let me beseech you above all things, labour for the forgiveness of sin: think with yourselves, how great a mercy it is: it is one of the richest jewels in the cabinet of the new covenant, Pf. xxxii. 1. 'Blessed is he whose iniquity is forgiven.' In the Hebrew it is blessednesses. And think with yourselves, the unparalleled misery of such whose sins are not forgiven. Such as had not the blood of the paschal lamb sprinkled upon their door-posts, were destroyed by the angel, Exod. xii. So they who have not Christ's blood sprinkled on them, to wash away the guilt of sin, will fall into the gulf of perdition. And if you resolve to seek after forgiveness, do not delay.

Many say they will go about the getting their pardon, but they procrastinate and put it off so long, till it be too late; when the shadows of the evening are stretched forth, and the night of death approacheth, then they begin to look after their pardon. This hath been the undoing of millions; they purpose they will look after their souls, but they stay so long till the lease of mercy be run out: Oh, therefore hasten the getting of a pardon! think of the uncertainty of life. What security have you that you shall live another day? *Volat ambiguis mobilis aliis hora.* Our life is a taper soon blown out; it is made up of a few flying minutes. O thou dust and ashes! thou mayest fear every hour to be blown into thy grave; and what if death come to arrest thee before thy pardon be sealed? Plutarch reports of one Archias, who being among his cups, one delivered to him a letter, and desired him to read it presently, being about serious business; saith he *jèrio cras*, I will mind serious things to-morrow; and that night he was slain. Thou that sayest, to-morrow I will repent, I will get my pardon, thou mayest suddenly be slain; therefore to-day, while it is called to-day, look after the forgiveness of sin: after a while, all the conduits of mercy will be stopped, there will not be one drop of Christ's blood to be had, there is no sealings of pardon after death.

2. *Branch of Exhortation.* Let us labour to have the evidence of pardon, to know that our sins are forgiven. A man may have his sins forgiven, and not know of it; he may have a pardon in the court of heaven, when he hath it not in the court of conscience. David's sin was forgiven as soon as he repented. And God sent Nathan the prophet to tell him so, 1 Sam. xii. 13. But David did not feel the comfort of it at present, as appears by the penitential psalm composed after, Pf. li. 8 'Make me to hear the voice of joy;' and ver. 12. 'Cast me not away

from thy presence.' It is one thing to be pardoned, and another to feel it. The evidence of pardon may not appear for a time, and this may be,

1. From the imbecility and weakness of faith. Forgiveness of sin is so strange and infinite a blessing, that a Christian can hardly persuade himself that God will extend such a favour to him; as it is said of the apostles, when Christ appeared to them first, 'they believed not for joy, and wondered,' Luke xxiv. 41. So the soul is so stricken with admiration, that the wonder of pardon doth almost stagger his faith.

2. A man may be pardoned, and not know it, from the strength of temptation. Satan accuseth the godly of sin, and tells them that God doth not love them; what, should such sinners think of pardon? Believers are compared to bruised reeds, Matth. xii. 20. And temptations to winds, Matth. vii. 15. Now, a reed is easily shaken with the wind. Temptations shake the godly; and though they are pardoned, yet they know it not; Job in a temptation thought God his enemy, Job xvi. 9. Yet then he was in a pardoned condition.

Qu. *But why doth God sometimes conceal the evidence of pardon?*

Ans. Though God doth pardon, yet he may withhold the sense of it a while;

1. Because hereby he would lay us lower in contrition. God would have us see what an evil and bitter thing it is to offend him; we shall therefore lie the longer sleeping ourselves in the brinish tears of repentance, before we have the sense of pardon: it being long before David's broken bones were set and his pardon sealed, the more contrite his heart was, and this was a sacrifice God delighted in.

2. Though God did forgive sin, yet he may deny the manifestation of it for a time, to make us prize pardon, and make it sweeter to us when it comes. The difficulty of obtaining a mercy enhanceth the value: when we have been a long time tugging at prayer for a pardon of sin, and still God withholds, but at last, after many sighs and tears, pardon comes; now we esteem it the more, and it is sweeter,—*Quo longius desertur, eo juxius laetatur*,—The longer mercy is in the birth, the more welcome will the deliverance be.

Let me now re-assume the exhortation to labour for the evidence and sense of pardon. He who is pardoned and knows it not, is like one who hath an estate befallen him, but knows it not. Our comfort consists in the knowledge of forgiveness, Psal. li. 8. 'Make me to hear the voice of joy.' This is a proclaiming a jubilee in the soul, when we are able to read our pardon; and to the witness of conscience God adds the witness



of his Spirit ; in the mouth of these two witnesses our joy is confirmed : O labour for this evidence of forgiveness.

*Qu. How shall we know that our sins are forgiven ?*

*Ans.* we must not be our own judges in this case, Prov. xxviii. 26. ‘ He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.’ ‘ The heart is deceitful,’ Jer. xvii. 9. And it is folly to trust a deceiver. The Lord only by his word must be judge in this case, whether we are pardoned, or not. As it was under the law, no leper might judge himself to be clean ; ‘ but the priest was to pronounce him clean.’ Lev. xiii. 37. So, we are not to judge of ourselves to be clean from the guilt of sin, till we are such as the word of God hath pronounced to be clean.

*Qu. How then shall we know by the word whether our guilt is done away and our sins pardoned ?*

*Ans.* 1. The pardoned sinner is a great weeper. The sense of God’s love melts his heart : that free grace should ever look upon me ; that such crimson sins should be washed away in Christ’s blood ! this makes the heart melt, and the eyes drop with tears ; never did any man read his pardon with dry eyes, Luke vii. 38. ‘ She stood at his feet weeping ;’ her heart was a spiritual limbeck, out of which those tears were distilled. Mary’s tears were more precious to Christ, than her ointment ; her eyes, which before did sparkle with lust, whose amorous glances had set on fire her lovers ; now she makes them a fountain, and washeth Christ’s feet with her tears. She was a true penitent and had her pardon, ver. 47. ‘ Wherefore, I say, her sins, which were many are forgiven.’ A pardon will make the hardest heart relent, and cause the stony heart to bleed ; and, is it thus with us ? Have we been dissolved into tears for sin ? God seals his pardons upon melting hearts.

2. We may know our sins are forgiven, by having the grace of faith infused, Acts x. 43. ‘ To him give all the prophets witness, that whosoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins.’ In saving faith there are two things, abrenunciation, and recumbency ; 1. Abrenunciation : a man renounceth all opinion of himself, digged out of his own borough ; he is quite taken off himself, Phil. iii. 9. He sees all his duties are but broken reeds ; though he could weep a sea of tears : though he had all the grace of men and angels, it could not purchase his pardon. 2. Recumbency. Faith is an assent with alliance : the soul doth get hold of Christ, as Adonijah did of the horns of the altar, 1 Kings i. 51. Faith casts itself upon the stream of Christ’s blood, and saith, If I perish, I perish. If we have but the *minimum quod sic*, the last drachm of this precious faith, we have something to shew for pardon. ‘ To him give all the prophets witness, that whosoever believes in him shall receive remission of sin.’ 1. This faith is acceptable to God, it pleas-

eth God more than offering up ten thousand rivers of oil, than working miracles, than martyrdom, or the highest acts of obedience. 2. Faith is profitable to us ; it is our best certificate to shew for pardon : no sooner doth faith reach forth its hand to receive Christ, but Christ sets his hand to our pardon.

