

SERMON I.

*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no guile.*—Ps. XXXII. 1, 2.

THE title of this psalm is ‘A psalm of instruction,’ and so called because David was willing to show them the way to happiness from his own experience. Surely no lesson is so needful to be learned as this. We all would be happy: the good and bad, that do so seldom agree in anything, yet agree in this, a desire to be happy. Now, happy we cannot be but in God, who is the only, immutable, eternal, and all-sufficient good, which satisfies and fills up all the capacities and desires of our souls. And we are debarred from access to him by sin, which hath made a breach and separation between him and us, and till that be taken away there can be no converse, and sin can only be taken away by God’s pardon upon Christ’s satisfaction. God’s pardon is clearly asserted in my text, but Christ’s satisfaction and righteousness must be supplied out of other scriptures, as that 2 Cor. v. 19, ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.’ Where the apostle clearly shows that not imputing transgressions is the effect of God’s grace in Christ. And we do no wrong to this text to take it in here; for the apostle, citing this scripture Rom. iv. 6, 7, tells us, that ‘David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, when he saith, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.’

In the words you have:—

1. An emphatical setting forth of a great and blessed privilege; that is, pardon of sin.

2. A description of the persons who shall enjoy it: *in whose spirit there is no guile.*

The privilege is that I shall confine my thoughts to; it is set forth in three expressions: *forgiving transgression, covering of sin, and not imputing iniquity.* The manner of speech is warm and vehement, and it is repeated over again: *blessed is the man.*

I shall show what these three expressions import, and why the prophet doth use such vehemency and emphatical inculcation in setting forth this privilege.

1. *Whose transgression is forgiven*, or who is eased of his transgression; where sin is compared to a burden too heavy for us to bear, as also it is in other scriptures: Mat. xi. 28, ‘Come to me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden.’

2. *Whose sin is covered*; alluding to the covering of filth, or the

removing of that which is offensive out of sight. As the Israelites were to march with a paddle tied to their arms, that when they went to ease themselves they might dig, and cover that which came from them: Deut. xxiii., you have the law there, and the reason of it, ver. 14, 'For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp; therefore shall thy camp be holy, that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.'

And then the third expression is, *to whom the Lord imputeth no sin*; that is, doth not put sin to their account. Where sin is compared to a debt, as it is also in the Lord's Prayer: Mat. vi. 12, 'Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.' Thus is the act set forth.

The object of pardon about which it is conversant is set forth under divers expressions—iniquity, transgression, and sin; as in law many words of like import and signification are heaped up and put together, to make the deed and legal instrument more comprehensive and effectual. I observe it the rather because, when God proclaims his name, the same words are used: Exod. xxxiv. 7, 'Taking away iniquity, transgression, and sin.' Well, we have seen the meaning of the expression. Why doth the holy man of God use such vigour and vehemency of inculcation—'Blessed is the man,' and again 'Blessed is the man'? Partly with respect to his own case. David knew how sweet it was to have sin pardoned; he had felt the bitterness of sin in his own soul, to the drying up of his blood, and therefore he doth express his sense of pardon in the most lively terms—'Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven,' &c. And then partly too with respect to those for whose use this instruction was written, that they might not look upon it as a light and trivial thing, but be thoroughly apprehensive of the worth of so great a privilege. Blessed, happy, thrice happy, they who have obtained pardon of their sins, and justification by Jesus Christ.

The doctrine, then, which I shall insist upon is this:—That it is a great degree and step towards, yea, a considerable part of our blessedness, to obtain the pardon of our sins by Christ Jesus. I shall evidence it to you by these three considerations:—

1. I shall show what necessity lies upon us to seek after this pardon.

2. Our misery without it.

3. I shall speak of the annexed benefits, and our happiness if once we attain it.

1. The necessity that lies upon us, being all guilty before God, to seek after our justification, and the pardon of our sins by Christ. That it may sink the deeper into your minds, I shall do it in this scheme or method:—First, A reasonable nature implies a conscience; a conscience implies a law; a law implies a sanction; a sanction implies a judge, and a judgment-day (when all shall be called to account for breaking the law); and this judgment-day infers a condemnation upon all mankind unavoidably, unless the Lord will compromise the matter, and find out some way in the chancery of the gospel wherein we may be relieved. This way God hath found out in Christ, and being brought about by such a mysterious contrivance, we ought to be deeply and thankfully apprehensive of it, and humbly and broken-heartedly to

quit the one covenant, and accept of the grace provided for us in the other.

[1.] A reasonable nature implies a conscience; for man can reflect upon his own actions, and hath that in him to acquit or condemn him accordingly as he doth good or evil, 1 John iii. 20, 21. Conscience is nothing but the judgment a man makes upon his actions morally considered, the good or the evil, the rectitude or obliquity, that is in them with respect to rewards or punishment. As a man acts, so he is a party; but as he reviews and censures his actions, so he is a judge. Let us take notice only of the condemning part, for that is proper to our case. After the fact, the force of conscience is usually felt more than before or in the fact; because before, through the treachery of the senses, and the revolt of the passions, the judgment of reason is not so clear. I say, our passions and affections raise clouds and mists which darken the mind, and do incline the will by a pleasing violence; but after the evil action is done, when the affection ceaseth, then guilt flasheth in the face of conscience. As Judas, whose heart lay asleep all the while he was going on in his villainy, but afterwards it fell upon him. 'Thou hast sinned in betraying innocent blood.' When the affections are satisfied, and give place to reason, that was before condemned, and reason takes the throne again, it hath the more force to affect us with grief and fear, whilst it strikes through the heart of a man with a sharp sentence of reproof for obeying appetite before reason. Now this conscience of sin may be choked and smothered for a while, but the flame will break forth, and our hidden fears are easily revived and awakened, except we get our pardon and discharge. A reasonable nature implies a conscience.

[2.] A conscience implies a law, by which good and evil are distinguished; for if we make conscience of anything, it must be by virtue of some law or obligation from God, who is our maker and governor, and unto whom we are accountable, and whose authority giveth a force and warrant to the warnings and checks of conscience, without which they would be weak and ineffectual, and all the hopes and fears they stir up in us would be vain fancies and fond surmises. I need not insist upon this, a conscience implies a law. The heathens had a law, because they had a conscience: Rom. ii. 15, 'Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another.' They have a conscience doth accuse or excuse, doth require according to the tenor of the law. So when the apostle speaks of those stings of conscience that are revived in us by the approach of death, he saith, 1 Cor. xv. 56, 'The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.' Those stings which men feel in a death-threatening sickness, are not the fruits of their disease, but, justified by the highest reason; they come from a sense of sin, and this sense is strengthened and increased in us by the law of God, from whence conscience receives all its force.

[3.] A law implies a sanction, or a confirmation by penalties and rewards; for otherwise it is but an arbitrary rule or direction, which we might slight or disregard without any great loss or danger. No; the law is armed with a dreadful curse against all those that disobey

it. There is no dallying with God, he hath set life and death before us; life and good, death and evil, Deut. xxx. 15. Now the precept, *that* is the rule of our duty, and the sanction is the rule of God's process, what God will do, or might do, and what we have deserved should be done to us. The one shows what is due from us to God, and the other what may justly be expected at God's hands; therefore, before the penalty be executed, it concerns us to get a pardon. The scripture represents God as 'angry with the wicked every day,' standing continually with his bow ready, with his arrow upon the string, as ready to let fly, with his sword not only drawn but whetted, as if he were just about to strike, if we turn not, Ps. vii. 11-13.

