

# A Sermon.

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Preached on Sabbath, 19th August, 1917.

“They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion  
appeareth before God” – Psalm 84:7.

The Psalmist begins this Psalm by expressing admiration for the Tabernacle of the Lord, where the people of Israel gathered to worship. He himself was a true worshipper of God, and was a regular attendant in God’s house, except when he was driven away from it by enemies. It would appear that on this occasion he was far away from the Lord’s house, through persecution. As he envies the sparrows that were at liberty to fly to it, he vehemently longs to be restored to the courts of the Lord, which he so much loved. Though absent in body, he was present there in spirit.

In speaking from our text, we shall notice: –

- I. – The people spoken of, “*They*”;
- II. – The way through which they have to go;
- III. – The manner in which they are enabled to go through that way; and
- IV. – The place they are going to.

I. – There is no doubt but it is the Lord’s people that are spoken of, as the Psalmist calls them *blessed*. It is they only that are blessed; all others are under the curse. Their sins are forgiven, and David in another psalm says that, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” (Psalm 32:1). They are justified, and there is no condemnation to them. They are also spoken of as dwelling in the Lord’s house as His children. They are not only justified, but also adopted into His family. They were born again in the Lord’s house, and they dwell in it, not only as those who have a title to it but as worshippers, for it is said, “They will be still praising thee.” The service of praise is a part of God’s worship; they have many reasons to praise the Lord, and He gives them a heart to praise Him. They are spoken of as those who have their strength, not in themselves, but in the Lord; and they not only walk in His ways, but love them; they are in their heart. “Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are the ways of them” (verse 5). “The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them” (Hosea 14:9).

II. – Although they dwell in the house of the Lord, yet they are travellers and sojourners in this world, travelling on the way to heaven. What was their starting point? It was the cross of Christ. Although they were awakened by the Spirit to a sense of their sinful and lost condition, they did not begin their journey then. No; not till they believed in Christ. They then began to walk in the narrow way that leads to life. At the same time they began their wilderness journey in this world. It is this way that is spoken of in our text. When the people of Israel were brought out of their bondage in Egypt, they had to travel through a wilderness before they came to their destination, the land of promise. In like manner, believers have to walk through the wilderness of this world before they arrive at their destination in heaven. The world which they formerly considered a paradise, and in which they sought their happiness, now becomes a wilderness to them, in which they cannot find anything to sustain the spiritual life communicated to them. In this wilderness they meet with many trials and manifold temptations. In their journey they have to pass through the valley of Baca – a valley of tears. When the people of Israel

crossed the Red Sea they began to sing, and they thought that they would continue in that frame of mind till they came to the end of their wilderness journey, but they soon found out that it was not to be so. If they were asked where they were going, they would tell that they were going to the good land that flowed with milk and honey. If asked, when did they expect to arrive there, they would perhaps say that they expected to be there in forty days; but near the end of forty years, if the man to whom they told that they expected to be in the land of Canaan at the end of forty days met them, and said, "You are still in the wilderness; when do you expect to reach the land of promise?" they would be apt to say that it did not seem that they would ever reach that land. In like manner the Lord's people, who sang for joy when they were brought into Gospel liberty, thought that all their difficulties were past, that they would be always singing during their journey, and that they would be soon in heaven, but they found out that they were oftener mourning than rejoicing, and afraid that they would never reach heaven. The people of Israel were left so long in the wilderness that they might know what was in their heart. Believers knew little of the evil that was in their heart when they first believed in Christ. They were more troubled by their actual transgressions than by the corruption of their nature, the foul fountain from which all actual transgressions proceed. But, the longer they are in the wilderness, the more they discover the wickedness of their heart – that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. As there is no actual transgression forgiven before it is brought before the eye of the sinner, so no corruption of nature is removed and cleansed until it is first brought before the eye of the believer. In the wilderness they meet with many oppositions from within and without, and this is ordained to try and prove their graces – that the trial of their faith and other graces might be found more precious than gold tried in the fire. The longer they are in their wilderness the more the troubles of their heart are enlarged. Even Christ Himself, the glorious head of the Church, the longer He was in His state of humiliation the greater His sufferings became, so that He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Mark 14:34).

III. – The manner in which they are enabled to go through the wilderness. –

They go "from strength to strength." They are sometimes strong, and other times weak. They are strong in the Lord, but weak in themselves. When Samson's hair was cut, he became as weak as other men. But the believer is sometimes brought so low, that he is weaker than other men; he is so by the power of unbelief, and other causes.

Although it is the Lord that strengthens them to go forward in the wilderness, they have to use means, as those in our text did. They digged wells in the dry wilderness, and God sent down rain to fill these wells. They dig wells by prayer, and God, in answer to prayer, sends down the rain of His Spirit to refresh and strengthen them to go forward on their journey heavenward. They dig wells in faith and expectation that the rain shall be sent down. The Lord's people are a praying people, but they do not rest in prayer as a ground of salvation; they use it only as a means of salvation. Although you may dig a well, you cannot put water in it, for that is God's work. All the means of grace are wells, and these are to be used, in order to be strengthened to persevere in their journey. Reading the Scriptures is a means of bringing down the heavenly rain to thirsty souls. In their state of nature they seldom read the Bible, but when they were awakened by the Spirit they began not only to read it but to search it. They saw in that sacred volume not only their sinful and fallen condition, but also the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, which brought hope and comfort to their weary souls. It is wonderful how soon they come to the knowledge of God's Word. They read the Bible daily, not only at family worship, but privately, each for himself or herself. It was the practice of the Lord's people in the past to read the Bible in course, at family worship, from beginning to end; to read the Old Testament in course in the morning, and the New Testament in the evening, so that the whole Bible was read from beginning to end, and that repeatedly. They search the Scriptures for a word to comfort, and cry to God in their distress, and He speaks to

them a word in season, to encourage and strengthen them. The Lord speaks a word in season to them when they are helpless and hopeless in themselves, and not knowing what to say or do.

They dig wells by meditation on the Word of the Lord, like the blessed man that is spoken of in the first Psalm, who meditates on the law of God day and night. They are thus enabled to go from strength unto strength. Some render the phrase, “from strength unto strength,” “from company unto company.” As they proceed on the journey the company increases, and the more numerous they become, the more they renew their strength. They encourage one another, and thus go from strength unto strength. If two are better than one, how much more is a large company; they commune with one another, and go from strength to strength by the profitable communication. They go from one company to another in the following sense – from being new-born babes to the company of “little children,” and from that to the company of “young men,” and from that to the company of “fathers” in Israel. While they are strengthened and comforted by each other, they are enabled to persevere in their journey, going from strength to strength, especially by looking unto Jesus, “the author and finisher of their faith.” So long as they have their eye fixed upon Him they are strengthened to go forward, but when they lose sight of Him, from various causes, they become weak and helpless till He manifests Himself to them again. When Peter kept his eye on Christ he could walk upon the face of the waters, but when he took his eye off Him, to look upon his dangerous position, he began to sink. So it is with believers.

IV. – The place they are going to, Zion, that is, heaven. We are all travelling on to eternity. Where are we going to in the world of eternity? Many are journeying on to hell, but the Lord’s people are going to heaven, and as they are journeying on to that place of perfect felicity, they ought to say to their fellow-sinners by word and practice, as Moses said to Hobab, “We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you. Come thou with us, and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel” (Numbers 10:29). They shall all reach heaven; not one of them shall fail to appear there. Our text makes this sure: “Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.” Many that came out of Egypt never reached the land of promise, but all who are brought out of a state of nature shall reach the Zion of glory. It was for this end they were brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace. Whatever may be their own doubts and fears in this matter, God’s purpose concerning them cannot fail of being accomplished.

In conclusion:

(1) A word of comfort and encouragement to the Lord’s people. You have met, and you still meet, with many things in your wilderness journey to discourage you, but, as the Lord purposed to bring you to heaven, none of these things shall be able to frustrate His purpose. When you arrive there, you shall leave behind you all that obstructed your way thitherward. Sin within you shall never cause you trouble any more, for you shall be perfectly holy. Unbelief, which caused you much discouragement, shall trouble you no more. You shall be beyond the reach of Satan, who did his utmost to torment you while on earth, and the world that hated and persecuted you is powerless to cause you any more trouble. You shall then fully understand what the Apostle Paul said, “I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). You were weeping in the wilderness, but in heaven all your tears are wiped away from your eyes by the tender and merciful hand of your heavenly Father. While on earth you were drinking out of the streams which flowed from the river of life, but in heaven you shall be drinking out of the fountain-head which dwells in God, the fountain of living waters. In the state of imperfection you were praising God for His goodness to you, but your song of praise was often interrupted, so that, instead of praise, you were crying in prayer to Him in your

distress for deliverance, but in heaven prayer shall be exchanged for praise, without interruption, unceasingly throughout eternity. You are still in the “wilderness,” but the Lord has given you repeated tokens for good, the remembrance of which should enable you to set up your Ebenezer, saying, “Hitherto the Lord hath helped us.” And He who helped you hitherto, is able to help you to the end, when you shall shout the song of victory, ascribing the glory to God, in the words of Scripture: “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57).

(2) A word to the awakened sinner who asks the important question: “What must I do to be saved?” Take heed that you will not rest satisfied till you receive the only safe answer to that question – “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” – for many came to your stage of anxiety that never went further, and were lost at last. This ought not to discourage you, although it is a solemn warning. Pray earnestly that the Lord would work faith in you by the effectual work of His Spirit, that you may receive Christ in the free offer of the Gospel. When you are enabled to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you have peace with God, and you may speak to your soul thus: “Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee” (Psalm 116:7).

(3) A word to the careless sinner. What a dangerous state is that in which you are – under the curse of a broken law, and exposed every moment to the awful wrath of an angry God! What a wonder it is that you have not been removed by the messenger of death, from this world of Gospel privileges to the place of everlasting torment in the world of eternity! It is high time that you should awake out of sleep, “to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon his name while he is near.” Although your case is dangerous it is not desperate, for you are invited to come to Christ, “who is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him.” *We* cannot save you, but “we pray you in Christ’s stead, Be ye reconciled to God.” “For he hath made him who knew no sin to be a sin offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:20,21). Notwithstanding all the sins of which you have been guilty, nothing shall cause your everlasting ruin but the rejecting of Christ, freely offered to you in the Gospel. We leave the matter with you, and if you die in your sins, we shall be free of your blood. “He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (Hebrews 10:28,29).