3. *Sign.* The pardoned soul is a God-admirer, Micah vii. 18. ' Who is a God like thee, that pardonest iniquity ? ' O that God should ever look upon me, I was a sinner, and nothing but a sinner, yet I obtained mercy ? Who is a God like thee ? Mercy hath been despised, yet that mercy should save me : Christ hath been crucified by me, yet his cross crowns me. God hath displayed the ensigns of free grace, he hath set up his mercy above my sin, nay, in spite of it, this causeth admiration, ' Who is a God like thee ? ' A man that goes over a narrow bridge in the night, and the next morning comes and sees the danger he was in, and how miraculously he escaped ; he is stricken with admiration ; so, when God shews a soul how near he was a-falling into hell, and how that this gulph is shut, all his sins are pardoned, he is amazed, and cries out, ' Who is a God like thee, that pardonest iniquity ? ' That God should pardon one, and pass by another ; one taken, another left ; this fills the soul with wonder and astonishment.

4. Wherever God pardons sin, he subdues it, Micah vii. 19. ' He will have compassion on us, he will subdue our iniquity.' Where mens' persons are justified, their lusts are mortified. There is in sin *vis imperatoria & damnatoria*, a commanding power, and a condemning. Then is the condemning power of sin taken away, when the commanding power of it is taken away. When we know whether our sins are forgiven, are they subdued ? If a malefactor be in prison, how shall he know that his prince hath pardoned him ? If the jailor come and knock off his chains and fetters, and lets him out of prison, then he may know he is pardoned : so, how shall we know God hath pardoned us ? If the fetters of sin be broken off, and we walk at liberty in the ways of God, Psal. cxix. 45. ' I will walk at liberty ; ' this is a blessed sign we are pardoned.

Such as are washed in Christ's blood from their guilt, are made kings to God, Rev. i. 6. As kings they rule over their sins.

5. He whose sins are forgiven, is full of love to God. Mary Magdalene's heart was fired with love, Luke vii. 47. ' Her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much.' Her love was not the cause of her remission, but a sign of it. A pardoned soul is a monument of mercy, and he thinks he can never love God enough ; he wishes he had a coal from God's altar, to inflame his heart in love ; he wishes he could borrow the wings of the cherubims, that he might fly swifter in obedience :

a pardoned soul is sick of love. He whose heart is like marble, lockt up in impenitency, that doth not melt in love, a sign his pardon is yet to seal.

6. Where the sin is pardoned, the nature is purified, Hof. xiv. 9. 'I will heal their backslidings, I will love them.' Every man, by nature, is both guilty and diseased: where God remits the guilt, he cures the disease, Pf. ciii. 3. 'Who forgiveth all thy iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases.' Herein God's pardon goes beyond the king's pardon; the king may forgive a malefactor, but he cannot change his heart, he may have a chieftie heart still: but God, when he pardons, changeth the heart, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. 'A new heart also will I give you.' A pardoned soul is adorned and embellished with holiness, 1 John v. 6. 'This is he that came by water and blood.' Where Christ comes with blood to justify, he comes with water to cleanse, Zech. iii. 4. 'I have caused thy iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.' I will cause thy iniquity to pass from thee, there is pardoning grace; and I will clothe thee with change of raiment, there is sanctifying grace: let not him say, he hath pardon, that wants grace. Many tells us, they hope they are pardoned, but were never sanctified; yea, but they believe in Christ: but what faith is it? A swearing faith, a whoring faith; the faith of devils is as good.

7. Such as are in the number of God's people, forgiveness of sin belongs to them, Isa. xl. 1. 'Comfort ye my people, tell them their iniquity is forgiven.'

Qu. *How shall we know that we are God's elect people?*

Ans. By three characters.

(1.) God's people are an humble people, the livery which all Christ's people wear, is humility, 1 Pet. v. 5. 'Be ye clothed with humility.' 1. A sight of God's glory humbles: Elijah wrapped his face in a mantle when God's glory passed by, Job xlii. 5. 'Now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself.' The stars vanish when the sun appears. 2. A sight of sin humbles. In the glass of the word the godly see their spots, and these are humbling spots. Lo, saith the soul, I can call nothing my own but sins and wants; this humbles. A humble sinner is in a better condition than a proud angel.

(2.) God's people are a willing people: Psal. cx. 3. 'A people of willingness:' love constrains them: they serve God freely, and out of choice. They stick at no service; they will run through a sea and a wilderness; they will follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

(3.) They are an heavenly people, stars, John xvii. 6. 'Ye are not of the world.' As the *primum mobile* in the heavens hath a motion of its own, contrary to the other orbs; so God's

people have an heavenly motion of soul, contrary to the men of the world : they use the world as their servant, but do not follow the world as their master, Phil. iii. 20. ' Our conversation is in heaven.' Such as have these three characters of God's people, have a good certificate to shew that they are pardoned. Forgiveness of sin belongs to them : ' comfort ye my people, tell them their iniquity is forgiven.'

8. A sign we are pardoned, if, after many storms, we have a sweet calm and peace within, Rom. v. 1. ' Being justified we have peace.' After many a bitter tear shed, and heart-breaking, the mind hath been more sedate, and a sweet serenity or still music hath followed ; this brings tidings, God is appeased : whereas before conscience did accuse, now it doth secretly whisper comfort : this is a blessed evidence a man's sins are pardoned. If the bailiffs do not trouble and arrest the debtor, it is a sign his debt is compounded or forgiven : so, if conscience do not vex or accuse, but upon good grounds whisper consolation, this is a sign the debt is discharged, the sin is forgiven.

9. A sign sin is forgiven, when we have hearts without guile, Psal. xxxii. 1, 2. ' Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.'

Qu. *What is this to be sine fuco, without guile ?*

1. He who is without guile, hath plannets of heart : he is without collusion, he hath not *corduplex*, a double heart ; his heart is right with God. A man may do a right action, but not with a right heart, 2 Chron. xxv. 2. ' Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart.' To have the heart right with God, is to serve God from a right principle, love ; by a right rule, the word ; to a right end, the glory of God.

2. An heart without guile dares not allow itself in the least sin ; he avoids secret sins. He dares not hide any sin, as Rachel did her father's images, under her, Gen. xxxi. 34. He knows God sees him, which is more than if men and angels did behold him. He avoids complexion-sins, Ps. xviii. 23. ' I was also upright before him, and kept myself from my iniquity.' As in the hive there is a master-bee, so in the heart there is a master-sin. An heart without guile takes the sacrificing knife of mortification, and runs it thro' his beloved sin.

3. An heart without guile desires to know the whole mind and will of God. An unsound heart is afraid of the light *lucifugo*, he is not willing to know his duty. A sincere soul faith, as Job xxxiv. 32. ' What I know not, teach thou me : ' Lord shew me what is my duty, and wherein I offend ; let me not sin for want of light, what I know not, teach thou me.