[4.] A sanction implies a judge, who will take cognisance of the keeping or breaking of this law; for otherwise the sanction or penalty were but a vain scarecrow, if there were no person to look after it. God, that is our maker and governor, is our judge. Would he appoint penalties for the breach of his law, and never reckon with us for our offences, is a thought so unreasonable, so much against the sense of conscience, against God's daily providence, against scripture, which everywhere (in order to this, to quicken us to seek forgiveness of sins) represents God as a judge. Conscience is afraid of an invisible judge, who will call us to account for what we have done. The apostle tells us, Rom. i. 32, the heathen 'knew the judgment of God, and that they that have done such things as they have done are worthy of death.' And providence shows us there is such a judge that looks after the keeping and breaking of his law, hath owned every part of it from heaven by the judgments he executes: Rom. i. 18, 'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;' hath owned either table, by punishing sometimes the ungodliness, and sometimes the unrighteousness of the world; nay, every notable breach by way of omission or commission. The apostle saith, 'every transgression,' and 'every disobedience.' These two words signify sins of omission or commission: it hath been punished, and God hath owned his law, that it is a firm authentic rule. And the scripture also usually makes use of this notion or argument of a judge to quicken us to look after the pardon of our sins: Acts x. 42, 43, 'And he hath commanded us to preach and testify to the people, that it is he that was ordained of God to be the judge of the quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.' So Acts iii. 19-21. Surely we that are to appear before the bar of an impartial judge, being so obnoxious to him for the breach of his holy law, what have we to do but to make supplication to our judge, and prevent execution by a submissive asking of a pardon, and accepting the grace God hath provided?

[5.] A judge implies a judgment-day, or some time when his justice must have a solemn trial, when he will reckon with the lapsed world. He reckons sometimes with nations now, for ungodliness and unrighteousness, by wars, and pestilence, and famine. He reckons with particular persons at their death, and when their work is done he pays them their wages: Heb. ix. 27, 'It is appointed for all men once to die, and after that the judgment.' But there is a more general and final judgment, when his justice must have a solemn trial, which is in

part evident in nature; for the apostles did slide in the Christian doctrine mostly by this means into the hearts of those to whom they preached: Acts xxiv. 25, 'He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.' The particularity of it belongs to the gospel revelation, but nature hath some kind of sense of it in itself, and they are urged to repent, 'because God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead,' Acts xvii. 31. God judgeth the world in patience now, but then in righteousness, when all things shall be reviewed, and everything restored; virtue to its public honour, and vice to its due shame.

[6.] If there be a solemn judgment-day, when every one must receive his final doom, this judgment certainly infers a condemnation to a fallen creature, unless God set up another court for his relief; for now man is utterly disenabled by sin to fulfil the law, and can by no means avoid the punishment that is due to his transgression. I shall prove this by three reasons:—The law to fallen man is impossible; the penalty is intolerable; and the punishment, for aught that yet appears, if God do not take another course, is unavoidable.

(1.) The duty of the law is impossible. The apostle tells us 'what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the weakness of our flesh.' It could not justify us before God, it could not furnish us with any answer to his demands, when he shall call us to an account. Man is mightily addicted to the legal covenant, therefore it is one part of a gospel minister's work to represent the impossibility of ever obtaining grace or life by that covenant. Man would stick to the law as long as he can, and will patch up a sorry righteousness of his own, some few superficial things. He makes a short exposition of the law, that he may cherish a large opinion of his own righteousness; and curtails the law of God, that the ell may be no longer than the cloth, and brings it down to a poor contemptible thing, requiring a few external superficial duties of men. We read often of being 'dead to sin,' and 'to the world;' it is as certainly true we must be 'dead to the law.' Now how are we dead to the law? The scripture tells us in one place, that 'through the law we are dead to the law;' and in another place, that we are 'dead to the law through the body of Christ.' The first place is Gal. ii. 19, 'Through the law I am dead to the law.' Men are apt to stand to the legal covenant, and have their confidence in the flesh, to place their hopes of acceptance with God in some few external things, which they make their false righteousness. For the carnal world, as it cries up a false happiness as its God, so men have a false righteousness which is their Christ. Now through the law they are dead to it. How? The law supposeth us as innocent, and requires us to continue so: 'Cursed is every one that continues not in every thing,' &c. Suppose a man should exactly fulfil it afterwards, yet the paying of new debts will not quit old scores. And then we are 'dead to the law by the body of Christ,' Rom. vii. 4; by the crucified body of Christ, by which he hath merited and purchased a better hope and grace for us. Well, the duty is impossible.

(2.) The penalty is intolerable, for who can stand when God is

angry? Ezek. xxii. 14, 'Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the day that I shall deal with thee?' We that cannot endure the pain of the gout or stone, how shall we endure the eternal wrath of God? It is surely a very 'dreadful thing to fall into the hands of that living God,' that lives for ever to punish the transgressors of his law.

(3.) The punishment is unavoidable, unless sin be pardoned, and you submit to God's way: for I would ask you, what hope can you have in God, whose nature engageth him to hate sin, and whose justice obligeth him to punish it?

(1st.) Whose nature engageth him to hate sin and sinners: Hab. i. 13, 'He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.' I urge this for a double reason: partly because I have observed that all the security of sinners, and their neglect of seeking after pardon by Jesus Christ, it comes from their lessening thoughts of God's holiness; and if their hearts were sufficiently possessed with an awe of God's unspotted purity and holiness, they would more look after the terms of grace God hath provided: Ps. l. 21, 'Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself.' Why do men live securely in their sins, and do not break off their evil course? They think God is not so severe and harsh, and so all their confidence is grounded upon a mistake of God's nature, and such a dreadful mistake as amounts to a blasphemy: 'Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself.' The other reason is this, particularly because I observe the bottom reason of all the fear that is in the hearts of men is God's holiness: 1 Sam. vi. 20, 'Who is able to stand before this holy God?' and 'Who would not fear thee? for thou art holy,' Rev. xv. 4. We fear his power; why? because it is set on work by his wrath. We fear his wrath; why? because it is kindled by his justice and righteousness. We fear his righteousness, because it is bottomed and grounded upon his holiness, and upon the purity of his nature.

(2dly.) His justice obligeth him to punish sin, that the law might not seem to be made in vain. It concerns the universal judge to maintain the reputation of his justice in reference to men, and to appear to them still as a righteous God: Gen. xviii. 25, 'Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?' and Rom. iii. 5, 6, 'Is God unrighteous to take vengeance? how then shall he judge the world?' These scriptures imply, that if there were the least blemish, if you could suppose he should fail in point of righteousness, this were to be denied, that God should be the judge of the world. Therefore God's righteousness and justice, which gives to every one their due, must shine in its proper place; he will give vengeance to whom vengeance is due, and blessing to whom blessing belongs. In our case punishment belongs to us, and what can we expect from this God but wrath and eternal destruction? Therefore if all this be so, if a conscience suppose a law, a law a sanction, a sanction a judge—a judge some time when his justice must have a solemn trial, and this will necessarily infer condemnation to a fallen creature—what then shall we do?

[7.] From this condemnation there is no escape, unless God set up another court and chancery of the gospel, where condemned sinners may be taken to mercy, and their sins forgiven, and they justified and

accepted unto grace and life, upon terms that may save God's honour and government over mankind. There is a great deal of difference between the forgiving private wrongs and injuries, and the pardoning of public offences; between the pardon of a magistrate, and the pardon of a private person. When equals fall out among themselves, they may end their differences in charity, and in such ways as best please themselves, by a mere forgiving, by acquitting the sense of the wrong done, or a bare submission of the party offending. But the case is different here: God is not reconciled to us merely as the party offended, but as the governor of the world; the case lies between the judge of the world and sinning mankind; therefore it must not be ended by mere compromise and agreement, but by satisfaction, that his law may be satisfied, and the honour of his justice secured. Therefore to make the pardon of man a thing convenient to the righteous and holy judge to bestow, without any impeachment to the honour of his justice and authority of his law, the Lord finds out this great mystery, 'God manifested in our flesh.' Jesus Christ is 'made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law,' Gal. iv. 5; and is 'become a propitiation to satisfy God's justice,' Rom. iii. 25, 26. And so God shows mercy to his creatures, and yet the awe of his government is kept up, and a full demonstration of his righteousness is given to the world.