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## A Sermon.

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(Tenth Sermon of Series on Psalm 130.)

“But there is forgiveness with thee” – Psalm 130:4.

In handling this great point, the remission of sins, which is, in effect, the great article of the new covenant – see Jeremiah 31:34, “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” – after I had spoken, in the first place, to that which is pardoned, or pardonable, sin, I entered in the morning to speak to the Author of pardon, that “forgiveness is with God.” Whatever hand ministers or private persons may have in pardoning – the one in carrying the word of reconciliation and pardon, the other in forgiving sins, so far as they are injuries done to themselves – yet God is still the principal creditor, and pardon from Him is still to be looked after. From which (as I told you) not only Papists, who lie down and sleep on the pillow of men’s pardon without considering whether they act according to their commission, come to be reprov’d, but these self-absolvers, and these who rest on the applause of others, and these who, to please men, stand not to displease God, are found to be culpable.

Now, before I leave this head, I would draw somewhat from it for encouragement of those who are in earnest about the pardon of sin. And that “there is forgiveness with God” should, and will, affect sensible sinners as a wonder; He will not only be a matchless God to them, upon the account that “he passes by iniquity, and pardons transgression” (Micah 7:18), but it will be a wonder to them that there should be a pardon for iniquity, that pardoning mercy should be with Him, whose holy justice is so great, who is of purer eyes than that He can behold iniquity, who hath no pleasure in wickedness, and who hateth all the workers of iniquity. That such a holy and just God should pardon sin, that His holiness and justice should combine so sweetly, with mercy to the sinner, is a wonder of wonders. Yea, further, this may heighten the wonder, that pardoning mercy gives access to them who are excluded by the covenant of works, that, when, as it is in verse 3, if He should mark iniquity, none could stand, yet, as in verse 4, there should be forgiveness with Him, and that, as it is deduced (Romans 3:20-22), when by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin, so now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law, and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe, without difference. That there should be a righteousness by the faith of Christ, closing with Him for pardon, O! what a wonder is that, and how good news should that be to sinners. How should it quicken up, and revive any that are ready to sink under the burden of the sense of sin that, when they look upon a holy and just God that hates sin with a perfect hatred, they may also look upon Him as one who will pardon; that when they look to the law and covenant of works, their expectations are not to be limited thereby, because there is a righteousness without the law manifested to be had by faith in Christ!

3. But because sensible souls may readily think, “How can this be?” and may be afraid to lean their weight on a pardon; they have so much guilt, and the conscience is alarmed with it, and pardoning mercy is an act of free grace, whereupon they know not if they may venture; therefore, to enforce this, that God is a pardoner of iniquity, I shall not anticipate what may come to be spoken to this afterwards, but shall ask the sensible sinner meantime to consider:–

(1) That the pardon of sin is an act of royal prerogative in free grace. It is an act of princes’ royal prerogative to pardon criminals in many cases, and shall we deny that to God which we give to creatures? Seeing He is above all law, who can hinder Him to have mercy on whom He will have mercy, to do with His own what He will, and pardon whom He will? Salvation belongs to Him, as His prerogative royal.

(2) Sensible sinners should consider that satisfaction is paid to justice for their sins, though He freely pardons (which will come in afterward). Only here, such should remember that thoughts of the holiness and justice of God need not affright the sensible sinner. Why? Justice is fully satisfied. That fire that burnt continually on the altar, and was not quenched by these sacrifices under the law, is now quenched; the burning fire of the justice of God is now satisfied; and hence God, in pardoning sins, is not only merciful, but just. Therefore (Romans 3:26), upon Christ the Redeemer's being set forth as the propitiation, through faith in His blood, it follows to declare His righteousness, that He might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus without reflection upon His justice. And hence the Apostle (1 John 1:9) says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," not only upon the account of His fidelity that He will keep His promise, but upon the account of the agreement passed betwixt Him and the Mediator, and upon the account of the satisfaction and price paid by the Mediator upon that account, He is faithful and just to pardon sin.

(3) And hence, things being thus, when sensible sinners come to Christ, or to God through Him, for pardon, and yet are filled with doubts and fears, they should conclude that their hesitation results not from the uncertainty of their pardon, for the holy and just God will not break bargain with His Son, but partly results from ignorance of that righteousness which is by the covenant of grace. We know no righteousness by the covenant of works but that which is inherent, and the ignorance of that righteousness, which is by the covenant of grace, is the ground of our hesitation, and of many doubts and fears. Partly it results from a proud competition, whether thy abounding sin or His superabounding grace should carry it (Romans 5:20, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound") and therefore thou that comest to Christ for pardon, and yet will not settle upon it, thou wouldst lay upon the matter that thy abounding sin should carry it, and not His superabounding grace. So much for the second head proposed to be spoken to concerning the Author of pardon.

The third thing I proposed to be spoken to was anent the nature of the pardon of sin, what this pardon of sin imports, or is. And this, when I have spoken to it at this time, will give rise to several other questions, which will come in, in their own place, and may be useful for you. I shall not detain you upon the signification and importance of these words and phrases that express pardon in Scripture, that may come in afterward. That word (Matthew 6:12), "Forgive us our debts," signifies the dismissing of one accused, and a loosing of one bound for debt. Both concur here; as sins are a debt, they are forgiven; and, as they are a bond tying the conscience to answer at the tribunal of God, they are remitted and loosed; and considering sins as accusations of them that are in a Court accused, a pardon remits and assoilzies them. So the pardoned man may say, as Romans 8:33, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth," etc. The word rendered pardon or forgiveness (Colossians 2:13, "Having forgiven you all trespasses") hints at the freedom of the grace of God in pardoning of sin. It's the publican's word (Luke 18:13), "God be merciful to me a sinner." The word in the original expresses pardon, with an eye to the propitiation. Paul's word also, "I obtained mercy" (1 Timothy 1:13), which also is a word made use of in the New Testament, or Covenant (Hebrews 8:12), intimates the yearnings of the bowels of God relative to the miserable state of the pardoned sinner, expressed in pardoning. That word, Psalm 32:2, and Romans 4:8, not imputing of sin or iniquity, is borrowed from merchants that, in casting up accounts, pass some debts. And that word, Psalm 32:1, "of covering sin," imports that, as sin is a loathsome thing, so the pardoning of sin takes sin out of the sight of God's vindictive justice. Now, all these expressions put together give some general hint what pardon of sin is, when God out of His free grace, out of the yearning bowels of His mercy and compassion, accepts of the propitiation made by Jesus Christ, and upon that account remits the sinner's obligation to wrath by pardoning sin, dismisses him from the accusation

laid against him, looses him of his bonds, puts his debts out of His books, and covers the loathsomeness of his sin.

But to follow out this a little more distinctly, as to what this pardon is, I shall take up both negatively, what it is not, and then positively, what it is. For an error here is an error in the first digestion, or concoction, that will not be gotten well helped in the second.

For the first of these, negatively, what the pardon of sin is not. And for clearing of this, what I would say upon it ye shall take in these five: –

(1) Pardon with God is not to be confounded with our forgetting sin, slighting of sin, or taking a pardon of it to ourselves. God's pardon of sin is one thing, and men's taking of pardon to themselves is another. There are many folk that think God sees no sin in them, and why? They have no leisure to look after sin in themselves. They think God hath forgotten sin. Why? They themselves, through length of time, or other diversions, have forgotten it. This is all that many have for that great article of their creed, "I believe in the remission of sins." But do not cheat yourselves, as I cleared before to you, from Joseph's brethren, Genesis 42:21, sin long ago committed, even upwards of twenty or two and twenty years, if it be not pardoned, will be as green when the conscience is wakened as the first hour it was committed. Therefore look to it, ye who forgive your sins by forgetting them, and take not your forgetting of sin for God's pardoning of it.

(2) In taking up the nature of pardon, we must not look so lightly on sin, as if there were no more to do than we to sin and God to forgive. It's indeed pardoned, as to any satisfaction to justice that's exacted of thee, but justice behaved to be satisfied, that God might pardon freely. There is a question agitated amongst orthodox divines, whether God, out of His royal prerogative, might not pardon sin without a satisfaction – a question that they determine variously, either as they grapple with Arminians, who say the satisfaction of Christ was only to loose God from any bond lying upon Him, resulting upon a necessity to punish sin; or as they grapple with the Socinians, who deny there was any satisfaction for sin paid by Christ. But were I worthy to be umpire in such a thing, there is so much hazard in debates started anent the nature of God, when it is inquired what He might do, and what He may not do, that I would judge it safer to forbear it. This is sufficient for us, that, in the case in hand, He hath declared what He will do, or not do, particularly that He will not pardon sin without a satisfaction. So, Romans 3:24, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." He would have His righteousness declared for the remission of sins; and that, as it is, Hebrews 9:22, "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Thus the pardon of our sin cost Christ dear, and yet it runs freely to us, because God freely laid the burden on Christ, and Christ freely undertook it, and God freely accepts of His satisfaction in our name, and so we come to be freely pardoned. But remember, sin is with God no trifle, no light thing, that He would easily pass; no, He would have His justice satisfied, that He might freely pardon. And the consideration of this will not only commend the love of God, and the love of Christ, in finding out such a way whereby pardon might come to sinners without prejudice of justice; but, further, the freedom of pardon will not hide from the sinner that is pardoned the odiousness of sin, but make it so much the more loathsome and vile when he sees his pardon sealed with the blood of Christ, and all His exinanition [emptying or poverty] that went before. O! the pardoned sinner looking to Christ crucified, and considering that he hath pierced Him by his sins. It will make him mourn most bitterly, as one that mourneth for his only son, and like that of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon, Zechariah 12:10. So, when thou lookest upon pardoning mercy, thou takest not a right look of it except thou lookest also on the satisfaction made to justice by Christ that a free pardon might come out to thee.