4. An heart without guile is uniform in religion : he hath

an equal eye to all God's commands. 1. He makes conscience of private duties; he worships God in his closet as well as in the temple. Jacob, when he was alone, wrestled with the angels, Gen. xxxii. 3, 4. So a Christian when he is alone, wrestles with God in prayer, and will not let him go till he hath blessed him. 2. He performs difficult duties, wherein the heart and spirit of religion lie, and which do cross flesh and blood: he is much in self-humbling and self-examining. *Utitur speculis magis quam per specillis*, Sen. He rather useth the looking-glass of the word to look into his own heart, than the broad spectacles of censure to spy the faults of others.

5. An heart without guile is true to God's interest. 1. He grieves to see it go ill with the church. Nehemiah, though the king's cup bearer, and wine so near, yet was sad when Zion's glory was eclipsed, Neh. ii. 3. Like the tree I have read of, if any of the leaves are cut, the rest of the leaves begin to shrink up themselves, and for a time to hang down the head; so a sincere soul, when God's church suffers, feels himself as it were touched in his own person. 2. He rejoiceth to see the cause of God get ground; to see truth triumph, piety lifts up his head, and the flowers of Christ's crown flourish. This is an heart without guile, it is loyal and true to God's interest.

6. An heart without guile is just in his dealings: as he is upright in his words, so he is upright in his weights. He makes conscience of the second table as well as the first: he is for equity as well as piety, 1 Thess. iv. 6. 'That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter.' A sincere heart thinks he may as well rob as defraud: his rule is 'to do to others what he would have them do to him,' Mat. vii. 12.

7. An heart without guile is true in his promises: his word is as good as his bond. If he hath made a promise, though it be to his prejudice, and doth entrench upon his profit, he will not go back. The hypocrite plays fast and loose, flees from his word; there is no more binding him with oaths and promises, than Samson could be bound with green withs, Judges xvi. 7. A sincere soul saith as Jephtha, Judges xi. 35. 'I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot go back.'

8. An heart without guile is faithful in his friendship: he is what he pretends; his heart goes along with his tongue, as a well-made dial goes with the sun. He cannot flatter and hate, commend and censure. Counterfeiting of love is hypocrisy. It is too usual to betray with a kiss, 2 Sam. xx. 9. 'Joab took Abner by the beard to kiss him, and smote him in the fifth rib that he died.' Many deceive with sugar words. Physicians use to judge of the health of the body by the tongue; if that look well, the body is in health: but we cannot judge of friendship by the tongue: the words may be full of honey, when the

heart hath the gall of malice : sure his heart is not true to God, who is treacherous to his friend. Thus you see what an heart without guile is ; now, to have such a heart is a sign sin is pardoned ; ‘ God will not impute sin to him in whose spirit there is no guile.’ What a blessed thing is this, not to have sin imputed ? If our sins be not imputed, it is as if we had no sin : sins remitted, are as if they had not been committed : this is the blessing belongs to a sincere soul, God imputes not iniquity to him in whose spirit is no guile.

9. He whose sins are forgiven, is willing to forgive others who have offended him, Eph. iv. 32. ‘ Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.’ An hypocrite will read, come to church, give alms, build hospitals, but cannot forgive wrongs, he will rather want forgiveness from God than he will forgive his enemies. A pardoned soul argues thus, hath God been so good to me, to forgive me my sins, and shall not I imitate him in this ? Hath he forgiven me pounds, and shall I not forgive pence. It is noted of Cranmer, *nihil oblivisci solet praeter injurias*, Cicero. He was of a forgiving spirit, and would do offices of love to them that had injured him ; like the sun, which having drawn up black vapours from the earth, returns them back in sweet showers.

By this touchstone we may try whether our sins are pardoned : we need not climb up into heaven to see whether our sins be forgiven, but let us look into our hearts ; are we of forgiving spirits ? Can we bury injuries, requite good for evil ? A good sign we are forgiven of God. If we can find all these things wrought in our souls, they are happy signs that our sins are pardoned, and are good letters testimonial to shew for heaven.

*Use 3. Consolation.* I shall open a box of cordials, and shew you some of the glorious privileges of a pardoned condition. This is a peculiar favour, it is a spring shut up, broached for none but the elect. The wicked may have forbearing mercy, but only an elect person hath forgiving mercy. Forgiveness of sin makes way for solid joy, Isa. xl. 1. ‘ Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God, speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem :’ or, as in the Hebrew, “ speak to her heart.”—What was this must cheer her heart ? ‘ Tell her that her iniquity is pardoned :’ if any thing would comfort her, the Lord knew it was this. When Christ would cheer the palsy man, Matth. ix. 2. ‘ Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.’ It was a greater comfort to have his sins forgiven, than to have his palsy healed. This made David put on his best clothes, and anoint himself, 2 Sam. xii. 20. It was strange his child was newly dead, and God had told him ‘ the sword shall not depart from his house ;’ yet now he sprueth up himself, he puts on his best clothes, and anoints himself : whence was this ? David

had heard good news: God sent him his pardon by Nathan the prophet, 2 Sam. xii. 13. 'The Lord hath put away thy sin.' This could not but revive his heart, and in token of joy, he anoints himself. Philo saith, it was an opinion of some of the philosophers, that among the heavenly spheres there was such sweet harmonious melody, that if the sound of it could reach our ears, it would affect us with wonder and delight. Sure he who is pardoned hath such a divine melody in his soul, as doth replenish him with infinite delight. When Christ had said to Mary Magdalene, 'thy sins are forgiven:' he presently adds, 'go in peace,' Luke vii. 50. More particularly,

1. *Comfort.* God looks upon a pardoned soul, as if he had never sinned. As the cancelling a bond nulls the bond, and makes it as if the money had never been owing, forgiving sin makes it not to be. Where sin is remitted, it is as if it had not been committed, Jer. i. 20. So that, as Rachel wept because her children were not, so a child of God may rejoice because his sins are not. God looks upon him as if he had never offended: though sin remain in him after pardon, yet God doth not look upon him as a sinner, but as a just man.

2. *Comfort.* God having pardoned sin, will pass an act of oblivion, Jer. xxxi. 34. 'I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.' When a Creditor hath crossed the book, he doth not call for the book again. God will not reckon with the sinner in a judicial way. When our sins are laid upon the head of Christ, our scape-goat, they are carried into a land of forgetfulness.

3. *Comfort.* The pardoned soul is for ever secured from the wrath of God. How terrible is God's wrath? Ps. xc. 11. 'Who knows the power of thine anger?' If a spark of God's wrath when it lights upon a man's conscience, fills it with such horror (as in the case of Spira) then, what is it to be always scorching in that torrid zone, to lie upon beds of flames? Now, from this avenging wrath of God every pardoned soul is freed: though he may taste of the bitter cup of affliction, yet he shall never drink of the sea of God's wrath, Rom. v. 9. 'Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath thro' him.' Christ's blood quencheth the flames of hell.