[8.] This being done conveniently to God's honour, we must sue out our pardon with respect to both the covenants, both that which we have broken, the law of nature, and that which is made in Christ, and is to be accepted by us as our sanctuary and sure refuge.

(1.) We must have a broken-hearted sense of sin, and of the curse due to the first covenant; for it is the disease brings us to the physician; the curse drives us to the promise, and the tribunal of justice to the throne of grace; and the avenger of blood at our heels, that causeth us to fly to our proper city of refuge, and to take sanctuary at the Lord's grace, Heb. vi. 18. So that if you mince and extenuate sin, you seem to hold to the first covenant, and had rather plead innocent than guilty. No; if you would have this favour, you must confess your sins: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' You must confess your sins, and with that remorse that will become offences done to so great a God. And there must not only be a sense of sin, but of the curse and merit of sin also; for we must not only accuse, but judge ourselves, that God may not judge and condemn us, 1 Cor. xi. 31. Self-accusing respects sin, and is acted in confession; self-judging respects the curse or punishment that is due to us for sin, and it is a person's pronouncing upon himself according to the tenor of the law what is his due, acknowledging his guilt, and this with much brokenness of heart before God, when he hath involved himself in God's eternal wrath and displeasure. I observe, that the law-covenant is in the scripture compared to a prison, wherein God hath shut up guilty souls, Rom. xi. 32, 'He hath concluded or shut them up, that he may have mercy upon them;' Gal. iii. 21, 'He hath shut them up under sin.' The law is God's prison, and no offenders can get out of it till they have God's leave; and from him they have none, till they are sensible of the justice and righteousness of that first dispensation,

confess their sins with brokenness of heart, and that it may be just with God to condemn them for ever.

(2.) We must thankfully accept the Lord's grace, that offers pardon to us. For since God is pleased to try us a second time, and set us up with a new stock of grace, and that brought about in such a wonderful way, that he may recover the lost creation to himself, surely if we shall despise our remedy, after we have rendered ourselves incapable of our duty, no condemnation is bad enough for us, John iii. 18, 19. Therefore we should admire the mercy of God in Christ, and have such a deep sense of it, that it may check our sinful self-love, which hath been our bane and ruin. And since God showed himself willing to be reconciled, we must enter into his peace, not look upon ourselves in a hopeless and desperate condition, but depend upon the merit, sacrifice, and intercession of Christ, and be encouraged by his gracious promise and covenant to 'come with boldness, that we may find grace and mercy to help in a time of need,' Heb. iv. 16. Thus you see the need we have to look after this pardon of sin.

2. Secondly, I must show our misery without this; and this will be best done by considering the notions here in the text. Here is filth to be covered, a burden of which we must be eased; and here is a debt that must be cancelled: and unless this be, what a miserable condition are we in!

[1.] What a heavy burden is sin, where it is not pardoned! Carnal men feel it not for the present: elements are not burdensome in their own place; but how soon may they feel it! Two sorts of consciences feel the burden of sin—a tender conscience, and a wounded conscience. It is grievous to a tender heart, that values the love of God, to lie under the guilt of sin, and to be obnoxious to his wrath and displeasure: Ps. xxxviii. 4, 'Mine iniquities are gone over mine head, as a burden too heavy for me.' Broken bones are sensible of the least weight; certainly a broken heart cannot make light of sin. What kind of hearts are those that sin securely, and without remorse, and are never troubled? Go to wounded consciences, and ask of them what sin is: Gen. iv. 13, 'Mine iniquity is greater than I can bear;' Prov. xviii. 14, 'A wounded spirit, who can bear?' As long as the evil lies without us, it is tolerable, the natural courage of a man may bear up under it; but when the spirit itself is wounded with the sense of sin, who can bear it? If a spark of God's wrath light upon the conscience, how soon do men become a burden to themselves; and some have chosen strangling rather than life. Ask Cain, ask Judas, what it is to feel the burden of sin. Sinners are 'all their lifetime subject to this bondage;' it is not always felt, but soon awakened: it may be done by a pressing exhortation at a sermon; it may be done by some notable misery that befalls us in the world; it may be done by a scandalous sin; it may be done by a grievous sickness, or worldly disappointment. All these things and many more may easily revive it in us. There needs not much ado to put a sinner in the stocks of conscience. Therefore do but consider to be eased of this burden; oh the blessedness of it!

[2.] It is filth to be covered, which renders us odious in the sight of God. It is said, Prov. xiii. 5, that 'a sinner is loathsome.' To

whom? To God. Certainly he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. To good men. 'The wicked is an abomination to the righteous;' the new nature hath an aversion to it. Lot's righteous soul was vexed from day to day with the conversation of the wicked. A wicked man hates a godly man with a hatred of enmity and abomination; but a godly man doth not hate a wicked man with a hatred of enmity—that is opposite to good-will—but with that of abomination, which is opposite to complacency. It is loathsome to an indifferent man, for holiness darts an awe and reverence into the conscience. 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,' and a wicked person is a vile person in the common esteem of the world: horrible profaneness will not easily down. Nay, it is loathsome to other wicked men. I do not know whether I expound that scripture rightly, but it looks somewhat so, 'Hateful and hating one another.' We hate sin in another, though we will not take notice of it in ourselves. The sensuality and pride and vanity of one wicked man is hated by another; nay, he is loathsome to himself. Why? because he cannot endure to look into himself. We cannot endure ourselves when we are serious. 'They will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd.' And we are shy of God's presence; we are sensible we have something makes us offensive to him, and we hang off from him when we have sinned against him; as it was David's experience, Ps. xxxii. 3. That was the cause of his silence: he kept off from God, having sinned against him, and had not a heart to go home and sue out his pardon. Oh, what a mercy is it, then, to have this filth covered, that we may be freed from this bashful inconfidence, and not be ashamed to look God in the face, and may come with a holy boldness into the presence of the blessed God! Oh, the blessedness of the man whose sin is covered!

[3.] It is a debt that binds the soul to everlasting punishment; and if it be not pardoned, the judge will give us over to the jailer, and the jailer cast us into prison, 'till we have paid the uttermost farthing,' Luke xii. 59. To have so vast a debt lying upon us, what a misery is that! Augustus bought that man's bed who could sleep soundly when he was in debt so many hundred of sesterces. Certainly it is a strange security that possesseth the hearts of men, when we are obliged to suffer the vengeance of the wrath of the eternal God by our many sins, and yet can sleep quietly. Body and soul will be taken away in execution; the day of payment is set, and may come much sooner than you think for; you must get a discharge, or else you are undone for ever. Our debt comes to millions of millions; well, if the Lord will forgive so great a debt, oh, the blessedness of that man, &c. Put altogether now; certainly if you have ever been in bondage, if you have felt the sting of death and curse of the law, or been scorched by the wrath of God, or knew the horror of those upon whom God hath exacted this debt in hell, certainly you would be more and more affected with this wonderful grace. 'Oh, the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth not his transgressions!'

Thirdly, The consequent benefits. I will name three:—

[1.] It restores the creature to God, and puts us in joint again, in a capacity to serve, and please, and glorify God: Ps. cxxx. 4, 'There is

forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' Forgiveness invites us to return to God, obliges us to return to God, and take it as God dispenseth it; it inclines us to return to God, and encourages us to live in a state of amity and holy friendship with God, pleasing and serving him in righteousness and holiness all our days. Certainly it invites us to return to God. Man stands aloof from a condemning God, but may be induced to submit to a pardoning God. And it obligeth us to return to God, to serve, and love, and please him who will forgive so great a debt, and discharge us from all our sins; for she loved much to whom much was forgiven. It inclines us to serve and please God; for where God pardons he renews, he puts a new life into us that inclines us to God: Col. ii. 13, 'He hath quickened you together with Christ, having forgiven all your trespasses.' And it encourages us to serve and please God: Heb. ix. 14, 'How much more shall the blood of Christ cleanse your consciences from dead works, that ye may serve the living God?' and that in a suitable manner, that you may serve God in a lively, cheerful manner. A poor creature bound to his law, and conscious of his own disobedience, and obnoxious to wrath and punishment, is mightily clogged, and drives on heavily; but when the conscience is purged from dead works, we serve the living God in a lively manner; and this begets a holy cheerfulness in the soul, and we are freed from that bondage that otherwise would clog us in our duty to God.