(3) In taking up the nature of pardon, beware that ye do not confound the pardon of sin with God's forbearing, or not inflicting punishment on sinners. If ye confound these, ye will

embrace a shadow, and get a lie in your right hand instead of pardon. Ye know what the Apostle says, Romans 2:4, that there is a riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long-suffering. How long did God forbear the old world? for an hundred and twenty years, Genesis 6:3. How suffered He His people's manners for about forty years! Now, this forbearance of God, as it is often a temptation to godly men, so it is a snare to the wicked, or they make it a snare to themselves. It's often a temptation to godly men, as Psalm 73:1. O! what a temptation was it to the Psalmist, his feet were almost gone; his steps were well near slipped; he was envious at the foolish when he saw the prosperity of the wicked, how they had no bonds in their death, and their strength was firm, they were not in trouble as other men, etc. O! he thought, if he had been on the throne, he would have made these children know themselves sooner nor God did, and Habakkuk 1:13, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?" There ye see the forbearance of God is a temptation to the godly. Wicked men also make a snare of it to themselves. O! the wicked doctrines that wicked men build on God's forbearance. One is, wrong thoughts of God, Psalm 50:21, "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." There is a doctrine that wicked men found on God's forbearance: they think God is like themselves. Another is, that thereby they are emboldened to go on in sin, Ecclesiastes 8:11, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." So, Romans 24, they harden themselves by God's forbearance. The riches of God's goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering should lead them to repentance, but they abuse it to produce hardness, and impenitent hearts, and further, they bless themselves in prospering in wickedness; Hosea 12:7, Ephraim is a Canaanite, "a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand, he loveth to oppress," and he saith, "Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance. Let the Bible say of me what it will, the sun of prosperity shines on my tabernacle, as well as on your tenderest folk; I am as far from any mischance as the most upright in their conversation." But still remember, forbearance in God is no pardon, that which is fristed [delayed] is not forgiven; it's no sign of Divine approbation when thou art forborn, and prosperest in a sinful way. To these ends ye shall remember these three Scriptures, and they will help you not to confound forbearance with pardon. One is Ecclesiastes 8:12, "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God." How will ye prove that? Because he fears before Him. "But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God." No approbation lies in the bosom of forbearance. Anther Scripture that gives a dreadful refutation to them that take forbearance for pardon, is that, Psalm 50:21, "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." There is a refutation of all the wicked man's dreams anent God, and His forbearance. And, if you would have a third Scripture, take the forecited place, Romans 2:4,5, "Thou despisest the riches of his goodness, forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that it leadeth thee to repentance, but, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath." Thou mayest treasure up other things as thou wilt for thy advantage, but thou shalt find thou treasurest up wrath to thy ruin; thou mayest think, because thou prosperest in sin, God approves of thee (as the saying is, *prosperum et felix scelus virtus vocatur*, wickedness is called a virtue, because it thrives), yet remember, that forbearance is no pardon.

(4) In taking up the nature of pardon negatively, consider, that God's pardoning of particular sinners, whereby He restores them in favour, is not to be confounded with national

pardon, which God gives to nations. This pardon is many times spoken of in Scripture, though, by analogy, we may draw it to a particular pardon. So the scope of that place, Numbers 14:19, runs another way than to particular persons, and respects a national pardon. "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people (says Moses) according unto the greatness of thy mercy, as thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt, even until now." "I have pardoned according to thy word (says the Lord), but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. I have pardoned, but yet I will punish, and vindicate mine honour." So that passage, Psalm 78:38, "But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not when they deserved." That was a pardon of the nation, or a national pardon. Now a national pardon amounts only to this: when the Lord forbears to root out a nation, as the Lord threatened to Moses, that he would root out Israel, Numbers 14:12, and that He would disinherit them, and make of him a greater nation, and a mightier than they; and when He keeps them in their own land, as He did Israel, and does not root them out, or when He continues with them the privilege of a Church, though He plague them and weed out a godless generation from among them, as He did out of Israel, that in the space of thirty-eight years' time there was not a man of them left that was twenty years old and upwards when they came out of Egypt, save Caleb and Joshua. So the Lord may pardon a nation, and yet punish them; He may by His judgments weed out the generality of a nation, and send them to the pit, which may consist with a national pardon when He doth not cut off the nation, or suffers them to enjoy the privileges of a Church. But the pardon of a particular sinner is, when he sits down at God's footstool, and judges himself, and closes with Christ for righteousness, and that's another thing.

And (5) in taking up the nature of pardon negatively, we must beware of confounding the pardon of sin with the removal of sin; the prosecution whereof would lead me to speak positively, wherein pardon of sin consists, to the guilt and pollution of sin, and the different acts of God about both. But, because that will give rise to other questions, I shall remit it to another occasion. Only here ye shall distinguish these three: the filth of sin, the power of sin, and the guilt of sin. The filth of sin is the foul stain that sin leaves behind it; the guilt of sin is the offence done to God, and the obligation to punishment resulting thereupon; the power of sin is the tyranny that sin exercises over the sinner. Now, when I say we are not to confound the pardon of sin with the removal of sin, ye would understand it aright. I grant that God strikes at the guilt of sin and the power of sin both at once, which is this in plain language, that a pardoned sin must not be a reigning sin; where the virtue of the blood is applied for pardon, the power of the blood will also be applied for the subjugating of sin, and putting it from the throne. And therefore, in the by, ye may take it as a noble evidence of pardon when sin is subdued, or if it be not subdued, yet ye are engaged against your own sinful disposition, that it prevails not with your consent. But for the filthiness of sin; though it be stricken at as soon as any of the former, regeneration lays the ax to the root of that tree, yet it remains in the saints till death makes the separation. Paul hath a law in his members, rebelling against the law in his mind till death (Romans 7). But the pardon of sin is attainable before death, and is given in justification, and afterwards upon the justified person's repentance for particular faults, and therefore, consequently, it is not to be confounded with the removal of sin. Sin may be pardoned, and pardon of sin is consistent with the sight of the filthiness of sin, for which the soul is abased before God daily after regeneration, though sin doth not reign. And that's it wherein the pardon of sin consists, even in the taking away of the guilt of sin, and of the soul's obligation to wrath, though the filth of sin remain.

*[continued in September 1920]*

[May 1920]

## A Sermon.

By the late REV. PROFESSOR JOHN DUNCAN, LL.D.,  
Edinburgh.

*(Hitherto Unpublished.)*

[Preached at Clare Hall, Grange, Edinburgh, on 10th April, 1864.]

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” – Hebrews 9:27,28.

You will have observed in reading the former part of the chapter, that a comparison is instituted between the services belonging to the first covenant and the second. The Apostle had been comparing the Christian dispensation with the Jewish, Christ with Moses, the Apostle of that dispensation, and Aaron, the High Priest of it. He alludes, in the eighth verse of the eighth chapter to the new covenant, quoting from Jeremiah thirty-first “Behold, the

days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah"; and reverts to the points of agreement and of contrast between the services that belonged to the first, or Sinaitic covenant, and what belongs to the new covenant. There was a worldly sanctuary, and in it were offered daily sacrifices; and once a year took place the great sacrifice of the Day of Atonement. Besides, at the entering of the people into covenant relation with God, when they met with Him, Moses offered sacrifices, and sprinkled both the book and the vessels of the tabernacle, and the people, with blood. "It was necessary," says he, "that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." He here makes out then that the services of the Mosaic dispensation were the *patterns* of things in the heavens, but that the things of the new covenant are the heavenly things themselves. Both had to be purified with blood. For the patterns of things in the heavens, which were types of heavenly things, typical blood sufficed unto an outward end; but, for the heavenly things, there was needed better blood, viz., Jesus entering with His own blood into the true sanctuary.

The contrast therefore is shewn in two particulars. First, in the superiority of the blood: "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood." Secondly, in the circumstance, that while these sacrifices had to be repeated often, that was not necessary in this case – seeing the blood was better blood, it was not necessary it should be offered often – He once suffered. For when true and proper expiation for sin is made, there is no use that the sacrifice should be repeated. And that, by the way, tells against the Romish doctrine of the repetition, or the modified doctrine of the continuation, of the sacrifice of Christ in the Lord's Supper, or, as the Romanists call it, the sacrifice of the Mass.

The Apostle urges the imperfection of the Levitical sacrifices, on the ground, among other considerations, that these needed continually to be repeated. And so, to say that the sacrifice of Christ needs to be repeated or continued, is to declare that it is as yet imperfect, and so to cast the greatest possible slur – instead of putting respect, it is to pour contempt – on the expiatory death of the Lord Jesus. "Once" – it was once; but it continued to have a permanent effect.

Just as among men one thing takes place, death on account of sin, and is followed by its everlasting effect, the judgment; so the death of Christ once for many needs not to be repeated, but shall be followed by His second appearing unto them that look for Him without sin unto salvation.

You see that in the text there are two pairs of things contrasted – the appointment unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment, and so the first appearing of Jesus Christ, with sin; and His second appearing, without sin, unto salvation.

I. – The appointment unto all men once to die, but after this the judgment (verse 27).

That all men die is a fact of which all are cognisant, and yet which, alas! is far too little laid to heart. The poet's saying still holds true: "All men think all men mortal but themselves." And yet this earth which we tread is, as it were, one huge sepulchre of the generations that have passed; and soon it shall be with us, that the place which now knows us shall know us no more. Yes; death is a dread fact. I must die; thou must die; we all must die. "It is appointed unto men once to die." It is not – as it is sometimes called – the debt of nature; it is the appointment of God. And from this it derives its aspect of the king of terrors. For it is the wages of sin. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The dread curse, given forth first by way of threatening: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Then the confirmation of it: "Thou shalt return to the ground, for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

“It is appointed.” – “I know,” says Job, “that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.” Death, which shall separate us from all that are near and dear to us. So far they can accompany us, but not one step further. Death, which shall separate also between soul and body, and the body shall be laid in the silent tomb till the resurrection. “And after death the judgment.” And is it not a solemn thing, under God’s condemnation to death, to go and face God, and to receive at His hands according to the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or whether they have been evil; to stand at the judgment-seat of Him who, in His righteous judgment, shall render tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile? “To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath.”

“It is appointed unto men.” Ah, how important a nature have we! How solemn, how awful a thing it is to be a man, to be a man, whom God magnifies and sets His heart on, and will bring into judgment with Him! “After death, the judgment.” And suppose that here all our view terminates, and that we are left to our expectations of what that judgment will be, and to form our expectations, on correct views of God’s character and our own, on correct views of that holy, just and good law, which primarily the holy, just and good God gave to man (made by Him holy, just and good, and therefore laid under obligation by Him to remain and to act holily and justly and well), so to appear at His judgment-seat, what must our expectations be! I know not what each of you thinks of himself and herself, what, upon this perfect rule regarding the deeds done in the body, your expectations may be. Sure, I am, from what the Word of God declares, and what my own conscience testifies, that for me there were nothing but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, to consume me as an adversary, if I were brought into judgment on that ground.