4. *Comfort.* Sin being pardoned, conscience hath no more authority to accuse. Conscience roars against the unpardoned sinner, but it hath nothing to do to terrify or accuse him that is pardoned. God hath discharged the sinner, and if the creditor discharge the debtor, what hath the serjeant to do to arrest him? The truth is, if God absolve, conscience, if rightly informed, absolves; if once God saith thy sins are pardoned, conscience saith, 'go in peace.' If the sky be clear, and no storms blow there, then the sea is calm; if all be clear above,

and God shine with pardoning mercy upon the soul, then conscience is calm and serene.

5. *Comfort.* Nothing that befalls a pardoned soul shall hurt him, Ps. xci. 10. 'No evil shall touch thee;' that is, no destructive evil. Every thing to a wicked man is hurtful. Good things are for his hurt. His very blessings are turned into a curse, Mal. ii. 2. 'I will curse your blessings.' Riches and prosperity do him hurt. They are not *munera*, but *infidia*, Sen. 'Gold snares,' Eccl. v. 12. 'Riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.' Like Haman's banquet, which did usher in his funeral. Ordinances do a sinner hurt; they are a 'favour of death,' 2 Cor. ii. 16. Cordials themselves kill. The best things hurt the wicked, but the worst things which befall a pardoned soul shall do him no hurt: the sting, the poison, the curse is gone; his soul is no more hurt, than David hurt Saul, when he cut off the lap of his garment.

6. To a pardoned soul, every thing hath a commission to do him good. Affliction shall do him good; 'poverty, reproach, persecution,' Gen. l. 20. 'Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good.' As the elements, though of contrary qualities, yet God hath so tempered them, that they work for the good of the universe; so the most cross providences shall work for good to a pardoned soul. Correction shall be a corrosive to eat out sin; it shall cure the swelling of pride, the fever of lust, the dropsy of avarice. It shall be a refining fire to purify grace, and make it sparkle as gold. Every cross providence, to a pardoned soul, shall be like Paul's Euroclydon or cross wind, Acts xxvii. which though it broke the ship, yet Paul was brought to shore upon the broken pieces.

7. A pardoned soul is not only exempted from wrath, but invested with dignity; as Joseph was not only freed from prison, but advanced to be second man in the kingdom.

A pardoned soul is made a favourite of heaven. A king may pardon a traitor, but will not make him one of his privy-council; but whom God pardons, he receives into favour. I may say to him, as the angel to the virgin Mary, Luke i. 30. 'Thou hast found favour with God.' Hence such as are forgiven, are said to be 'crowned with loving-kindness,' Ps. ciii. 3, 4. Whom God pardons he crowns. Whom God absolves, he marries himself to, Jer. iii. 12. 'I am merciful, and I will not keep anger for ever:' there is forgiveness; and in the 14th verse, 'I am married to you:' and he who is matched into the crown of heaven, is as rich as the angels, as rich as heaven can make him.

8. Sin being pardoned, we may come with humble boldness to God in prayer, guilt makes us afraid to go to God. Adam having sinned, Gen. iii. 10. 'I was afraid, and hid myself.'



Guilt clips the wings of prayer, it fills the face with blushing : but forgiveness breeds confidence : we may look upon God as a Father of mercy, holding forth a golden sceptre : he that hath got his pardon, can look upon his prince with comfort.

9. Forgiveness of sin makes our services acceptable ; God takes all we do in good part. A guilty person, nothing he doth pleaseth God. His prayer is ‘ turned into sin ;’ but when sin is pardoned, now God accepts our offering. We read of Joshua standing before the angel of the Lord : ‘ Joshua was cloathed with filthy garments,’ Zech. iii. 3. That is, he was guilty of divers sins : now, saith the Lord, ver. 5. ‘ Take away his filthy garments, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee ;’ and then he stood and ministered before the Lord, and his services were accepted.

10. Forgiveness of sin is the sauce which sweetens all the comforts of this life. As guilt embitters our comforts, it puts wormwood into our cup ; so, pardon of sin sweetens all, it is like sugar to wine. Health and pardon, estate and pardon relish well. Pardon of sin gives a sanctified title, and a delicious taste to every comfort. As Naaman said to Gehazi, 2 Kings v. 23. ‘ Take two talents ;’ so saith God to the pardoned soul, take two talents, take the venison, and take a blessing with it ; take the oil in the cruse, and take my love with it : ‘ take two talents.’ It is observable, Christ joins these two together, ‘ Give us our daily bread, forgive us our trespasses :’ as if Christ would teach us, there is little comfort in daily bread, unless sin be forgiven. Forgiveness doth perfume and drop sweetness into every earthly enjoyment.

11. If sin be forgiven, God will never upbraid us with our former sins. When the prodigal came home to his father, the father received him into his loving embraces, and never mentioned his former luxury, or spending his estate among harlots : so God will not upbraid us with former sins ; nay, he will entirely love us, we shall be his jewels, and he will put us in his bosom. Mary Magdalene, a pardoned penitent, after Christ arose, he appeared first to her, Mark xvi. 9. so far was Christ from upbraiding her, that he brings her the first news of his resurrection.

12. Sin being pardoned, is a pillar of support in the loss of dear friends. God hath taken away thy child, thy husband ; but withal he hath taken away thy sins. He hath given thee more than he hath taken away ; he hath taken away a flower, and given thee a jewel. He hath given thee Christ and the Spirit, and the earnest of glory. He hath given thee more than he hath taken away.

13. Where God pardons sins, he bestows righteousness. With remission of sin goes imputation of righteousness, Isa. lxi.

10. 'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.' If a Christian can take any comfort in his inherent righteousness, which is so stained and mixed with sin, O then what comfort may he take in Christ's righteousness, which is a better righteousness than that of Adam? Adam's righteousness was mutable; but suppose it had been unchangeable, yet it was but the righteousness of a man: but that righteousness which is imputed, is the righteousness of him who is God, 2 Cor. v. 21. 'That we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' O blessed privilege, to be reputed, in the sight of God, righteous as Christ, having his embroidered robe put upon the soul! this is the comfort of every one that is pardoned, he hath a perfect righteousness; and now God saith of him, 'thy art all fair, my love, and there is no spot in thee,' Cant. iv. 7.

14. A pardoned soul needs not fear death. He may look on death with joy, who can look on forgiveness with faith. To a pardoned soul death hath lost his sting. Death, to a pardoned sinner, is like the arresting a man after the debt is paid, death may arrest, but Christ will shew the debt-book crossed in his blood. A pardoned soul may triumph over death, 'O death, where is thy sting! O grave where is thy victory!' he who is pardoned needs not fear death, it is not a destruction, but a deliverance: it is to him a day of jubilee or release, it releaseth him from all his sins. Death comes to a pardoned soul, as the angel did to Peter, it smote him and beat off his chains, and carried him out of prison; so doth death to him who is pardoned, it smites his body, and the chains of sin fall off. Death gives a pardoned soul a *quietus est*, it frees him from all his labours, Rev. xiv. 13. *Felix transitus a labore ad requiem*, Bern. Death, as it will wipe off our tears, so it will wipe off our sweat. Death will do a pardoned Christian the greatest good turn, therefore it is made a part of the inventory, 1 Cor. iii. 22. 'Death is yours.' Death is like the waggon which was sent for old Jacob, it came rattling with its wheels, but it was to carry Jacob to his son Joseph; so the wheels of death's chariot may rattle, and make a noise, but they are to carry a believer to Christ. While a believer is here, he is absent from the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 6. He lives far from court, and cannot see him whom his soul loves: but death gives him a sight of the King of glory, 'in whose presence is fulness of joy.' To a pardoned soul, death is *transitus ad regnum*; it removes him to the place of bliss, where he shall hear the triumphs and anthems of praise sung in the choir of angels. No cause hath a pardoned soul to fear death; what needs he fear to have his body buried in the earth, who hath his sins buried in Christ's wounds? What hurt can death do to him? It is but his ferry-man to ferry him over