[2.] It lays the foundation for solid comfort and peace in our own souls, for till sin be pardoned you have no true comfort; because the justice of the supreme governor of the world will still be dreadful to us, whose laws we have broken, whose wrath we have justly deserved, and whom we still apprehend as offended with us, and provoked by us. We may lull the soul asleep with carnal delights, but the virtue of that opium will be soon spent. All those joys are but stolen waters, and bread eaten in secret, a poor, sorry peace, that dares not come to the light and endure the trial,—a sorry peace, that is soon disturbed by a few serious and sober thoughts of God and the world to come; but when once sin is pardoned, then you have true joy indeed. 'Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee,' Mat. ix. 2. 'Then misery is plucked up by the roots: 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people.' Why? 'Her iniquity is forgiven,' Isa. xl. 1, 2; 'And we joy in God as those that have received the atonement,' Rom. v. 11. The Lord Jesus hath made the atonement; but when we have received the atonement, then we joy in God, then there is matter for abundant delight, when 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us.'

[3.] When we are pardoned, then we are capable of eternal happiness. Pardon of sin is *gratia removens prohibens*, that grace that removes the impediment, that takes the make-bate out of the way, removes that that hinders our entrance into heaven. Sanctification is the beginning; but till we are pardoned, there can be no entrance into heaven: now this removes the incapacity. I observe remission of sins is put for all the privilege part, as repentance for the duties: Acts v. 31, 'Him hath God exalted to give repentance and remission of sins.' There are two initial benefits—repentance, as the foundation

of the new life; and remission of sins, as the foundation of all our future mercies. There are two chief blessings offered in the new covenant, pardon and life, reconciliation with God, and the everlasting fruition of him in glory; and the one makes way for the other: Acts xxvi. 18, 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from Satan to God, that they may receive remission of sins, and an inheritance among the saints.' When we are pardoned, then we are capable to look for the blessed inheritance; the impediment is taken out of the way that excludes from it.

And thus you see 'the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose filth is covered, and unto whom the Lord will not impute his sin.'

A WORD OF APPLICATION.

1. Let us bless God for the Christian religion, where this privilege is discovered to us in all its glory, and that upon very commodious terms, fit to gain the heart of man, and to reduce him to God: Micah vii. 18, 'Who is a God like unto thee among all the gods, pardoning the transgressions of thine heritage?' The business of religion is to provide sufficiently for two things, which have much troubled the considering part of the world;—a suitable happiness for mankind, and suitable means for the expiation of sin. Happiness is our great desire, and sin is our great burden and trouble. Now these are fully made known and discovered to us by the Christian faith. The last is that we are upon,—the way how the grand scruple of the world may be satisfied, and their guilty fears appeased; and that we may see the excellency of the Christian religion above all religions in the world, it offers pardon upon such terms as are most commodious to the honour of God, and most satisfactory to our souls; that is, upon the account of Christ's satisfaction and our own repentance, without which our case is not compassionable. The first I will chiefly insist on. The heathens were mightily perplexed about the way how God could dispense with the honour of his justice in the pardon of sin. That man is God's creature, and therefore his subject; that he hath exceedingly failed and faulted in his duty and subjection to him, and is therefore obnoxious to God's just wrath and vengeance, are truths evident in the light of nature and common experience; and therefore the heathens had some convictions of this, and saw a need that God should be atoned and propitiated by some sacrifices of expiation; and the nearer they lived to the original of this tradition and institution, the more burdened and pressing were their conceits and apprehensions thereof. But in all their cruel superstitions there was no rest of soul; they knew not the true God, nor the proper ransom, nor had any sure way to convey pardon to them, but were still left to the puzzle and distraction of their own thoughts, and could not make God merciful without some diminution of his holiness and justice, nor make him just without some diminution of his mercy. Somewhat they conceived of the goodness of God by his continuing forfeited benefits so long: 'God left them not without a witness;' but yet they could not reconcile it to his justice or will to punish sinners; and all their apprehensions of the pardon of sin were but probabilities, and what was

wrought to procure merit was ridiculous, or else barbarous and unnatural, giving 'their first-born for the sin of their soul,' Micah vi. 7. And all those notions they had about this apprehended expiation were too weak to change the heart or life of man, or to reduce him to God. Come we now to the Jews. The Jews had many sacrifices of God's own institution, but such as 'did not make the comers thereunto perfect, as pertaining to the conscience,' Heb. ix. 9; and the ransom that was to be given to provoke justice was known but to a few. They saw much of the patience and forbearance of God, but little of the righteousness of God, and which was the great propitiation. Till 'God set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus,' Rom. iii. 25, 26. Their ordinances and sacrifices were rather a bond acknowledging the debt, or pre-signifying the ransom that was to be paid, and their sacrifices did rather breed bondage; and their ordinances were called 'an handwriting of ordinances that were against them.' The redemption of souls was then spoken of as a great mystery, but sparingly revealed: Ps. xlix. 3, 4, 'My mouth shall speak of wisdom, and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. I will incline mine ear to a parable, I will open my dark sayings upon the harp.' What was that wisdom? What was that dark saying? 'The redemption of souls is precious; it ceaseth for ever.' As it lies upon mere man's hand, 'none can give a ransom for his brother.' Eternal redemption by Christ was a dark saying in those days, only they knew no mere man could do it. And in more early times, in Job's time, he was 'an interpreter, one of a thousand,' that could bring this message to a distressed sinner, that God had found out a ransom. This atonement, then, that lies at the bottom of pardon of sin, was a rare thing in those days. Let us bless God for the clear and open discovery of this truth, and free offer of grace by Jesus Christ.

The second use is to quicken us to put in for a share in this blessed privilege. I have spent my time in presenting to you what a blessed thing it is to have our sins pardoned. Christians, a man that flows in wealth and honour, till he be pardoned, is not a happy man. A man that lives afflicted, contemned, not taken notice of in the world, if he be a pardoned sinner, oh, the blessedness of that man! They are not happy that have least trouble, but they that have least cause; not they that have a benumbed conscience, but they that have a conscience sound, established, and settled in the grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and bottomed upon his holy covenant, and that peace and grace he offers to us; this is the happy man. By these and such like arguments I would have you put in for a share of this privilege. But what must be required? I would fain send you away with some directions.