Death and judgment: these are solemn things, and in themselves most awful. What is it that makes death and judgment so terrible? It is sin. For, “the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.” The law, which binds the transgressor up under the execration and curse of God, and so delivers him over unto the reigning power of sin and Satan; the law, which gives its power to sin, for God could sanctify from sin by His omnipotence, but the curse of His law comes in between; and so the accursed is given over to his own heart’s lust – is given over to him to whom in the first man we surrendered, ourselves, the terrible one whose lawful prey we became. What a solemn thing to stand for life and death even before a human tribunal, and to stand in jeopardy and peril of having our life adjudged unto the vindication of that law which keeps human society bound together! But to be judged of God for the transgression of His law, for enmity to Himself involved in transgression of His law; to be declared God’s enemies, driven from His bliss-giving presence, and made vessels of His righteous, relentless wrath, without end and without hope, *that* is what I deserve. What dost thou deserve? If therefore there be no escape from sin, there is no escape from death; and if there be no escape from sin, likewise there is no escape from being cast in the great judgment. “It is appointed unto men once to die.” Men have but once to die – but once. And if they die wrong, they cannot amend it. Well, what an awful thing if we die wrong! And yet, alas! it is no uncommon thing. Those who would die well should think much on death. Not that this of itself is sufficient – far from it; but there is scarcely anything else that will fix our minds to the contemplation of the atoning death of the Lord Jesus but the realisation of our own mortality, and the cause of it, our own sinfulness.

II. – The first appearing of Christ, *with* sin, and His second appearing, *without* sin, unto salvation.

This is the other pair of things with which the Apostle compares death and judgment. "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." Amidst all the deaths that have taken place, there is one that stands out distinct and pre-eminent above them all. *We* die, because we are sinners; we die, because we sinned in the first of men; we die, having added innumerable actual transgressions, sin having abounded. But there died One who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; One who did no violence, neither was deceit found in His mouth; One of whom the Heavenly Father proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"; and One who was not involved in the guilt of Adam's transgression, for He came not by ordinary generation. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." But He came not – He did not enter, as we do – by connection with Adam, for He had divine being eternally. He existed from eternity as the co-equal Son in the bosom of the Father. Nor did He take our flesh by ordinary generation, and so incur the guilt of Adam's first sin. And why was He put to death? It will not solve the question to speak of the wicked and of the rage of devils. True, men took and, by wicked hands, crucified and slew Him; true, the prince of this world came, and though he found nothing in Him, many bulls of Bashan compassed Him about. What the malice of earth and hell could do, was done. But there is One higher than the highest. This act took place under the government of a righteous God. Why did He permit it? Permit it; do I say? "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." He offered Himself a sacrifice to God; but they are striking words, these already quoted: "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him."

Now, why this? We can all see, that whatever views of the death of Christ there may be other than as a true and proper sacrifice for sin – the sin of others imputed to Him, "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him" – that without this solution, it remains insoluble. Speak of a manifestation of the love of God to man! If the death of Christ was not a sacrifice to divine justice, it told nothing of love. What lesson could we learn from it? Only this lesson, that God had no regard to justice; that, under His government, the only holy one that had been since Adam fell was the greatest sufferer; and that, as the innocent suffered, so the guilty may escape. But, "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to *be the propitiation for our sins.*" Yes; He loved His Son with all the fulness of divine love, and He gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins, maintaining the honour of His law and justice, of all His perfections, in His plan of saving us. Christ's death was an atoning death, was a propitiatory sacrifice. He was "offered", He was offered unto God.

What was the meaning of sacrifice, sacrifice typical under the law? (The ceremonial law could have no meaning by itself – it had its meaning in reference to moral law, and the sanction of that law – "The soul that sinneth, it shall die.") God was pleased to manifest His design of accepting a substitutionary death of His own provision by the appointment of sacrifices. The sacrifices obtained freedom from death, so that the worshipper was allowed to enter the sanctuary of God, and to enjoy all the privileges of an Israelite. His sin deserved death, and only by the endurance of death could his sin be put away. Sacrifice there was, founded on the connection that is between sin and death. And that connection is not appointed arbitrarily by God, but is founded on the very nature of God, sin, not only warranting, but demanding, at the hands of justice, its proper desert, death. And death, as under God's displeasure for sin, can only be death in all its wide extent – the threefold death, as it is called – death temporal, spiritual, and eternal: the one great death of the soul's separation from God, the fountain of life, and being left in that condition for ever.

It was necessary that the sacrifice should be perfect: the animal, had to be of clean beasts, and to be perfect. For nothing could be expiatory, nothing could come on the altar of God, that was not perfectly pure. "Redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." And the innocent creature was laid hold of by the sinner; laying his hands on it, he confessed his sins, and his sins were transferred to the innocent. For the death could not be inflicted, unless the sin was imputed. So, the nature of a sacrifice is the death of the innocent for the guilty, by the transference of the guilt of the guilty to the innocent.

"Christ was once offered" – He was offered but once. Not many times since the foundation of the world. Indeed, if it had not been for the sufficiency of His death, it must have been repeated. Nothing but the death of Christ could put away sin; and, if it had been necessary that it should have been more than once, "then," as the Apostle takes for granted, "must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world," or since the fall of man. But it was not necessary that He should be offered often. He was offered once – once, with efficacy stretching back through all time, and stretching forward through all time. God's saints under the old dispensation looked forward through the typical blood – it was with much obscurity, yet it was sufficiently bright to faith – to what was meant by it, the sacrifice of the new covenant. Christ's death thus extended back through all time, and so it extends forward: There is no need of any more sacrifices for sin.

"Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Ah! my fellow sinner, I am one sinner; what art thou? My fellow-sinners who, along with me, are going on to judgment, this is an important matter to hear of Christ in connection with sacrifice, and in connection with sins. There remaineth no other sacrifice, He being *once* offered to bear the sins of many; and so, when we come into judgment, either our sins shall be found on Him or on us. If they are not on Christ, then are they on ourselves, and we have, with them lying on us, death before us, and judgment before us. And how shall we die with this weight upon us?

O perhaps, like many, we may sleep, and sleep on, and never feel the heavy weight, and die blind to what is immediately beyond death. But we shall not remain ignorant of the weight one moment longer. If our sins are out of our memory, they are in God's book of remembrance, and our own memories shall be refreshed – the memories of such as shall be found Christless – and shall testify against us to the awful facts.

But there shall be found those who had sinned – "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, covetous, drunkards" – the Apostle says to the believers, "Such *were* some of you" – these shall be found – and "when the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, they shall not be found." "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" – *many*. Around the One, who died once, shall be found the many who were wicked as well as others – the many who ought to have died eternally, being condemned and executed. But, no; their sin has been borne, and borne away. And mark how excellent that one offering must be, from a consideration of the many. No creature would have been able to bear – no mere creature would have undertaken to bear, God would not have allowed any mere creature to undertake to bear – the sins of others; and, if he had undertaken, he must have failed. But around the One are the many – "the number of them," as the Apostle says in the Apocalypse, "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." Every one of them was a sinner. For ever shall be the song, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." O what must be the value of that redemption price that was paid, when it was a price for the many!

It was for many; not for all. The Word says *many* – not all; not all. We read in our Catechism, "God having, out of His mere good pleasure, from all eternity elected *some* unto everlasting life." We are apt to wonder that the compilers did not say *many* instead of *some* merely, though no doubt they said some, meaning *many*, very many.

This leads us to the *second* part of this head, for it suggests the important question: How may I know – how may any one know that he is among the “many”?

That is answered in the second part: “unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.” The many for whom Christ was offered, and they that look for Him, to whom He shall appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation, are the same.

The “many” are defined to be “those that look for him.” We are not called in the Gospel, first of all, to ascertain whether our names are in the Lamb’s book of life, whether that propitiatory death was for us personally, or not. The Lord has not revealed the names of the elect saved, but He has revealed the name of the elect Saviour. And He has given signs of the elect saved – they know, receive, come to, believe in, cleave to the elect Saviour. The “many” know the One. “I know my sheep, and am known of mine.” “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” He does not say that the sheep know themselves, but, “I know the sheep, and the sheep know me, who, as the Good Shepherd, give unto them eternal life.” The word “many” offers this great encouragement – the multitude of the saved. Ah! there is the multitude of the lost. “Many are called, but few are chosen.” But in the everlasting Gospel the invitation is addressed to all. To those that have the everlasting Gospel, the words of Christ are: “Come unto me”; “Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” To the inquiry, “What must I do to be saved?” the answer is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

The inquiry is not then, in the first place, “Am I among the many?” but, “Am I a sinner that have to die, and be judged; and is Christ the Saviour of sinners that had to die and be judged; and does He invite me in the everlasting Gospel?” That is the one warrant. “This is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.” And He opens that; “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth in him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

If you ask me, who will come? I say, God’s called according to His promise. If you ask, who may and should come? I answer, every one to whom the word is sent, to whom Jehovah says, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, for I am God, and there is none else,” a just God and a Saviour.

The “many” there are described as “them that look for him.” The position, with reference to Christ, in which they are placed, is between His first and His second coming – occupying till He come – as in the parable: the man went into a far country to receive a kingdom, and to come back again. Christ’s “many” are described to be those that believe in His first, and wait for His second coming. It is said in 1 Thessalonians, “Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come,” when “He was once offered to bear the sins of many.” Such are the characteristics of the “many.” They have turned unto God from idols, to serve the living and true God. They believe in Jesus, who delivered us from wrath to come; they have received Him, being born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of man, but of God. And turning unto God through Him who died, “the just for the unjust,” they have turned to wait for His second coming – girding up the loins of their mind, being “sober, and hoping to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom, having not seen, they love.”

“Them that look for him.” This is not bare expectancy, but such looking as denotes preparation. “Occupy till I come.” The not looking produces sloth. So the servant, who said, “My Lord delayeth his coming,” began to beat his fellow-servants, and to eat and to drink, and be drunken. But the servant who expected his Lord’s return was diligent, careful to have

all things in readiness that, whatever hour of the night He might come, He might find him watching and ready.