to the land of promise. The day of death to a pardoned soul, is his ascension day to heaven, his coronation-day, when he shall be crowned with those delights of paradise, which are unspeakable and full of glory. Thus you see the rich consolations which belong to a pardoned sinner; well might David proclaim him blessed, Psal. xxxii. 1. ‘Blessed is he whose iniquity is forgiven;’ in the Hebrew it is in the plural, blessednesses. Here is a plurality of blessings. Forgiveness of sin is like the first link of a chain, which draws all the links after it; it draws these fourteen privileges after it; it crowns with grace and glory. Who then would not labour to have his sins forgiven? ‘Blessed is he whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered.’

Now follow the duties of such as have their sins forgiven.—Mercy calls for duty. Be much in praise and doxology, Psal. ciii.

1. ‘Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thy iniquities.’ Hath God crowned you with pardoning mercy, set the crown of your praise upon the head of free grace. Pardon of sin is a discriminating mercy, a jewel hung only upon the elect: this calls for acclamation of praise. You will give thanks for ‘daily bread,’ and will you not much more for pardon? You will give thanks for deliverance from sickness, and will you not from deliverance from hell? God hath done more for you in forgiving your sin, than if he had given you a kingdom. And that you may be more thankful, do but set the unpardoned condition before your eyes: how sad is it to want a pardon? All the curses of the law stand in full force against such an one. The unpardoned sinner dying, he drops into the grave and hell both at once; he must quarter among the damned; and will not this make you thankful, that this is not your condition, but that you are ‘delivered from the wrath to come?’

2. Let God’s pardoning love inflame your hearts with love to God. For God to pardon freely without any desert of yours, to pardon so many offences, that he should pardon you and pass by others; that he should take you out of the ruins of mankind, and of a clod of dust and sin, make you a jewel sparkling with heavenly glory; will not this make you love God much? Three prisoners that deserve to die, if the king pardon one of these, and leave the other two to the severity of the law, will not he that is pardoned love his prince, who hath been so full of clemency? How should our hearts be endeared in love to God? The schoolmen distinguish of a twofold love, *amor gratuitous*, a love of bounty; that is, God’s love to us in forgiving; and *amor debitus*, a love of duty; that is, our love to God by way of retaliation. We should shew our love by admiring God, by

sweetly solacing ourselves in him, and binding ourselves to him in a perpetual covenant.

3. Let the sense of God's love in forgiving, make you more cautious and fearful of sin for the future, Pl. cxxx. 4. 'There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared.' O fear to offend this God, who hath been so gracious to you in forgiving. If a friend hath done a kindness for us, we will not disoblige him, or abuse his love. After Nathan had told David, 'The Lord hath put away thy sin : ' how tender was David's conscience? How fearful was he of staining his soul with the guilt of more blood? Pl. li. 14. 'Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God.' Men committing gross sins after pardon, God changeth his carriage towards them, he turns his smile into a frown; they lie, as Jonah, in the 'belly of hell : ' God's wrath falls into their conscience, as a drop of scalding lead into the eye; the promises are as a fountain sealed, not a drop of comfort comes from them. O Christians, do you not remember what it cost you before to get your pardon? how long it was before your 'broken bones' were set; and will you again venture to sin? You may be in such a condition, that you may question whether you belong to God or not; though God doth not damn you he may send you to hell in this life.

4. If God hath given you good hope that you are pardoned, walk cheerfully, Rom. v. 11. 'We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement.' 'Who should rejoice, if not he that hath his pardon? God rejoiceth when he shews us mercy; and should not we rejoice when we receive mercy? In the saddest times a pardoned soul may rejoice. Afflictions have a commission to do him good, every cross wind of providence shall blow him nearer to the haven of glory. Christian, God hath pulled off your prison fetters, and clothed you with the robe of righteousness, and crowned you with loving-kindness, and yet art thou sad, Rom. v. 2. 'We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' Can the wicked rejoice who have only a short reprieve from hell, and not they who have a full pardon sealed?

5. Hath God pardoned you? do all the service you can for God, 1 Cor. xv. 58. 'Always abounding in the work of the Lord.' Let your head study for God, let your hands work for him, let your tongue be the organ of his praise. Paul got his pardon, 1 Tim. i. 16. 'I obtained mercy : ' and this was as the oil to the wheels it made him move faster in obedience, 1 Cor. xv. 10. 'I laboured more abundantly than they all.' Paul's obedience did not move slow, as the sun on the dial: but swiftly, as the sun in the firmament. 'He did spend, and was spent for Christ : ' The pardoned soul thinks he can never love God enough, or serve him enough.

The last thing is to lay down some rules or directions, how we may obtain forgiveness of sin.

1. We must take heed of mistakes about pardon of sin.

*1st* Mistake, that our sins are pardoned, when they are not.

Qu. *Whence is this mistake?*

*Ans.* From two grounds.

1. Because God is merciful.

*Ans.* God's being merciful, shews, that a man's sins are pardonable. But there is a great deal of difference between sins pardonable and sins pardoned; thy sins may be pardonable, yet not pardoned. Though God be merciful, yet who is God's mercy for? Not for the presuming sinner but the repenting sinner. Such as go on in sin, cannot lay claim to it. God's mercy is like the ark, none but the priests, might touch the ark; none but such as are spiritual priests, sacrificing their sins, may touch this ark of God's mercy.

2. Because Christ died for their sins, therefore they are forgiven.

*Ans.* That Christ died for remission of sin is true; but, that therefore all have remission is false; then Judas should be forgiven. Remission is limited to believers, Acts xiii. 39. 'By him all that believe are justified;' but all do not believe: some slight and trample Christ's blood under foot, Heb. x. 29. So that, notwithstanding Christ's death, all are not pardoned. Take heed of this dangerous mistake. Who will seek after pardon, that thinks he hath it already?

*2d. Mistake,* That pardon is easy to be had; it is but a sigh, or Lord have mercy: but, how dearly hath pardon cost them who have obtained it? How long was it ere David's broken bones were set? Happy are we, if we have the pardon of sin sealed, though at the very last hour: but, why do men think pardon of sin so easy to be obtained? Their sins are but small, therefore venial. The devil holds the small end of the perspective glass before their eyes. But, *First*, There is no sin small, being against a Deity. Why is he punished with death that clips the king's coin, or defaceth his statue, but because it is an abuse offered to the person of the king? *Secondly*, little sins, when multiplied become great; a little sum when multiplied, comes to millions. What is less than a grain of sand, but, when the sand is multiplied what heavier? *Thirdly*, thy sins cost no small price. View thy sins in the glass of Christ's sufferings: Christ did veil his glory, lose his joy and pour out his soul an offering for the least sin. *Fourthly*, little sins unrepented of, will damn thee, as well as greater. Not only great rivers fall into the sea, but little brooks; not only greater sins carry men to hell, but lesser; therefore do not think pardon easy, because sin is small, beware of mistakes.