Let me entreat you, if this be such a blessed thing, to make it your daily, your earnest, your hearty prayer to God, that your sins may be pardoned, Mat. vi. 12. Our Lord hath taught us to pray (for we make but too much work for pardoning mercy every day), 'Every day forgive us our trespasses.' *To-day*, in one of the petitions, is common

to all that follow; as we beg daily bread, we must beg daily pardon, daily grace against temptations. Under the law, they had a lamb every morning and every evening offered to God for a daily sacrifice, Num. xxviii. 4-6. We are all invited to look to the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. Surely we have as much need as they—more cause than they; because now all is clear, and openly made known unto us. God came to Adam in the cool of the day; he would not let him sleep in his sins: before night came, he comes and rouseth his conscience, and then gives out the promise of the seed of the woman that should break the serpent's head. In reconciliation with God, let not the sun go down upon God's wrath, Eph. iv. 26. A man should not sleep in his anger, nor out of charity with man; surely we should make our peace with God every day. If a man, under the law, had contracted any uncleanness, he was to wash his clothes before evening, that he might not lie a night in his uncleanness. We should daily earnestly come to God with this request, Lord, pardon our sins. But what! must those that are already adopted into God's family, and taken into his grace and favour, daily pray for pardon of sin? Though upon our first faith our state be changed, and we are indeed made children of God, and heirs of eternal life by faith in Christ Jesus; yet he that is clean, need wash his feet. We contract a great deal of sinful defilement and pollution by walking up and down here in a dirty world; and we must every day be cleansing our consciences before God, and begging that we may be made partakers of this benefit. The Lord may, for our unthankfulness, our negligence, our stupid security, revive the memory of old sins, and make us look into the debt-book (that hath been cancelled) with horror, and make us 'possess the sins of our youth.' An old bruise is felt upon every change of weather. When we prove unthankful, and careless, and stupid, and negligent, and do not keep our watch, the Lord may suffer these things to return upon our consciences with great amazement. Guilt raked out of its grave is more frightful than a ghost, or one risen from the dead. Few believers have, upon right terms, the assurance of their own sincerity; and though God may blot sins out of the book of his remembrance, yet he will not blot them out of our consciences. The worm of conscience is killed still by the application of the blood of Christ and the Spirit. This short exhortation I would give you, the other would take up too much time.

SERMON II.

*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no guile.—Ps. XXXII. 1, 2.*

In this text I observed, that it is a great degree and step towards, yea, a considerable part of our blessedness, to obtain pardon of our sins upon the account of Christ's righteousness. I showed the

necessity which lies upon men, who are all become guilty before God, to look after this pardon; and thereupon took occasion to represent the excellency of the Christian religion, that hath provided a salve for the great sore that runs upon all mankind, above that of the pagans, and also that of the Jews, to whom this mystery was but darkly revealed. To proceed to another use, to exhort you to put in for a share in this blessedness, to persuade you to it, let me use a few motives.

1. Till you are pardoned you are never blessed; there is an obstacle and impediment in the way hinders your blessedness. What though you flow in wealth, ease, and plenty; yet as long as this black storm hangs over your head, and you know not how soon it will drop upon you, you cannot be accounted happy men. Do you account him a happy man who is condemned to die, because he hath a plentiful allowance till his execution? or him a happy man that makes a fair show abroad, and puts a good face upon his ruinous and breaking condition, but at home is pinched with want and misery, which is ready to come upon him like an armed man? or him a happy man that revels it out in all manner of pleasure, but is to die at night? Then those that remain in the guilt of their sins may be happy. But now, on the other side, a pardoned sinner is blessed whatever befalls him. If he be afflicted, the sting of his affliction is gone, that is sin; if he be prosperous, the curse of his blessings is taken away; the wrath of God is appeased, and so every condition is made tolerable or comfortable to him.

2. Nothing less than a pardon will serve the turn. Not forbearance on God's side, nor forgetfulness on ours.

[1.] It is not a forbearance of the punishment on God's part, but a dissolving the obligation to the punishment. God may be angry with us when he doth not actually strike us: as the psalmist says, Ps. vii. 11-13, 'God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.' In the day of his patience he doth for a while spare; but God is ready to deal with them hand to hand, for he is sharpening his sword at a distance; he is bending his bow: the arrow is upon the string, and how soon God may let it fly we cannot tell; therefore we are never safe till we turn to God, and enter into his peace. Wherever there is sin there is guilt, and wherever there is guilt there will be punishment. If we dance about the brink of hell, and go merrily to execution, it argues not our sin,¹ but stupidity and folly.

[2.] On our part, our senseless forgetfulness will do us no good. Carnal men mind not the happiness of an immortal soul, and they are not troubled because they consider not their condition; but they are not happy that feel least trouble, but those that have least cause. A benumbed conscience cannot challenge this blessedness; they only put off that which they cannot put away, which God hath neither forgiven nor covered. They do but skin the wound till it fester and rankle into a dangerous sore. God is the wronged party, and supreme

¹ Qu. 'the pardon of our sin'?—E.D.

judge, to whose sentence we must stand or fall. If he justifies, then who will condemn? We may lay ourselves asleep, and sing peace to ourselves; but it is not what we say, but what God saith: 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.'

3. A pardon is surely a great blessing, if we consider, first, the evils we are freed from; and, secondly, the good depending upon it.

[1.] The evils we are freed from. Guilt is the obligation to punishment, and pardon is the dissolving or loosing that obligation. Now, the punishment is exceeding great, no less than hell and damnation; and hell is no vain scarecrow, nor is heaven a May-game. Eternity makes everything truly great. Look at the loss—an eternal separation from the comfortable presence of God: Mat. xxv. 41, 'Go, ye cursed,' &c.; and Luke xiii. 27, 'Depart, ye workers of iniquity.' When God turned Adam out of paradise, his case was very sad, but God took care of him, made him coats of skins to clothe him, gave him a day of patience, afterwards promised the seed of the woman, who should recover the lapsed state of mankind, and so intimated hopes of a better paradise. That exile, therefore, is nothing comparable to this; for now man is stript of all his comfort, sent into an endless state of misery, where there shall be no hope of ever changing his condition. Now, to be delivered from this that is so great an evil, what a blessedness is it! For the *pœna sensus*, the pain as well as the loss, our Lord sets it forth by two notions: Mark ix. 44, 'The worm that never dies, and the fire that shall never be quenched.' The scripture speaks of the soul with allusion to the state of the body after death. In the body worms breed usually, and many times they were burnt with fire. Accordingly, our state in the world to come is set forth by a worm and a fire. The worm implies the worm of conscience—a reflection upon our past folly and disobedience to God, and the remembrance of all the affronts we have put upon Christ. Here men may run from the rebukes of conscience by many shifts, sports, distracting their minds with a clatter of business; but then there is not a thought free, but the damned are always thinking of slighted means, abused comforts, wasted time, the offences done to a merciful God, and the curse wherein they have involved themselves by their own folly. The fire that shall never be quenched notes the wrath of God, or those unknown pains that shall be inflicted upon the body and soul; which must needs be great, because God himself will take the sinful creature into his own hands to punish him, and will show forth the glory of his wrath and power upon him. When God punisheth us by a creature, the creature is not a vessel capacious enough to convey the power of his wrath; as when a giant strikes with a straw, that cannot convey his strength. But when God falls upon us himself, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' How dreadful is that! Is it not a blessedness to be freed from so great an evil? Then a little mitigation, a drop to cool your tongue, would be accounted a great mercy.

[2.] If we consider the good depending on it. You are not capable of enjoying God, and being happy for evermore, till his wrath be appeased, and your sins forgiven; but when that is once done, then you may have sure hope of being admitted into his presence: Rom. v. 10,

‘If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled by his death, much more being now reconciled shall we be saved by his life;’ that is to say, it is far more credible that a reconciled man should be glorified, than that a sinner and rebel should be reconciled. If you can pass over this difficulty, and once get into God’s peace, then what may you not expect from God? The first favour to such as have been rebels against him facilitates the belief of all acts of grace.

Now, what must we do that we may be capable of this blessed privilege, that our sins may be pardoned, and our filth covered, and our debt may be forgiven? I shall give my answer in three branches:—

I. I will show you what is to be done as to your first entrance into the evangelic state.

II. What is to be done as to your continuance therein, and that you may still enjoy this privilege; and—

III. What is to be done as to your recovery out of grievous lapses, and falls, and wounds, as are more troublesome to the conscience, for which a particular and express repentance is required.