Well, then, from these and similar tokens, you may judge whether or not you be among the “many.” If you have these marks, you are among the “many,” and if you have not these distinctive marks, you are not among the “many.” Let those who have these marks seek to glorify God, who has made them what they are. And let those who are destitute of them consider. You know not what God’s sacred purposes are, not yet being among the called according to the purpose, yet hearing about death and judgment, and hearing about the death of Christ, and His coming again in the glory of His Father and of His holy angels to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe, and in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of His Son, you, who have been as sheep going astray, be ye now as sheep returning to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls, who refuses none that come to Him.

“Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, *without sin.*” Once more He appears – without sin, without sin-offering, and without the imputed sin which caused the sin-offering. “Without sin”; our Lord was always without sin *in Him*, but He had a great load of sin *on Him*. O how much sin had the ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, each of them having had the primeval guilt of the race and manifold actual sins, especially the sins of their unconverted state! What a load! And Christ bore them all. He accomplished the work; went through the task. Sin was on them once, they having committed it. Then it was on Him; by Him undertaken, and by God imputed. It is not on them now, for it was transferred to Him; and it is not on Him now, for He bore it and put it away. “The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.” It is gone; abolished. He hath finished transgression and hath made an end of sin. There was a load of sin on Him; but there is now a crown of glory on His head, and the King is made most glad for evermore with the light of Jehovah’s countenance. And without sin He comes in His own glory, and in the glory of His Father, and of the holy angels. “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe.” The Apostle adds – O! that we could add it – “because our testimony among you was believed.”

“Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, *unto salvation.*” Salvation is a word used in manifold senses; salvation has manifold aspects in Scripture. Sometimes it is put for the procuring of our salvation: “Who hath *saved* us, and called us with an holy calling.” Salvation, being here placed before effectual calling, must mean the procuring of salvation by Christ’s meritorious life and atoning death. Sometimes it is put for the state of grace into which men are brought when, through the receiving of the Holy Ghost, they see and believe in the only begotten Son of God: “The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.” Sometimes it is put for the progress of salvation in increasing sanctification: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Sometimes it is put for the completed salvation at the last day: “It is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

The salvation which was purchased by Christ, in its outgoing and application, has various stages. But, if we should suppose an individual converted just in the moment previous to Christ’s appearing, what would take place? The forgiveness of all his sins – the entire sanctification of his nature – and the change equivalent to death and the resurrection. “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” “Then we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall be caught up, together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” And this is what gives us the completeness of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.

But it comes out ordinarily in steps. There is the communication of the Spirit of life in regeneration and union to Christ by faith – justification, adoption, increased sanctification – deliverance from the power and dominion of sin – at death deliverance from indwelling sin – deliverance from death and all the consequences of sin – and the possession of a spiritual, glorious body. That is the complete salvation. It is salvation from condemnation – from indwelling sin – from death and the power of the grave – from hell. And it is the salvation of the whole man unto God – in the soul being made perfectly holy, and in the body being raised up and made glorious – in believers being openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

This full enjoying of God to all eternity is salvation in its full sense. And “Unto them that look for him Christ shall appear the second time without sin” (having no sin in Him, as He never had, and none on Him) “unto salvation.” They for whom He died, and rose again, and went away, shall be received and beheld by Him with inconceivable acceptancy, and presented before the presence of the Father “with exceeding joy.”

Now, is this nothing to men who have to die, and have after death the judgment? Is this nothing? What is Jesus to you, to me? Sinner, what is the Saviour to you, deserving to be condemned, what is the Saviour to you? What have you done with your sins? What do you do with them? Do you bring them to Him on whom it pleased the Lord to lay the iniquity of all those who, turning to God from idols to serve the living and true God, wait for His Son from heaven?

If you deposit your sins where the Lord deposited the sins of His people, then is Christ a mediator, a high priest, to bring you to God. And now, “It is appointed unto men once to die.” Yes; but death now to Christ’s “many” has altogether changed its nature. “It is appointed unto men once to die; but, said He to His disciples, and not to them only, but unto all them also who should believe on Him through their word, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” Having died and risen again, He quickens the dead soul, and will quicken the mortal body. “Our friend, Lazarus, *sleepeth*.” “If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which *sleep* in Jesus will God bring with him.”

Jesus *died* – it was death in all its terribleness there: believers *sleep* – sleep in Jesus. And “after death, the judgment”; but the judgment-seat of Him who bears the sins of many; the judgment-seat of Him for whom, having turned to God from idols, they have been looking – the judgment-seat of Him who will say at death, and say at last at the resurrection, His old word, which the sheep know so well, “Come, come.”

There is a word He never spake yet to a son of man, nor will ever speak till then: “Depart from me.” He will speak it then. He never said it to a son of man yet, nor ever will till then. And the word He will speak to His own then, He speaks to His own now. And the first word of it at least He speaks to thee, sinner, who art going to His judgment, “Come; come.” Come to Him who bare the sins of many; turning from idols to serve the living God, commence looking for His second coming. And you who have turned, continue looking for His second coming. And as troubles may increase, and days decrease, remember that now is your salvation nearer than when ye believed. “For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them who believe, to the saving of the soul.”

[June 1920]

## Notes of a Sermon.

By the REV. D. MACFARLANE, Dingwall.  
Preached on Sabbath, 25th March, 1917.

“One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me on a rock” – Psalm 27:4,5.

The Psalmist here expresses his great desire to be in the house of the Lord; and so do all the Lord's people.

In addressing you from the words of our text, we shall notice: –

- I. – The house of the Lord;
- II. – The Psalmist's desire to be in that house; and
- III. – The good he expected to find there.

I. – The house of the Lord means the place where God is worshipped. The first place of worship was the tabernacle erected in the wilderness after the people of Israel had been brought out of Egypt. After that the temple built by Solomon was the place of public worship. In New Testament times the place of worship is the Church. The Church has been often called, in Scotland, “the Kirk.” The word, “kirk,” is the contraction of a word in Greek for “the house of the Lord.” The word is “kurioikos,” a compound word, of which the first part, “kurios,” means “the Lord,” and the second part, “oikos,” means “a house,” the whole word therefore meaning “the house of the Lord.” The house of the Lord is a solemn place, for the Lord Himself dwells there. There were two compartments in the tabernacle and in the temple – “the holy place” and “the most holy place.” In the former the Lord’s servants conducted worship; into the latter none could enter but the high priest alone, and that only once a year – the Lord Himself had His throne there. We read in Scripture that “justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne” (Psalm 89:14). Justice means the law, and judgment, the Gospel. The law, which consisted of the ten commandments, was put in the Ark, and the covering of the Ark is called the mercy-seat or the propitiatory, upon which God sat as the God of salvation. The law breathed out curses upon its transgressors, but Christ’s propitiation, which was the covering of the Ark, proclaimed mercy and blessing to all that believed in Him. In New Testament times, where two or three are met together in the name of Christ for worship, is “the house of the Lord.” Some hold that unless God is worshipped in a consecrated building, the worship is not acceptable to Him; but, as already stated, Christ, the Head of the Church, says that where two or three are met together in His name, He is there in the midst of them, even although they might be met together in the open field. In the Highlands of Scotland large congregations met in the open field for public worship, especially on Communion occasions, and found that the Lord was with them. They were, even there, in “the house of the Lord.” Jacob, on his way to Padan-aram, as he could not finish his journey in one day, rested in a certain place when night came upon him, and the Lord revealed Himself to him graciously in a dream, so that, when he awoke, he called that place “the house of God and the gate of heaven.” It is the Lord’s presence with His people that consecrates the place of worship, and not the words of men. This much at present on the first head.

II. – His desire to dwell in the house of the Lord. He was often driven far away from the house of the Lord by enemies, but they could not deprive him of the desire to be there. His desire was not that of the sluggard who makes no effort to gratify his desire, for he says, “I seek to obtain,” that is, he endeavoured to satisfy his desire by coming to the Lord’s house. There are many who make little or no endeavour to attend the public means of grace. They make an excuse of the least thing for their absence from the Lord’s house, but where there is a true desire, there is an effort made to be there. Before their conversion the Lord’s people were not often seen in the Lord’s house, but after the Lord had changed them by His grace, nothing could keep them from being there except sickness, or other restraints of providence, and some of them had to travel long distances to hear the Gospel preached. Some travelled from Strathconon to Redcastle, over 20 miles, to hear the Rev. John Kennedy preach the Gospel, and others who had the Psalmist’s desire travelled long distances to the house of the Lord. And when the Lord will revive His work in our land, it shall be so also; they will not make a long distance to travel an excuse for absence. They will, like the Psalmist, reckon this as the “one thing.” The Psalmist needed and desired many things, but he made this the one thing he desired – he put this thing before every other thing. The Lord’s people consider the worship of God more precious than any worldly matter. The soul comes first, and then the body. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other (necessary) things shall be added unto you.” The Psalmist desired not only to come occasionally to the house of the Lord, but to make his dwelling of it – to dwell there as a member of God’s family. “The servant does not abide in the house always, but the son does,” and as this is true

of the Son of God, it is true also of all God's children. Although it is the Lord's house, it is *their* house also, in which they were born again, and in which they are nursed, nourished and built up till they attain to a perfect man in Christ. We said it was their house. A stranger coming to a place meets a boy going home from school, and when they come near the boy's home, he asks the boy, "What house is that?" The boy answers, "That is *our* house"; although it is his father's house, he calls it "our house"; it is the children's house also. If you are a child of God, you may call the house of the Lord your house.