2. The second means for pardon of sin, is, see yourselves guilty ; come to God as condemned men, 1 Kings xx. 22. ' They put ropes upon their heads and came to the king of Israel.' Let us come to God in profound humility : say not thus, Lord, my heart is good, and my life blameless : God hates this. Lie in the dust, be covered with sackcloth ; say as the centurion, Mat. viii. 8. ' Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come, under my roof ;' I deserve not the least smile from heaven. ' This is the way for pardon.

3. The third means for pardon is, hearty confession of sin, Ps. xxxii. 5. ' I confessed my sin, and thou forgavest me.' Would we have God cover our sins, we must discover them, 1 John i. 9. ' If we confess our sins, he is just to forgive them.' One would have thought it should have run thus, if we confess our sins he is merciful to forgive them ; nay, but he is just to forgive them. Why just ? Because he hath bound himself by a promise to forgive an humble confessor of sin. *Cum accusat, excusat* ; Tertul. When we accuse ourselves, God absolves us. We are apt to hide our sins, Job xxxi. 33. Which is as great a folly as for one to hide his disease from the physician ; but when we open our sins to God by confessing, he opens his mercy to us by forgiving.

4. Means for pardon, found repentance : repentance and remission are put together, Luke xxiv. 47. There is a promise of a fountain opened for the washing away the guilt of sin, Zech. xiii. 1. But see what goes before, Zech. xii. 20. ' They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him,' Isa. i. 16. ' Wash ye, make ye clean ;' that is, wash in the waters of repentance ; and then follows a promise of forgiveness, ' though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.' It is easy to turn white into scarlet, but not so easy to turn scarlet into white : yet, upon repentance, God hath promised to make the scarlet sinner of a milk-white whiteness.

*Caution.* Not that repentance merits pardon, but it prepares for it. We set our seal on the wax when it melts : God seals his pardons on melting hearts.

5. Means, faith in the blood of Christ. It is Christ's blood washeth away sin, Rev. i. 6. But this blood will not wash away sin, unless it be applied by faith. The apostle speaks of the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, 1 Pet. i. 2. Many are not pardoned, though Christ's blood be shed, because it is not sprinkles : now it is faith that sprinkles Christ's blood on the soul, for the remission of sin. As Thomas put his hands into Christ's sides, John xx. 27. So faith puts its hand into Christ's wounds, and takes of the blood and sprinkles it upon the conscience, for the washing away of guilt. Hence in scripture, we are said to obtain pardon through faith, Acts xiii. 39. ' By him

all that believe are justified,' Luke vii. 48. 'Thy sins are forgiven.' Whence was this, *ver* 56 'Thy faith hath saved thee.' O let us labour for faith : Christ is a propitiation or atonement to take away sin ; but how ? 'Through faith in his blood.' Rom. iii. 25.

6. Means, pray much for pardon, Hof. xiv. 2. 'Take away all iniquity,' Luke xviii. 13. 'The Publican smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.' And the text faith, 'He went away justified.' Many pray for health, riches, children ; but Christ hath taught us what to pray for chiefly, *Remitte nobis debita nostra* ; 'Forgive us our sins.' And be earnest suiters for pardon, consider what guilt of sin is ; it binds one over to the wrath of God ; better thy house were haunted with devils, than thy soul with guilt. He who is in the bond of iniquity, must needs be in the gall of bitterness, Acts viii. 23. A guilty soul wears Cain's mark, which was a trembling at the heart, and a shaking in his flesh ; guilt makes the sinner afraid, lest every trouble he meets with should arrest him, and bring him to judgment. If guilt be so dismal, and breed such convulsion-fits in the conscience, how earnest should we be in prayer, that God would remove this guilt, and so earnest, as to resolve to take no denial ! Plead hard with God for pardon, as a man would plead with a judge for his life. Fall upon thy knees, say, Lord, hear one word. Why may God say, what canst thou say for thyself, that thou shouldest not die ? Lord I can say but little, but I put in my surety, Christ will answer for me ; O look upon that blood which speaks better things than that of Abel ; Christ is my priest, his blood is my sacrifice, his divine nature is my altar. As Rahab was to shew the scarlet thread in the window, and when Joshua saw it, he did not destroy her, Josh. ii. 18, 21. and vi. 22, 23. So shew the Lord the scarlet thread of Christ's blood, and that is the way to have mercy. But, will God say, why should I pardon thee, thou hast nowise obliged me ? But, Lord pardon me, because thou hast promised it ; I urge thy covenant. When a man is to die by the law, he calls for his book ; so say, Lord let me have the benefit of my book : thy word faith, 'If the sinner forsake his evil way thou wilt pardon abundantly,' Isa. xliii. 25. Lord, I have forsaken my sin, let me therefore have mercy ; I plead the benefit of the book. But for whose sake should I pardon ? Thou canst not deserve it, Lord, for thy own name's sake : thou hast said, thou wilt blot out sin, for thy own name's sake, Isa. xliii. 25. 'It will be no eclipsing to thy crown : how will thy mercy shine forth, and all thy other attributes ride in triumph, if thou shalt pardon me ! Thus plead with God in prayer, and resolve not to give him over till thy pardon be sealed. God cannot deny importunity ; he delights in mercy. As the mother, faith Chry-

softom, delights to have her breast milked, so God delights to milk out the breast of mercy to the sinner. These means being used will procure this great blessedness, the forgiveness of sin. Thus I have done with the first part of this fifth petition, 'Forgive us our sins;' I come to the second part of the petition 'As we forgive our debtors.'



MATTH. vi. 12. *As we forgive our debtors: Or, as we forgive them that trespass against us.*

I PROCEED to the second part of the petition, 'As we forgive them that trespass against us.'

*As we forgive.* This word, As, is not a note of equality, but similitude; not that we equal God in forgiving, but imitate him.

This great duty of forgiving others, is a crossing the stream; 'tis contrary to flesh and blood. Men forget kindnesses, but remember injuries. But it is an indispensable duty to forgive; we are not bound to trust an enemy; but we are bound to forgive him. We are naturally prone to revenge. Revenge (saith Homer) is sweet as dropping honey. The heathen philosophers held revenge lawful. *Ulcisci te laceffitus potes*, Cicero. But we learn better things out of the oracles of scripture, Mark xi. 25. 'When ye stand praying, forgive.' Mat. v. 44. Col. iii. 13. 'If a man hath a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.'

Qu. 1. *How can we forgive others, when it is only God forgives sin?*

Ans. In every breach of the second table, there are two things; an offence against God, and a trespass against man: so far as it is an offence against God, he only can forgive; but so far as it is a trespass against man, so we may forgive.

Qu. 2. *When do we forgive others?*

Ans. When we strive against all thoughts of revenge; if it be in our power to do our enemies mischief, we will not; we wish well to them, grieve at their calamities, we pray for them, we seek reconciliation with them, we shew ourselves ready on all occasions to relieve them: this is gospel-forgiving.