I. As to our first entrance into the evangelic state; that is by faith and repentance: both are necessary to pardon, Acts x. 43, ‘To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.’ There remission of sins is granted to a believer. Now repentance is full out as necessary, Acts ii. 38, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins;’ Luke xxiv. 47, ‘And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’ What is in another evangelist, ‘to preach the gospel to every creature,’ in this is, ‘that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name.’ And this is preaching the gospel; for the gospel is nothing else but a doctrine of repentance and remission of sins. So if we will not hearken to the vain fancies of men who have perverted the scripture, but stand to the plain gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; these two duties are necessary to pardon. Christ’s satisfaction is not imputed to us, but upon terms agreed on in the covenant of redemption. As to the impetration there is required the intervention of Christ’s merit, so to the application faith and repentance, without which we are not pardoned. These two graces have a distinct reference, and it is intimated by that passage of Paul, for he gives this account of his ministry, Acts xx. 21, ‘Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Here, in short, repentance respects God, *to* whom we return, and faith Jesus Christ, *by* whom we return. From God we fell, to God we must return; we fell from him as we withdrew our allegiance, and sought our happiness elsewhere; and we return to him as our rightful Lord and our proper happiness. And then faith in Christ is necessary, because the Lord Jesus is the only remedy for our misery, who opened the way to God by his merit and satisfaction, and doth also bring us to walk in his ways by his renewing first, and then reconciling grace; and faith is that that respects him. Who will take physic of a physician whose art he does not trust, or go to sea with a pilot whose skill he questions? Who will venture his eternal interest in Christ’s hands, if he be not per-

suaded of his ability and fidelity, as one that is able to make our peace with God, and bring us to the enjoyment of him? But I would not lightly mention it, but bring it to a distinct issue.

1. I will show you it is for the glory of God and comfort of the creature that there should be a stated course of entering into God's peace, or applying the gospel; for we must not so look to the impetration, or merit and righteousness of Christ, as not to consider the application, and how we come to have a title to these things.

2. I will show that these two graces and duties are faith and repentance, which do in many things agree, and in other respects differ.

3. I will show you that they, differing in their use, are required for distinct reasons and ends.

4. The use of these graces will plainly discover their nature to you, so that a poor Christian, that would settle his soul upon Christ's terms, and this blessed gospel made known to us, need not any longer debate what is repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. It is for the glory of God and the comfort of the creature that there should be a stated course of applying the privileges of the gospel, or of entering into God's peace.

[1.] It is certainly for the glory of God. It is not meet that pardon and life should be prostituted to every one that will hastily challenge these privileges. Pardon we are upon; our case is not compassionable till we relent and submit to God's terms. I would appeal to your own consciences: surely it is more suitable to the wisdom of God that a penitent sinner should have pardon rather than an impenitent, or one that securely continues in his sins, and despiseth both the curse of the law and the grace of the gospel. It is not agreeable to the honour of God, and the wisdom of his transactions with man, that such should have benefit by him. Again, for faith: it is not meet we should have benefit by one we know not and trust not. Whatever be God's mercy to infants, who are not in a capacity to know and trust him, yet, in adult and grown persons, it is necessary we should not have such great privileges settled upon us without our knowledge, or besides and against our wills. God will have our consent in a humble and solemn way, that we may come and thankfully accept what he hath provided for us. So this is very much for the glory of God.

[2.] And then for our comfort, that we may make our claim, that we may state our interest with the greater certainty and assurance; for when great privileges are conditionally propounded, as they are in the new covenant, our right is suspended till the conditions be performed; and certainly our comfort is suspended till we know they be performed, till we know ourselves to be such as have an interest in the promises of the gospel. I have told you, Blessed are they whose sins are pardoned. But, saith the soul, if I knew my sins were pardoned I should think myself a blessed creature indeed. What would you reply to this anxious and serious soul? God hath made a promise, an offer of pardon by Christ: the offer of pardon is the invitation to use the means that we may be possessed of it. But then the serious anxious soul replies still, To whom is this promise made? How

shall I come to know that I am thus blessed and accepted by God, and that my sins are pardoned? What is to be replied here? Look to whom the promise is made. Certainly it is made to some, or to all. If you say the promise is to all, you deceive the most; if to some, you must say, from scripture, to them that repent and believe—to the penitent believer. Here is the shortest way to bring the debate to an issue, wherein our comfort is so much concerned, to see we be penitent believers. For thus the application is stated, and the fixing these conditions is the more for the glory of God, and the comfort of the creature.

2. The two graces or duties upon which it is fixed—faith and repentance—do in many things agree, in other respects differ.

[1.] They both agree in this, that they are both necessary to the fallen creature, and do concern our recovery to God, and so are proper to the gospel, which is provided for the restoration of lapsed mankind. The gospel is a healing remedy, and therefore is Christ so often set forth by the term of a physician. The law was a stranger to both these duties; it knew no such thing as repentance and faith in Christ; for, according to the tenor of it, once a sinner, and for ever miserable. But the gospel is a plank cast out after shipwreck, whereby we may escape and come safe to shore.

Again, they both agree in this, that they concern our entrance and first recovery out of the defection and apostasy of mankind, for afterwards there are other things required; but as to our first entrance into the evangelic state, both these graces are required, and the acts of them so interwoven, that we can hardly distinguish them.

Again, they both agree in this, that they have a continual influence upon our whole new obedience. For the secondary conditions of the covenant do grow out of the first, and these two graces run throughout our whole life. Repentance, mortifying sin, is not a work of a day, but of our whole lives, and the like is faith.

Again, they agree in that both are effected and wrought in us by the Holy Spirit; that God, who requires these things, gives them.

Lastly, they agree in this, that the one cannot be without the other, neither repentance without faith, nor faith without repentance; partly, because there is no use of faith without repentance. Christ as mediator is the means; now the means are of no use without respect to the end. Now Christ and the whole gospel grace is the means to come to God. Besides, these things cannot be graces but in a concomitancy. Repentance without faith, what would it be? When we see our sins, and bewail them, despair would make us sit down and die, if there were not a Saviour to heal our natures and convert our souls. Neither can faith be without repentance; for unless there be a confession of past sins, with a resolution of future obedience, we continue in our obstinacy and stubbornness, and so we are incapable of mercy, our case is not compassionate.

In short, repentance without faith would degenerate into the horror of the damned, and our sorrow for sin would be tormenting rather curing to us. And then faith would be a licentious and presumptuous confidence without repentance: unless it be accompanied with this hearty consent of living in the love, obedience, and service of God, with

a detestation of our former ways, it would be a turning the grace of God into wantonness. Therefore these two always go together. Which is the first, I will not enter upon; but the one cannot be without the other.

[2.] Let me show you wherein they differ: the one respects God, the other Christ.

(1.) Repentance towards God. While we live in sin, we are not only out of our way, but out of our wits. 'We were sometimes foolish and disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures,' Titus iii. 3. We live in rebellion against him against whom we cannot make our party good; and withal contenting ourselves with a false transitory happiness instead of a solid and eternal one, we never come to our wits again till we think of returning to God. As the prodigal, when 'he came to himself,' he thought of returning to his father; and Ps. xxii. 27, 'They shall remember, and turn to the Lord.' So long as we lie in our sins, we are like men in a dream, we consider not from whence we are, nor whither we are going, nor what shall become of us to all eternity; but go on against all reason and conscience, provoking God, and destroying our own souls. Man is never in his true posture again, till he returns to God as his sovereign Lord and chief happiness: as our sovereign Lord, that we may perform our duty to him; and our felicity and chief good, that we may seek all our happiness in him. And none do repent but those that give up themselves to obey God and to do his will, as he is the sovereign Lord: 1 Peter iv. 2, 'That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God;' and look upon him as their chief happiness, and prefer his favour above all the sensual pleasures of the world, that they may be able in truth to say, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee,' Ps. lxxiii. 25. This is repentance towards God.