How long did the Psalmist desire to dwell in the house of the Lord? All the days of his life. He desired to have a long lease of it. Some will have a lease of a dwelling-house for a year or some years, but the Psalmist had a perpetual lease, a life-long lease, all the days of his life. Why not longer? Because, at the end of his life on earth, he was to remove to the house not made with hands – eternal in the heavens – where he was to be for ever. We are all to leave the house of the Lord on earth, yea, to leave the world. Where are we going? Is it to the house not made with hands in heaven, or to the dungeon of hell, from which we cannot escape? "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psalm 9:17). As Christ went to heaven to prepare a place for His people, He prepares them for that place, and it is in this world that He does this. If we expect to go to heaven, we must be prepared for it during our time on earth. There was a gentleman who had a half-witted man as his servant, who was commonly called a fool, but this fool was wiser in one thing than his master. He was absent from his master's house for a few days, and when he returned his master was not at home. He asked some one where was his master, and was told that he had died and gone to heaven. The fool said that he did not believe that he went to heaven. He was asked what was his reason for saying that. He answered, that he saw his master often going on a journey from home, and that before he started for the journey he spent several days in preparing for the journey, but that he never saw him preparing for heaven. "Prepare to meet thy God." We must be prepared, delivered from sin in its guilt and depravity – we must be made perfectly holy, "for without holiness no man can see the Lord." Many die to be lost. It is to be feared that many who were killed in the present War are lost in eternity. We feel much concerned about our young men at the front, especially in these days when the enemy is making an extreme effort to defeat our Army in France, and unless the Lord interpose in mercy to defend our men, the enemy may succeed, and if he shall succeed, we are provoking the Lord so much by our sins that the enemy may be permitted to come to our very doors. Instead of humbling ourselves and repenting, we are getting bolder in sin, despising law and Gospel, so that without repentance it is not at all improbable the field of battle may be nearer hand than it is now.

### III. – What did he expect in "the house of the Lord"?

(1) He expected to see the Lord Himself. What is the house of the Lord to you who are His children, unless you see the Lord of the house there? If you do not see Him, it is not because He is not in His house. You may go to a house to see the master of the house, and you may be told when you arrive at the house that the person you desire to see is not at home. But the Lord is never absent from His house; He is always there, sitting on the mercy-seat. The Psalmist desired to see the beauty of the Lord. There is the beauty of holiness, with which His being and attributes are clothed, wherein dwells, as in a fountain, the fulness of holiness, out of which all the holiness communicated to believers flows.

There is a beauty also in His Word which is preached in His house, and in everything connected with His service when conducted as He prescribed. The worship that is not conducted according to the rule of God's Word, is ugly in the sight of the Lord and in the sight of those whose eyes have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit. In Isaiah 11:10, it is said that "in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people;

to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious.” His rest here means the Church. “The Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation: This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it” (Psalm 132:13,14).

There is a beauty in His people, which He puts upon them. What made the face of Moses shine with brightness when he came down from the Mount? It was his communion with the Lord on the Mount for forty days. His face shone so brightly that the people of Israel could not look at him. His appearance spoke to their conscience, and rebuked them for setting up idolatry during his absence. If we were favoured with fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, we also would shine with beauty. This fellowship may be had through the word of the Gospel, and the change which it effects as a means would be ours. As the Apostle Paul states: “But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

(2) The Psalmist had many perplexities which none but God could solve, and he expected, on making enquiry in the house of the Lord, that the Lord would solve his difficulties. “And to enquire in his temple.” There was a place in the temple where the high priest enquired of the Lord, by the ephod, as to the path of duty when they were in perplexity as to what they ought to do. For instance, before engaging in war, they first enquired of the Lord concerning their duty of doing so or not. When the high priest consulted Him on that subject, He told him what they ought to do. Our ephod now for making enquiry is the Word of God. All duties are expressly told in the Bible, and our High Priest makes the enquiry and gives the answer, for He knows the mind of the Father. Are you in perplexity about the salvation of your soul? Go to the house of the Lord, and you will get your perplexities solved, as many of the Lord’s people in the past got their difficulties removed there. You make enquiry not only for your own case but for the cases concerning the salvation of your friends and relatives, and for your fellow-creatures in general. You may be in perplexity as to what is to become of the Lord’s cause in your own day. Is it to be trampled under the feet of the Germans, which they are determined to do, if they gain the victory in the present War? But whatever may become of the men of this generation, the Lord will keep up His own cause, and will never permit His enemies to extinguish the light of the Gospel. “The Lord reigneth” and overruleth every event that occurs, in His holy providence. Many think that this War is the “Armageddon,” and it looks more like it every day. The most of the nations of Europe are engaged in it, and more nations are likely to join. America is preparing for it. If it is the “Armageddon,” idolatry shall be destroyed, and all other errors, and then a glorious revival of religion shall begin and go on apace, till the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God, and men shall learn war no more for a thousand years. There shall be no ploughing on Sabbath, as wicked men now propose. It is remarkable that the motor plough – sent to Dingwall to plough on Sabbath as on other days – has broken down, and was sent back to Inverness for mending. This, we believe, was in answer to the prayers of the Lord’s people. However weak you are, you may fight on your knees, and overcome the enemy. This reminds me of a godly tenant farmer and his proprietor, who was a cruel man. The proprietor came one day to him in a rage, and threatened to take the farm from him. He scolded the good man, and threatened to thrash him. The farmer said that he would fight him on his knees. The proprietor felt greatly insulted, and told someone of his neighbours the great insult he got from this man, that he said he would fight him on his knees. The man to whom he told this said that he did not understand what the good man meant by fighting him on his knees, and explained to him that he meant to pray against him, and that if he did so, he might lose his estate and all the goods he had on it. The proprietor got afraid, and soon returned to the farmer, and apologised for what he said to him. He was kind to him afterwards. “The prayer of the righteous man availeth much” to open the doors of heaven. In answer to Elijah’s prayer

the windows of heaven were closed, so that no rain fell on that part of the earth for over three years; and at his request in prayer the windows of heaven were opened, and rain fell freely to water the earth and make it fruitful. It is time for the oppressors of God's people to cease their evil work when the oppressed begin to fight them on their knees.

(3) He expected that in the time of danger the Lord would hide him in His pavilion. He did this to His people many a time in the past, and He is still the same. Alexander Peden was pursued by enemies in the time of persecution. On his way, fleeing from them, he saw a small cave and entered it, and as soon as he entered the cave, a spider began to weave a net at the mouth of the cave, and one of his persecutors said that he might be in that cave. Another called his attention to the spider's net, and said that no man entered that cave that day, so they passed on, and left Peden in the hiding-place which God prepared for him. Another day they were pursuing Peden, who, when they were getting near him, cried to the Almighty, "Throw Thy cloak around poor Sandy," and immediately a heavy mist covered the hills, so that the enemies could not see where he went. These are instances of what the Psalmist said in the time of trouble: "He shall hide me in his pavilion, and in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me." If we as a nation turned to the Lord with repentance, and cried to Him mightily in prayer, He would hide us, and baffle our enemies, and hide us from the wrath of our cruel enemies. Without striking a blow by the sword, the Lord terrified the Midianites, so that Gideon and his army soon gained the victory over their enemies. Many in our day discard the providence of God, and think that they can gain the victory by their own inventions. The Psalmist says further, "He shall set me upon a rock." A rock is a firm place to stand on. Christ is the rock upon which He builds His Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. In any danger His people are safe on that rock, and the rock that supports them falls upon their enemies, and breaks them in pieces.

(4) He expected and resolved to sing praises and to offer sacrifices of joy. "Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy – I will sing, yea I will sing praises unto the Lord." When the Lord's people are mournful they shall give sacrifices of sorrow with groans, and sighs, and tears, but when they draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation, they shall offer sacrifices of joy and praise unto the Lord. Every time they are made happy they sing His praise. They do so not only at stated times of worship, but on other occasions they will sing and pay their vows unto the Lord.

What have you to say from experience about the house of the Lord? Is it your chief desire to be in that house? Look into the past. Have you found any spiritual good there? Can you say with the psalmist "I remember the days of old," when the Lord made you happy in His house of prayer, or with Job, when he remembered the months past "when the Lord's candle shined on his head"? These are questions we ought to ponder upon to ascertain whether we are God's children or not, and we should not be going forward to death and eternity at a peradventure. The Psalmist on his way to eternity desired of the Lord a token for good, and we should do the same. May the Lord add His blessing! Amen.

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## A Sermon.

By the REV. GEORGE HUTCHESON, M.A., of Edinburgh and Irvine (1674).

*(Eleventh Sermon of Series on Psalm cxxx.)*

“But there is forgiveness with thee” – Psalm 130:4.

I am now insisting upon the refuge to which the man abased with the conscience of sin betaketh himself; who, when he hath reflected upon God’s proceedings in strict justice, according to the tenor of the covenant of works with sinners, and who, when he hath found that, if God should thus mark iniquity, none, even the most godly, should be able to stand, he subjoins this, as a blest after-game in man’s deplorable case, “But forgiveness is with thee.”

In prosecution of this great truth, that there is pardoning mercy with God, to be a relief for self-condemned sinners, I have spoken to two of the five heads that I proposed to be spoken to upon it.

(1) I have spoken to the consideration of that which is pardoned, that is iniquity, sin or transgression.

(2) I have spoken to the consideration of the Author of pardon, who it is that pardons sin. And whatever hand ministers have in this, or whatever hand private persons have in it in remitting injuries done to them, yet the text determines God still to be the principal creditor; it’s with Thee (says he). “It’s with Thee alone that forgiveness is.”

I entered upon the third thing I proposed to be spoken to, which is the main thing in purpose, that is, to inquire after the nature of this pardon, what this forgiveness of sin which is with God imports. And after a brief touch upon some passages of Scripture whereby pardon of sin is expressed, I proceeded, negatively, to tell you what it is not, where I show that pardon of sin is not to be confounded with men's forgetting of sin, and taking a pardon to themselves; as also, that sin is not to be lightly looked on, as a thing that God lightly passes by, when He pardons it, for He pardons none but upon satisfaction made to His justice by the sinner's surety; likewise that pardon of sin is not to be confounded with God's forbearing, or not inflicting punishment for it for a time, for they may be long forborn who yet may be unpardoned, and whose forbearance is no sign of Divine approbation. Further, it was cleared, that the pardoning of particular sinners, and their restoring in favour, is not to be confounded with a national pardon conferred on a nation whom He may pardon, and yet punish. And lastly, it was cautioned and cleared, that we should not confound the pardon of sin with the removal of sin in the pollution of it; for, though God strike at the guilt and power of sin both together, yet, whereas pardon of sin is attained before death, some filthiness of sin will remain in the pardoned sinner as long as he is in this life, and pardon of sin may consist with the sight of the filthiness of sin, for which the sinner is abased before God daily.

And this leads me positively to point out what pardon of sin imports. All that I shall say to it in general, before I break in to tell you more particularly what it is, shall be this: ye shall distinguish in sin these two.