Obj. 1. *But I have been much injured and abused, and to put it up will be a stain to my reputation.*

Ans. 1. To pass by an injury without revenge, is no eclipsing one's credit; the scripture saith, Prov. xix. 11. 'It is the glory of a man to pass over a transgression.' 'Tis more honour to bury an injury, than revenge it: wrathfulness denotes weakness; a noble heroic spirit overlooks a petty offence.



2. Suppose a man's credit should be impaired with those whose censure is not to be valued ; yet consider the folly of challenging another to a duel, 'tis little wisdom for a man to redeem his credit by losing his life, and to run to hell to be counted val-  
lorous.

Obj. 2. *But the wrong he hath done me is great.*

Ans. But thy not forgiving him is a greater wrong ; he in injuring thee hath offended against a man, but thou in not forgiving him offendest against God.

Obj. 3. *But if I forgive one injury, I shall occasion more.*

Ans. If the more injuries thou forgiveest, the more thou meetest with, this will make thy grace shine the more. Often forgiving will add more to the weight of his sin, and to the weight of thy glory. If any say, I strive to excel in other graces, but as for this of forgiving, I cannot do it, I desire in this to be excused ; what dost thou talk of other graces ? the graces are *inter se connexæ*, linked and chained together ; where there is one, there is all : he that cannot forgive, his grace is counterfeit, his faith is fancy, his devotion is hypocrisy.

Qu. 3. *But suppose another hath wronged me in my estate, may not I go to law for my debt ?*

Ans. Yes, else what use were there of law-courts ? God hath set judges to decide cases in law, and to give every one his right. It is with going to law, as it is with going to war ; when the just rights of a nation are invaded, here it is lawful to go to war : so, when a man's estate is trespassed upon by another, he may go to law to recover it. But the law must be used in the last place, when no entreaties or arbitrations will prevail, then the chancery must decide it. Yet this is no revenge, it is not so much to injure another, as to right one's self ; this may be, yet one may live in charity.

Use 1. Here is a bill of indictment against such as study revenge, and cannot put up the least discourtesy. They would have God forgive them, but they will not forgive others : they will pray, come to church, give alms ; but, as Christ said, Mark x. 21. ' Yet lackest thou one thing ; ' they lack a forgiving spirit, they will rather want forgiveness from God, than they will forgive their brother. How sad is it, that, for every slight wrong, or disgraceful word, men should let malice boil in their hearts ? would there be so many duels, arrests, murders, if men had the art of forgiving ? Revenge is the proper sin of the devil ; he is no drunkard, or adulterer, but this old serpent is full of the poison of malice : and what shall we say to them who make profession of religion, yet, instead of forgiving, pursue others despitefully ? it was prophesied, the ' wolf should dwell with the lamb,' Isa. xi. 6. But what shall we say, when such as profess to be lambs become wolves ; These open the mouths of the

profane against religion ; they will say, these are as full of rancour as any. O whither is love and mercy fled ? If the Son of man did come, should he find charity on the earth ? I fear but little. Such as but cherish anger and malice in their hearts, and will not forgive, how can they pray, ' Forgive us, as we forgive others ? ' Either they must omit this petition (as Chrysostom saith, some did in his time) or else they pray against themselves.

*Use 2.* Let it persuade us all, as ever we hope for salvation, to pass by petty injuries and discourtesies, and labour to be of forgiving spirits, Col. iii. 13. ' Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another.'

Herein we resemble God. He is ready to forgive, Ps. lxxxvi. 5. He befriends his enemies ; he opens his hand to relieve them, who open their mouths against him. It was Adam's pride to go to resemble God in omniscience : but here it is lawful to resemble God in forgiving enemies : this is a God-like disposition ; and what is godliness but God-likeness ?

2. To forgive is one of the highest evidences of grace. When grace comes into the heart, it makes a man, as Caleb, of another spirit, Numb. xiv. 24. It makes a great metamorphosis, it sweetens the heart, and fills it with love and candour. When a scion is grafted into a stock, it partakes of the nature and sap of the tree, and brings forth the same fruit ; take a crab, graft it into a pepin, it brings forth the same fruit as the pepin ; so he who was once of a sour crabby disposition, given to revenge, when he is once ingrafted into Christ, he partakes of the sap of this heavenly olive, and bears sweet and generous fruit : he is full of love to his enemies, and requites good for evil. As the sun draws up many thick noxious vapours from the earth, and returns them in sweet showers : so a gracious heart returns the unkindnesses of others, with the sweet influences of love and mercifulness, Psal. xxxv. 13. ' They rewarded me evil for good : but as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth, I humbled my soul with fasting.' This is a good certificate to shew for heaven.

3. The blessed example of our Lord Jesus ; he was of a forgiving spirit : his enemies reviled him, but he did pity them, their words were more bitter than the gall and vinegar they gave him, but Christ's words were smoother than oil ; they spat upon him, pierced him with the spear and nails, but he prayed for them, ' Father, forgive them : ' he wept over his enemies, he shed tears for them that shed his blood : never such a pattern of amazing kindness. Christ bids us learn of him, Mat. xi. 29. he doth not bid us learn of him to work miracles, but he would have us learn of him to forgive our enemies. If we do not imitate Christ's life, we cannot be saved by his death.

4. The danger of an implacable unforgiving spirit : it hinders the efficacy of ordinances ; it is like an obstruction in the body, which keeps it from thriving. A revengeful spirit poisons our sacrifice ; our prayers are turned into sin : will God receive prayer mingled with this strange fire ? Our coming to the sacrament is sin, we come not in charity ; so that ordinances are turned into sin. It were sad if all the meat one did eat should turn to poison ; malice poisons the sacramental cup, men eat and drink their own damnation : Judas came to the passover in malice, and after the sop Satan entered, John xiii. 27.

5. God hath tied his mercy to this condition, if we do not forgive, neither will he forgive us, Mat. vi. 15. ‘ If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.’ A man may as well go to hell, for not forgiving, as for not believing. How can they expect mercy from God, whose bowels are shut up, and are merciless to their trespassing brethren ? James ii. 13. ‘ He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy. I cannot forgive, said one, though I go to hell.

6. The examples of the saints, who have been of forgiving spirits. Joseph forgave his brethren, though they put him into a pit, and sold him, Gen. l. 21. ‘ Fear not, I will nourish you, and your little ones.’ Stephen prayed for his persecutors. Moses was of a forgiving spirit ; how many injuries and affronts did he put up ; The people of Israel dealt unkindly with him, they murmured against him at the waters of Marah, (the water was not so bitter as their spirits) but he fell to prayer for them, Exod. xv. 25. ‘ He cried unto the Lord, and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, they were made sweet.’ When they wanted water, they fell a-chiding with Moses, Exod. xvii. 3. ‘ Why hast thou brought us out of Egypt, to kill us with thirst ?’ As if they had said, if we die, we will lay our death to thy charge ; here was enough to have made Moses call for fire from heaven upon them, but he passeth by this injury, and, to shew he forgave them, he becomes an intercessor for them, *ver.* 4. and set the rock a broach for them, *ver.* 5. The prophet Elijah feasted his enemies, 2 Kings vi. 23. he prepared a table for them who would have prepared his grave. Cranmer was famous for forgiving injuries. When Luther had reviled Calvin, *Etiamsi milies me diabolus vocet* ; Though he call me a devil a thousand times, yet I will love and honour him as a precious servant of Christ. When one had abused and wronged a Christian, asking him what wonders hath your master Christ wrought ? saith he, he hath wrought this wonder, that though you have so injured me, yet I can forgive you, and pray for you.