(2.) There is faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This grace is necessary, that we may own our Redeemer, and be thankful to him, as the author of our deliverance: Rom. vii. 25, 'O wretched man that I am! But thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' And also faith is necessary, that we may trust ourselves in his hands. We are to take Christ as our prophet, priest, and king; to hear him as our prophet: Mat. xvii. 5, 'This is my beloved Son, hear him.' We are to receive him as our Lord and King: Col. ii. 6, 'As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.' We are to consider him as the great high priest of our confession: Heb. iii. 1, 'Let us consider the Lord Jesus, the great apostle and high priest of our confession.' Hear him we must as a prophet, that we may form our hopes by his covenant, and frame our lives by his holy and pure doctrine. Receive him we must as a king, that we may obey him in all things. Consider him as a priest, that we may depend upon the merit and value of his sacrifice and intercession, and may the more confidently plead his covenant and promises to God. Now without this there can be no commerce between us and Christ. Who will learn of him as a prophet, whom he takes to be a deceiver? obey him as a king, who doth not believe his power? or depend upon him with any confidence or hopes of mercy, if he doth not believe the value of his merit and

sacrifice? Herein these things differ—repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; the one respects the end, God; the other the means, Christ. Repentance more especially respects our duty; faith, our comfort. Repentance, newness of life for the future, and returning to the primitive duty, the love of God, and obeying his will; faith, pardon of what is past, and hope of mercy to come. In short, to God we give up ourselves as our supreme Lord; to Christ as Mediator, who alone can bring us to God: to God, as taking his will for the rule of our lives and actions, and preferring his love above all that is dear in the world; to Christ as our Lord and Saviour, who makes our peace with God, and gives the Holy Spirit to change our hearts, that we may for ever live upon him as our life, hope, and strength. Thus I have briefly showed you how repentance respects God, and faith our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. That these graces having their peculiar reference, are required in order to pardon, for distinct reasons and ends.

First, Repentance is required for these reasons:—

[1.] Because otherwise God cannot have his end in pardon, which is to recover the lost creation, that we may again live in his love and obedience. Surely Christ came to seek and save that which was lost. Now, to be lost, in the first and primitive sense, was to be lost to God. Take the lost sheep or goat, it was lost to the owner, the son to the father; and so, if Christ came to save that which was lost, he came to recover us to God, therefore said to redeem us to God.

[2.] Neither can the Redeemer do his work for which God hath appointed him: 1 Peter iii. 18, 'He died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.' We accept him in all his offices for this end: 'I am the way, truth, and life; no man comes to the Father but by me.' Therefore, whole Christianity, from the beginning to the end, a short description of it is this,—a coming to God by Christ: Heb. vii. 25, 'He is able to save to the uttermost' Whom?—'all those that come to God by him.'

[3.] Without it we should not have our happiness. It is our happiness to please and enjoy God. We are not in a capacity to please and enjoy God till we are returned to him: 'They that are in the flesh cannot please the Lord;' nor to enjoy him here, for here 'we see his face in righteousness,' nor hereafter, for 'without holiness no man shall see God.'

Secondly, But why is faith in our Lord Jesus Christ required, and so much spoken of in scripture? I will content myself but with two reasons at this time:—

[1.] Faith in Christ is most fitted for the acceptance of God's free gift. Faith and grace do always go together, and are put as opposite to law and works: Rom. iv. 16, 'It is of faith that it may be of grace:' Eph. ii. 8, 'For by grace ye are saved through faith, and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.' Faith establishes and keeps up the interest and honour of grace; for it is the free grace and favour of God to condescend to the rebel world, so far as he hath done in the new covenant. We present ourselves before him as those that stand wholly to his mercy, have nothing to plead for ourselves but the righteousness and merit of our Re-

deemer, by virtue of which we humbly beg pardon and life to be begun in us by his Spirit, and perfected in glory.

[2.] Why faith in Christ? Because the way of our recovery is so strange and wonderful. It can only be received by faith; sense cannot convey it to us, reason will not, and nothing is reserved for the entertainment of this glorious mystery, pardon, and salvation by our Redeemer, but faith alone. If I should deduce this argument at large, I would show you nothing but faith, or the belief of God's testimony concerning his Son, can support us in these transactions with God. The comfort of the promise is so rich and glorious, sense and reason cannot inform us of it: 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive, the things God hath prepared for them that love him,' 1 Cor. ii. 9. It is not meant only of heaven, but of the whole preparations and rich provisions God hath made for us in the gospel. It is not a thing can come to us by eye or ear, or the conceiving of man's heart; we only believe and entertain it by faith. And then, the persons upon whom it is bestowed are so unworthy, that certainly it cannot enter into the heart of man that God will be so good, and do so much good to such. Adam, when he had sinned, grew shy of God, and ran away from him. Besides, the way God hath taken for our deliverance is so supernatural: 'God so loved the world, that he sent his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' That God should become man, that he should submit to such an accursed death for our sakes, is so high and glorious, it can only be entertained by faith. Besides, our chief blessedness lies in another world: 'He that lacketh faith is blind, and cannot see afar off.' Here in this lower world, where our God is unseen, and our great hopes are to come, where the flesh is so importunate to be pleased, where our temptations and trials are so many, and difficulties so great, we are apt to question all, and we can never keep waiting upon God, were it not for faith, and a steady belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. For these reasons (if you look into the scriptures), it is why faith is so much insisted upon, that we may keep up the honour of God's grace, and because this grace of the Redeemer is so mysterious and wonderful.

4. The use of these two graces discovers their nature. What is faith and repentance? Repentance towards God is a turning from sin to God. The *terminus a quo* of repentance is our begun recovery from sin, and therefore called, 'Repentance from dead works,' Heb. vi. 1. The *terminus ad quem*, to which we return, is God, and our being devoted to God in obedience and love. God never hath our hearts till he hath our love and delight, till we return to a love of his blessed majesty, and delight in his ways. This is called in scripture sometimes a turning to God, in many other places a seeking after God, a giving up ourselves to God: 2 Cor. viii. 5, 'They gave up themselves to the Lord.' This is the repentance by which we enter into the gospel state. Now what is faith? Besides an assent to the gospel, which is at the bottom of it, it is a serious, thankful, broken-hearted acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he may be to every one of us what God hath appointed him to be, and do for every one of us what God hath appointed him to do for poor sinners; it is serious and

broken-hearted, done by a creature in misery, and thankful for such a wonderful benefit, a trusting to this Redeemer, that he may do the work of a redeemer in our hearts, to save us from the evil of, and after, sin.

And thus I have briefly opened this necessary doctrine, as clearly laid in the scripture. And this is your entrance in the evangelic state.

II. For our continuance therein; for we must not only mind our entrance, but our continuance. Our Lord Jesus tells us of a gate and a way: the gate signifies the entrance, and the way our continuance. And we read of making and keeping covenant with God; we read of union with Christ, that is our first entrance. For this faith is the closing act, and expressed sometimes by a being married to Christ. But there is not only an union with Christ, but an abiding in him: 'Abide in me, and I will abide in you.' Now as for our continuance, I would show you that the first works are gone over and over again, faith and repentance are still necessary: 'For the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.' And repentance is still necessary. But I shall only press two things—first, new obedience; secondly, daily prayer.

1. New obedience is required: 1 John i. 7, 'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' Holy walking is necessary to the continuance of our being cleansed from sin, and therefore mercy is promised to the forsaking of our sins: Prov. xxviii. 13, 'He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy;' Isa. lv. 7, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thought; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' Our hearts were not sound with God in the first covenanting if we undo what was done: 'If we build again the things we have destroyed, then we are found transgressors,' Gal. ii. 18. Well, then, a man that seeks after pardon, seeks after it with the ruin and destruction of sin. Sin was the greatest burden that lay upon his conscience, the grievance from whence he sought ease, the wound pained him at heart, the disease his soul was sick of. And was all this anguish real? And shall a man come to delight in his sores again, and take up the burden he groaned under, and tear open the wound that was in a fair way of healing, and willingly relapse into the sickness he was almost recovered from with so much ado? Sure this shows our first consent was not real and sincere. And then Christ will be no advocate for them that continue in their sins. 'Our God is a God of salvation,' we cannot enough speak of his saving mercy; but 'he will wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses,' Ps. lxxviii. 20, 21.