There is in sin a blot or pollution of the soul and a defacing of God's image thereby; and

there is in sin a guilt, that is, an offence done to God by the violating of His law, whereby the sinner becomes obnoxious to the punishment that He hath threatened in His law.

These two are clearly distinguishable among men. A child running in a puddle pollutes himself, and, by so doing, he becomes guilty of transgressing his parent's command, and is liable to their correction, or punishment. Now as to these two, the guilt and the blot of sin, there are diverse and distinct operations of God conversant about them; for, as the blot of sin begins to be stricken at in regeneration, so that work is carried on by piecemeal in sanctification, till sanctification be perfected, and end in glorification. Regeneration and sanctification are the acts of God, conversant about the blot and filthiness of sin, but pardon of sin takes not away the being, nor the filthiness of sin, as Antinomians say, but it takes away the guilt of sin, and the guilt of sin being pardoned, the sinner is delivered from the punishment that his guilt deserves. And this is also distinguishable among men; for a person having committed an enormous crime, that crime continues still a filthy thing, and evidences a naughty disposition, yet, when that crime is pardoned, the man that committed it loses not their favour against whom it was committed, and is free from the punishment that it deserves. So a child that hath puddled himself in a mire, suppose the parents forgive the offence, the filth that he hath got in the mire sticks to him still, till it be washed away another way. So I say, pardon of sin takes not away the filthiness of sin, but the guilt of sin. And this I mention not merely for speculation, and information of the judgment, but it says something for their advantage and encouragement, who in the sense of sin are flying to Christ for pardon, that they be not scared, by the pollution of sin, from relying on him for the pardon of guilt. A tender soul, so long as it finds the blot of sin, will readily doubt if the guilt of sin be taken away; but if we take up pardon scripturally, the guilt of sin is done away by pardon, though the blot of sin remains. I confess, the blot of sin must not remain unmourned for, it must not remain unsubdued, or without an endeavour to subdue it, yet it may remain, when the guilt and violation of the law of God by sin is pardoned, and past. That sin may be near thy sight in the blot and pollution, which pardon hath put far off, as to the guilt of it. "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none;

and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found” (Jeremiah 50:20). Why? “For I’ll pardon them whom I reserve.” Only let me add that thou who grippest to the pardon of guilt, when yet thou findest the blot of sin remaining, and art mourning for it, remember that pardon must not be only a simple exemption from punishment, but that it is also a restitution into His favour, whom thou hast offended. Thy pardon must not be an Absalom’s pardon, that brought him back to Jerusalem, but he saw not the king’s face. Thou must not satisfy thyself with that, but thou must be accepted, and come into favour. That was David’s prayer (Psalm 51:8), “Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice,” and verse 11, “Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thine Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit.” But of this I will have occasion to speak in the progress, therefore I leave it.

And having given you this general notion of pardon, I shall proceed to batter it out a little for the clearing of four questions.

(1) How the guilt of sin can be separated from the blot of sin, and the sinner pardoned.

(2) Whether in pardon the obligation to punishment be so taken off, as the pardoned man falleth under no chastisement for sin.

(3) Whether the real passing of pardon be one in the court of Heaven with that which is the court of conscience, or if the truth of pardon depends on the intimation of it to our hearts.

(4) Whether, what the Lord pardons, He pardons irrevocably, or whether, upon the contracting of new guilt, the former pardon be made void to the pardoned man. These four questions I shall touch upon as briefly as I can, and sure I am, those of you, whose plight anchor pardon of sin is, ye will not weary to hear them spoken unto.

For the first, having said that the pardon of sin takes away the guilt of sin, while the blot of sin remains, it’s a question how that can be, seeing these two are inseparable, it’s (as we say) *proprium quarto modo*, an essential property of sin, that it draws under guilt, and makes the sinner liable to punishment. And it’s as absurd to say that sin can be without guilt as to say fire can be without heat, or the sun without light, guilt being as inseparable a property of sin as heat is to fire, or light to the sun. But for answer, this distinction will clear it; distinguish between guilt itself and the result of that guilt on the person sinning, as also betwixt God’s offence and displeasure at sin, and His offence and displeasure at the sinner. Hence, if we consider guilt in itself, it is inseparable from sin; there is no pardon that God gives unto the sinner that takes away the desert that sin hath in itself of the wrath of God. But if we consider guilt, as it results upon the person sinning and brings him under the lash of God’s displeasure, in that respect guilt may be separated from sin. Sin cannot be sin if it bring no guilt with it, yet the pardoning of sin brings freedom from the actual obligation of the sinner to punishment. Sin hath that evil with it that it deserves wrath, but a free pardon suspends that ill deserving, that it doth not take effect against a sinner that is fled to Jesus Christ. I may illustrate it by a similitude of a massive hammer that is lifted up and falls down by an engine, and crushes that which is under it, and a strong hand holding it up, and keeping it up, that it never falls down. It’s as inseparable from sin, to deserve everlasting wrath, as it’s inseparable from a ponderous weight falling down to crush that which it falls on, but pardon keeps up that weight of deserved wrath that it falls not down to crush them that are fled to Christ. And this also serves not only for information of the judgment, but to meet with another case incident to the people of God. When they are fled to Christ for refuge, they not only meet with the pollution and blot of sin, but with the guilt and ill-deserving of sin, which troubles them. Being sensible of sin, and essaying to close with pardon, when they look to the dreadful rod of iron, that they know their sins deserve, they cannot get pardon of sin closed with. That’s a strong temptation to a tender walker to stand aback, but, in this case, we would distinguish betwixt what we deserve, and the execution of it. A pardoned sinner would

remember that it commends God's free grace in pardoning sin, that, whatever his ill-deserving be, he will not get that which he deserves. God will not give him according to his deserving. And though the man, fled to Jesus Christ, may be daily humbled with the sight of the pollution and desert of sin, yet he may be comforted, in the free grace of God, that his ill-deserving shall never take effect to his prejudice.

Now this is a great point, and folk that are in earnest about the pardon of sin, when they are fled unto Christ for pardon, may have many a sad thought about the pollution and desert of sin. The tender walker will, no doubt, say, "I am a vile body, I have that which deserves everlasting wrath, nay that, that God will pursue to root out, though He doth not look on us as an enemy." Because this may be ground of many doubts about this matter, touching the pardon of sin, I shall desire you to take notice of some Scriptural expressions that are very full and satisfactory for pardon, notwithstanding of the pollution of sin, and the desert of sin. And in following this, I would desire you to take a look of these two:

one is, how the Scripture declares that pardoned sin is looked on by the creditor, to wit, God; and

another is, how it stands with the pardoned man.

For the first, whatever thou feelest who art fled to Christ for pardon, yet O how fully and satisfactorily doth the Scripture speak to thy pardon. I dare not fall on all the Scriptural expressions that hold it forth, but I shall briefly touch on some of them in these four steps. And

(1) The Scripture tells that pardoned sin is a blotted out sin, Psalm 51:9, "Blot out all mine iniquities;" and Isaiah 44:22, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." It is an allusion to a man that deletes or blots out of his count-book that which is either paid or forgiven, and hence this phrase tells that pardoned sin is a debt that will never be craved nor called for; it is a debt that God, the principal creditor, hath given over, and will no more call for, seeing it is blotted out. But,

(2) because it might be supposed that a debt, deleted in a count-book, may be looked on and read, though not to crave the debt, yet to waken resentments, therefore the Scripture goes a further length in the pardon of sin, and tells that pardoned sin is not only blotted out, that it cannot be gotten read, but it is covered and hid out of God's sight, Psalm 32:1, "Blest is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered;" Numbers 23:21, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor hath he seen perverseness in Israel." It is not only blotted out, but it is covered, and so covered as is not seen to be pursued with the punishment it deserves; and here, the Scripture is very copious to express how sin is covered, as that He casts pardoned sins behind His back, or over His shoulders (to speak so) that they shall be no more in His view. Isaiah 28:17, "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." And because a man may turn about and see that which is behind his back, therefore pardoned sin is said to be so covered that, as in Micah 7:19, it is said to be cast not in the shallow places, "but in the depths of the sea." And ye use to say of a thing that is lost irrecoverably, it is tint [lost] as it were in the sea-bottom. But further, because, though a thing be in the depth of the sea, it may be dived after, and sought out; therefore, it is added in that forecited place, Jeremiah 50:20, "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sin of Judah, and they shall not be found." So that the pardon of sin covers sin, takes it out of God's sight, and puts in the depths of the sea, that though it be sought for, it shall not be found. But,

(3) if there remain any doubt, how can it be but the Omniscient God must see sin, and seeing it, must be angry at it; therefore the Scripture gives a further account of the fulness of pardon, that it hides God's face from it; as David says, Psalm 51:9, "Hide thy face from my sins;" and it is a notable word, Micah 7:18, that God passes by, or over-pardons transgressions, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardons iniquity, and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage?" Though He be an Omniscient God to see sin,

yet, when sin is pardoned, He will (as we used to say) see, and not see, He will see, and misken, as he that passes by that which might irritate him, He will not set his face in that airt [quarter]; so deals the Lord with pardoned sins in His people. But,

(4) whereas ye have a cursed distinction of forgiving, but not forgetting of injuries, and temptations may be ready to rise, and say that, though in the sense that I have been speaking of, pardoned sin be blotted out, covered, put out of sight, passed by, or over, the Lord will not take notice of pardoned iniquities, to punish them; yet He may remember them by way of grudge against the pardoned person. The Scripture secures us against the fear of that, and tells us that pardoned iniquities are not remembered, Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins;" and Jeremiah 31:34, with the parallel place, Hebrews 8, in the new covenant it is said, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more." I will remember it judicially no more, to call them to an account for the sin I have pardoned. So that sins being pardoned, they shall be as if they had not been committed, as if they were everlastingly forgotten, no more to be remembered. So much for these expressions, showing how pardoned sin is looked upon in reference to God, to which many more might be added. And O what a full and satisfactory ground do they afford, that pardon of sin is no compliment, but a real security, and firm ground of confidence. When God hath said all this, who are they who, looking on the pollution, or desert of sin, will take pardon of sin for a compliment, and not look on it as a solid security?