7. Forgiving and requitting good for evil, is the best way to

conquer and melt the heart of an enemy. Saul having pursued David with malice, and hunted him as a partridge upon the mountains, yet David would not do him mischief when it was in his power. David's kindness melted Saul's heart, 1 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17. 'Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice and wept, and said, 'Thou art more righteous than I, for thou hast rewarded me good.' This forgiving is heaping coals, which melts the enemy's heart, Rom. xii. 20. This is the most noble victory, to overcome an enemy without striking a blow, to conquer him with love. Philip of Macedonia, when it was told him that one Nicanor did openly rail against him, the king instead of putting him to death, sent him a rich present; which did so overcome the man, and made his heart relent, that he went up and down to recant what he had said against the king, and did highly extol the king's clemency.

8. Forgiving others is the way to have forgiveness from God, and is a sign of forgiveness.

(1.) It is the way to have forgiveness, Matth. vi. 14. 'If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.' But one would think other things should sooner procure forgiveness from God, than our forgiving others: no surely, nothing like this to procure forgiveness; for all other acts of religion may have leaven in them. God forbade leaven in the sacrifice, Exod. xxxiv. 25. One may give alms, yet there may be the leaven of vain glory in this; the Pharisees sounded a trumpet, they did not give alms, but fell them for applause, Matth. vi. 2. One may give his body to be burned, yet there may be leaven in this, it may be a false zeal; there may be leaven in many acts of religion, which fours the whole lump: but to forgive others that have offended us, this can have no leaven in it, no sinister aim; this is a duty wholly spiritual, and is done purely out of love to God; hence it is, God rather annexeth forgiveness to this than to the highest and most renowned works of charity, which are so cried up in the world.

(2.) It is a sign of God's forgiving us. It is not a cause of God's forgiving us, but a sign: we need not climb up into heaven, to see whether our sins are forgiven; let us look into our hearts, and see if we can forgive others. Then we need not doubt but God hath forgiven us; our loving others is nothing but the reflection of God's love to us: Oh therefore, by all these arguments, let us be persuaded to the forgiving others. Christians, how many offences hath God passed by in us? our sins are innumerable and heinous: is God willing to forgive us so many offences, and cannot we forgive a few? No man can do so much wrong to us all our life, as we do to God in one day.

*Qu. But how must we forgive?*

*Ans.* As God forgives us.

1. Cordially. God doth not only make a shew of forgiveness, and keep our sins by him ; but doth really forgive, he passeth an act of oblivion, Jer. xxxi. 34. So we must not only say, we forgive, but do it with the heart, Mat. xviii. 35. ‘ If ye from your hearts forgive not.’

2. God forgives fully ; he forgives all our sins. He doth not for fourscore write down fifty, Pl. ciii. 3. ‘ Who forgiveth all thy iniquities.’ Hypocrites pass by some offences, but retain others. Would we have God deal so with us to remit only some trespasses, and call us to account for the rest ?

3. God forgives often ; we run afresh upon the score, but God multiplies pardon, Isa. lvii. 7. Peter asks the question, Matth. xviii. 21. ‘ Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him ? Till seven times ? Jesus saith to him, I say not, until seven times, but, until seventy times seven.’ If he say, I repent, you must say, I remit.

Qu. *But this is one of the highest acts of religion, flesh and blood cannot do it : how shall I attain to it ?*

Ans. 1. Let us consider, how many wrongs and injuries we have done against God : what volume can hold our *errata* ? Our sins are more than the sparks in a furnace.

2. If we would forgive, see God’s hand in all that men do or say against us. Did we look higher than instruments, our hearts would grow calm, and we should not meditate revenge. Shimei reproached David and cursed ; David looked higher, 2 Sam. xvi. 11. ‘ Let him alone, let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him.’ What made Christ, that when he was reviled he reviled not again ? He looked beyond Judas and Pilate, he saw his Father putting the bitter cup into his hand : and as we must see God’s hand in all the affronts and incivilities we receive from men, so we must believe God will do us good by all, if we belong to him, 2 Sam. xvi. 12. ‘ It may be the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day.’ *Quisquis detraxit famæ meæ addet mercedi meæ*, Aug. He that injures me shall add to my reward ; he that clips my name to make it weigh lighter, shall make my crown weigh heavier. Well might Stephen pray for his enemies, ‘ Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,’ Acts vii. 60. He knew they did but increase his glory in heaven ; every stone his enemies threw at him, added a pearl to his crown.

3. Lay up a stock of faith, Luke xvii. 4. ‘ If thy brother trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again unto thee, and say, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.’ And the apostle said to the Lord, ‘ increase our faith ;’ as if they had said, We can never do this without a great deal of faith ; Lord, increase our faith. Believe God hath pardoned

you, and you will pardon others; only faith can throw dust upon injuries, and bury them in the grave of forgetfulness.

4. Think how thou hast sometimes wronged others; and may it not be just with God that the same measure you mete to others, should be measured to you again? Hast thou not wronged others, if not in their goods, yet in their name? If thou hast not borne false witness against them, yet perhaps thou hast spoken falsely of them: the consideration of this may make Christians bury injuries in silence.

5. Get humble hearts. A proud man thinks it a disgrace to put up an injury. What causeth so many duels and murders but pride? ‘Be clothed with humility,’ Pet. v. 5. He who is low in his own eyes, will not be troubled much though others lay him low: he knows there is a day coming, where there shall be a resurrection of names as well as bodies, and God will avenge him of his adversaries, Luke xviii. 7. ‘And shall not God avenge his own elect?’ The humble soul leaves all his wrongs to God to requite, who hath said, ‘Vengeance is mine,’ Rom. xii. 19.

*Use*, of comfort. Such as forgive, God will forgive them. You have a good argument to plead with God for forgiveness. Lo, I am willing to forgive him who makes me no satisfaction, and wilt not thou forgive me who hast received satisfaction in Christ my surety. So ends the fifth petition.

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## OF THE SIXTH PETITION IN THE LORD’S PRAYER.

MATTH. vi. 13. *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

THIS petition consists of two parts. *First*, Deprecatory, ‘Lead us not into temptation.’ *Secondly*, Petitory, ‘but deliver us from evil.’

*First*, ‘Lead us not into temptation.’ Doth God lead into temptation? God tempts no man to sin, James i. 13. ‘Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God tempteth not any man.’ God doth permit sin, but doth not promote it. He who is an encourager of holiness cannot be a patron of sin. God doth not tempt to that which he hath an antipathy against. What king will tempt his subjects to break those laws which he himself hath established.

Qu. *But is it not said, God tempted Abraham?* Gen. xxii. 1.

Ans. Tempting there was no more than trying. God tried Abraham’s faith, as a goldsmith tries gold in the fire: but there