2. Daily prayer. [This was spoken unto at the close of the first sermon.] Mat. vi. 12. Our Lord hath taught us to pray (for we make but too much work for pardoning mercy every day), 'Every day forgive us our trespasses.' *To-day* in one of the petitions, is common to all that follow; as we beg daily bread, we must beg daily pardon, daily grace against temptations. Under the law they had a lamb every

morning and every evening offered to God for a daily sacrifice, Num. xxviii. 4-6. We are all invited to look to the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. Surely we have as much need as they—more cause than they, because now all is clear and openly made known unto us. God came to Adam in the cool of the day; he would not let him sleep in his sins: before night came he comes and rouseth his conscience, and then gives out the promise of the seed of the woman that should break the serpent's head. In reconciliation with God let not the sun go down upon God's wrath, Eph. iv. 26. A man should not sleep in his anger, nor out of charity with man; surely we should make our peace with God every day. If a man under the law had contracted any uncleanness, he was to wash his clothes before evening, that he might not lie a night in his uncleanness. We should daily, earnestly, come to God with this request, Lord, pardon our sins. But what! must those that are already adopted into God's family, and taken into his grace and favour, daily pray for pardon of sin? Though upon our first faith our state be changed, and we are indeed made children of God, and heirs of eternal life by faith in Christ Jesus, yet he that is clean need wash his feet. We contract a great deal of sinful defilement and pollution by walking up and down here in a dirty world, and we must every day be cleansing our consciences before God, and begging that we may be made partakers of this benefit.

III. The third thing is our recovery out of grievous lapses and falls. In them there is required a particular and express repentance; and repentance and faith must be carried with respect to those four things that are in sin: *culpa*, the fault, *reatus*, the guilt, *macula*, the stain and blot, and *pœna*, the punishment. You know the law supposeth a righteous nature that God gives to man, therefore in sin there is a stain or blot, defacing God's image. The precepts of the law require duty, so it is *culpa*, a criminal act; the sanction of the law as threatened makes way for guilt, as executed calls for punishment; you see how it ariseth.

1. For the fault in the transgression of the law, or the criminal action. See that the fault be not continued; relapses are very dangerous. A bone often broken in the same place is hardly set again. God's children are in danger of this before the breach be well made up, or the orifice of the wound be soundly closed; as Lot doubled his incest, and Samson goes in again and again to Delilah. But in wicked men frequently, as that king sent fifty after fifty, and nothing would stop him. There is an express forsaking of sin required of us, otherwise it would abolish all the difference between the renewed and the carnal.

2. The guilt continues till serious and solemn repentance, and humiliation before God, and suing out our pardon in Christ's name. 1 John i. 9, he speaks of believers: 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' There must be a solemn humbling for the sin, and then God will forgive us. Suppose a man forbore the act, and never commit it more (as Judah forbore the act, after he had committed incest with Tamar, but it seems he repented not till she showed him the bracelets and the staff); yet with serious remorse we must beg our peace humbly upon the account of our Mediator. Therefore something must be done to take away the guilt.

3. There is the blot or evil inclination to sin again. The blot of sin in general is the defacing of God's image, but in particular sins it is some weakening of the reverence of God. A man cannot venture to act a grievous wilful sin, but there is a violent obstruction of the fear of God. A brand that hath been in the fire is more apt to take fire again; the evil influences of the sin continue. Now the root of sin must be mortified, it is not enough to forbear or confess a sin, but we must pull out the core of the distemper before all will be well. As Jonah, he repented of his tergiversation and forsaking his call. The fault was not repeated: he goes to Nineveh and does his duty. Yet the core of the distemper was not taken away; for you read of him, Jonah iv. 2, 'Was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew thou wert a gracious God, and repentest thee of the evil.' On the contrary, Peter fell into a grievous sin, denying his Lord and Master with oaths and execrations; but afterwards, John xxi. 15, Christ tries him: Jesus saith to Simon Peter, 'Lovest thou me more than these?' pointing to the rest of his disciples. Peter had been bragging, Mat. xxvi. 33, 'Though all men forsake thee, yet I will not forsake thee.' Now when he was foiled, though he had wept bitterly for his fault, Christ tries if the cause be removed: 'Lord, saith he, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.' But he doth not say now, 'more than these.' The root of the distemper was gone; Peter is grown more modest now than to make comparisons.

4. There is the punishment. Now we must deprecate eternal punishment, and bless God for Jesus Christ, 'who hath delivered us from wrath to come.' But as to temporal evils, God hath reserved a liberty in the covenant to his wisdom and fatherly justice, to inflict temporal punishments as he shall see good. 'If they break his statutes, and keep not his commandments; then will he visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness I will not utterly take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail,' Ps. lxxxix. 32, 33. If 'judgment begin at the house of God,' what shall become of the sinner and ungodly? The righteous are recompensed upon earth, partly to increase their repentance, that when they smart under the fruit of sin, they may best judge of the evil of it. God doth in effect say, 'Now know it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against me.' God doth not do it to complete their justification, but to promote their sanctification, and to make us warnings to others, that they may not displease God as we do. Now for these reasons the Lord, though he doth forgive the sin and release the eternal punishment, yet he reserves a liberty to chastise us in our persons, families, and relations. Therefore what is our business? Humbly deprecate this temporal judgment: 'Lord, correct me not in thine anger, nor chasten me in thy hot displeasure.' We should be instant with God to get it stopped or mitigated; but if the Lord see it fit it shall come, patiently submit to him, and say, as the church, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.' These afflictive evils, some of them belong to God's external government, and some to his internal. Some to his external government, as when many are sick, and weak, and fallen asleep: 'When we are

judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.' A rod dipped in guilt may smart sore upon the back of God's children, if they will play the wantons and rebels with God. Eli broke his neck, his sons were killed in battle, the ark taken. But then there are some other things belonging to his internal government, as the withdrawing the comforts of his Spirit, or the lively influences of his grace; for this was the evil David feared when he had gone into wilful sins: Ps. li. 11, 12, 'Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not away thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.' When God's children fall into sin, though the Lord doth not utterly take away his loving-kindness from them, he may abate the influences of his grace so far as they may never recover the like measure again as long as they live.

SERMON III.

Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.—ACTS III. 26.

THESE words are the conclusion of the second sermon that was preached after the pouring out of the Spirit, and in them you may observe three things:—

I. The parties concerned: *unto you first.*

II. The benefit offered: *God, having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent him to bless you.*

III. The blessing interpreted, or what kind of blessing it is we shall have by the Mediator: *he hath sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you from your iniquities.*

Let me a little open these, before I come to observe anything.

I. For the parties concerned: *unto you first.* Why was the first offer of Christ made unto the people of the Jews? For sundry reasons. Partly:—

1. Because they were the only church of God for that time, and the people that were in visible communion with him. And God hath so much respect for the church, that they shall have the refusal and the morning-market of the gospel. And whatsoever dispensations of grace are set on foot shall be first brought to them: 'He hath showed his statutes unto Jacob: he hath not dealt so with other nations,' Ps. cxlvii. 19.

2. They were the children of the covenant: 'Ye are the children of the covenant,' therefore 'unto you first.' God was in covenant with their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and God follows a covenant people with more offers of grace than he doth vouchsafe unto others, and bears with sin after sin till he can bear no longer. And when the branches of the covenant-stock run quite wild, then they are cut off, Rom. xi. 20.

3. Christ came of them after the flesh, and was of their seed, Rom.