And this will be further clear if, in the second place, we consider how it stands with the pardoned man. For ye may say to me, "Much hath been said for God, and of the fulness of His pardon, and that it is a real security to the pardoned man, but I find it not so with my case"; therefore I shall, in a few words, hint how it stands with thee. Thou who art a pardoned sinner may find much sin and pressures of guilt at thy door, and lying near thy conscience, but the Scripture tells us that it is otherwise with thee than thou apprehend, Psalm 103:12, "So far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." That which thy fears and doubts apprehend lying at thy door, and to be as an heavy burden upon thy back sinking thee, a pardon removes from thee, as far as the east is from the west, as far as one thing can be removed from another, as the proverbial speech imports. Thou thinkest thyself to be in a woeful and wretched condition, but the Scripture determines thee to be blest, Psalm 32:1-2, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven," etc. Thou mayest be crying out, "O wretched man, who shall deliver me?" But the Scripture tells thee thou art happy, and ought to thank God through Christ, Romans 7:24-25. Thou mayest be drooping, notwithstanding thou art fled unto Christ for pardon, but the Scripture-language of pardon is another thing, Matthew 5:2, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." The power and pollution of sin may make thee droop, but the pardon of sin may make thee "drink and forget thy misery, and remember thy poverty no more." Thy other sores and difficulties may stick to thee and press thee down; but, if thou read the pardon of sin rightly, thou may say, as Isaiah 33:24, "The inhabitant shall not say I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Since I am pardoned, what can ail me; what can dare at me, or trouble me, since I am forgiven of my sin? In a word, the Scripture declares, that have what thou wilt, or want what thou wilt, though thou should complain, loving-kindnesses are wanting, thou hast not these proofs of love thou wert wont to receive, yet thou wantest not an admirable proof of love that hast pardon; hence is the exclamation, Micah 7:18, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?" Others may say, "Who is a God like thee in working wonders, when thou broughtest thy people out of Egypt?" But, as for me, I will say, "Who is a God like thee in pardoning sin?" Thus, if we take the Scripture verdict of pardon of sin, as well, in reference to the pardoned man as in respect of God, we will find that pardon is a sure foundation of confidence, and it is so excellent a character that, if we could heed it;

believe it, and improve it to the quickening of us to run and secure pardon in the right method (whereof we may hear), we should find that we have here a treasure hid in this field, Christ, a pardoner of iniquity, lying in the bosom of this mercy. The Lord bless what ye have heard.

[Continued in October 1920]

[September 1920]

## A Sermon.

By the REV. GEORGE HUTCHESON, M.A., of Edinburgh and Irvine (1674).

(*Twelfth Sermon of Series on Psalm 130.*)

“But there is forgiveness with thee.” – Psalm 130:4.

I am now entered upon the third, and great head of this necessary doctrine, to clear wherein it is “That the forgiveness of sin doth stand;” and after a general resolution thereof, “That the pardon of sin takes away not the filthiness and pollution, but the guilt of sin,” I proceeded to name four questions to be cleared on this subject. And the first (to which I spoke) was, how the guilt of sin could be removed while the filthiness and pollution of sin remained, guilt being inseparable from sin; and the resolution was that, however guilt in itself, or (as the learned call it) “the potential guilt,” the guilt of sin in itself, be not taken away by pardon, yet guilt as it results on the person, or the actual ordination of the person guilty to condemnation, is suspended everlastingly, and taken away. And for confirmation thereof, I led you through several Scriptures to let you see what a sure character pardon is; whether we consider pardon, as it is to be looked on in respect of God, or how it stands with the pardoned man.

And now, without further repetition, I shall go on with the rest of the cases tending to clear the nature of the remission of sin.

A second question in order, is: Since pardon frees the pardoned man from obligation to punishment, whether is this to be held that no justified or pardoned person can fall under any punishment or chastisement for sin? And here the adversaries of truth, Papists on the one hand, and Antinomians on the other, run on two extremes; for Papists say, that in pardon of sin, God remits *culpam*, but not *pœnam*; that is, He remits the fault or guilt, so as not only He may chasten (which we grant) but as He reserves a punishment, by way of satisfaction for sin, to be undergone by the pardoned sinner. They distinguish in this betwixt mortal and venial

sins; for mortal sins, they grant that the free grace of God turns eternal punishment into a temporal, which the sinner must undergo; for venial sins, which they say deserve not eternal punishment, but temporal, all that temporal punishment they will have the pardoned man to sustain. Hence is their doctrine of penances in this life, and of purgatory after death, when penances are not undergone here, where they will have pardoned sinners to make satisfaction of sin. As for this doctrine, it would be but troublesome to you to hear all that might be said against it, though we should but touch on it, and therefore passing that groundless distinction of mortal and venial sins, ye shall notice these five anent that their doctrine:

1. That as the bulk of Popish religion is nothing but a well-contrived policy, of interest of State, so this doctrine of penance and purgatory is nothing else but a politic device to make gain for maintaining their kitchen, pomp, pride, and luxury. This (as I told you the last day), Cæsar Borgia, the son of Alexander the Sixth, makes to appear, who, while he had lost 100,000 lire at the dice, passed it in a sport, saying, "These are the sins of the Germans," meaning, that thereby they had purchased remission of sins, for here the policy lies. Once persuade folk that they must do penances to satisfy for sin, or to go to purgatory, what will they not do while they are alive, or their friends for them when they are dead, to mitigate that satisfaction? That is their market, and then pay well, and come to Heaven without either penance or purgatory, so that their doctrine in this is a perfect cheat.

2. In this their doctrine they corrupt the doctrine of the ancient Church, which was not so very sound; for, as they have a trick of retaining ancient names of things, under which they bring in new errors, so in this particular of penances and indulgences, used by the ancient Church, who, while they were a distinct society, were very strict and severe in requiring public penance and satisfaction for scandals. Some they held many years in making their repentance; some they held all their life, but afterward, when the world came into the Church, and the emperors embraced Christianity, and they, with other great ones, were too thin-skinned and would not submit to discipline, the Church did degenerate from their strictness, and shortened their indulgences. But the ancient Church's penances were not to satisfy God for sin, but the Church; they were not for private and secret sins, but for public and scandalous offences. And the Church, willing to gratify great persons, did mitigate these severities to many. But the Papists retaining the name, they will have these penances a satisfaction to God for sin, and their indulgences to assoil (acquit) folk in the Court of Heaven.

3. A third thing to be considered in that their doctrine, which is very unhandsome for them to maintain. These penances which they call satisfaction, what are they? They are their fastings, their *Ave Marias* and *paternosters*, their pilgrimages and peregrinations, their charity to the poor, or for a religious use, their self-scourgings and whippings. Now, I enquire, what are these? They are either commanded duties, or not. If they be not commanded duties, how can they be satisfaction for sin? For, will God be satisfied with that which He doth not require? "Who required these things at your hand?" If they be commanded duties, how can they make a punishment of them? That is a dreadful solecism in their religion: that commanded duties that should be the joy and rejoicing of folks' hearts should be turned to punishments; and, except they be punishments, they cannot be satisfaction, so that they have a bad impression of these things, which they look upon as duties, while they make commanded duties punishments for sin.

4. And a fourth word I say to that their doctrine, is this, That to admit of satisfaction for sin, either as to temporal or eternal punishment for it, is a blasphemous imputation on Christ's satisfaction, as if anything needed to be added to the ocean of His merit, who hath satisfied the justice of God, both as to the temporal and eternal curse, due to His own elect for their sins.

5. And a fifth I shall say to their doctrine, is, That it is contradictory to itself, for what is the guilt of sin (as contra-distinct to the stain of sin) that is removed? It is not the potential guilt, the desert of sin, for that is inseparable from sin; it is only the actual ordination to punishment. Now, to say God remits the guilt, and retains the punishment of sin, it is to say that He remits and retains, that He pardons and doth not pardon, that He takes away actual ordination to punishment, and yet will have the sinner suffering punishment, that He craves the debt which He hath forgiven. This is sufficient to refute the Papists on the one hand in what they hold anent the pardon of sin.

Upon the other hand, the Antinomians run on another extreme, and say that pardoned, justified persons fall not so much as under chastisement, let be a proper punishment for sin. And they will have all afflictions that come upon the godly to be mere trials of their faith, and no more, and think that it is a legal spirit that teacheth folk, while they are under the rod, to search out sin, and to be humbled for it. All that a man is called to do in that case (say they) is to maintain his faith in adhering to the love of God in Christ, for whatever affliction come, it is not for sin, and it is no wonder they maintain the saints cannot fall under affliction for sin, or chastisement for sin, seeing they maintain, God sees no sin in them. To clear the mind of God in this particular, there are some things that must be granted as truths, and there are some other things to be cautioned against as errors. The truths that are to be granted may be reduced to these four words: –

1. That justified persons never meet with condemnation, what temporal lots soever they meet with, and though they be not secured against the cross, yet they are secured from condemnation.

2. That a pardoned and justified child of God doth never come under the wrath of God; though justified persons may come under God's Fatherly displeasure, yet they are never more objects of Divine wrath as others; though they may often meet with Fatherly and Divine displeasure, as children, they come not under wrath, as enemies.

3. That pardoned and justified sinners never fall under proper punishments for sin, or afflictions to satisfy for their faults, though for other ends they may, such as to invite them to repentance, and to be humbled for their sin, to mortify sin, to caution them against sin for the future.

4. That many trials and afflictions come on pardoned sinners, wherein God doth not pursue them for sin, but is trying their faith and their graces. Such were Job's trials. Though Elihu tells him what he was, he had sin, and his sin deserved all was come upon him; yet betwixt God and Satan all his trials were stated on this, whether he would prove a godly man, and continue so, notwithstanding of them all. And such were these trials under which the Apostles and other godly persons did glory. God in these was not pursuing sin, but taking service and proofs of their faith, love, zeal, patience, etc., under the cross from them; and to this pertains that of John 9:2,3, when the disciples asked Him, saying, "Master, who did sin? This man, or his parents, that he was born blind." Christ answers, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents." That is, God was not punishing his nor his parents' sin in that stroke of blindness, "but that the works of God might be made manifest in him."

These truths being conceded, there are some other things to be cautioned against, as error, and I shall reduce what I would say for caution to these three heads:

Firstly. It is certain that sin is the inlet to all affliction, Romans 5:12, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Death, that is all calamities, which are a begun death, and the great death, the separation of the soul from the body. And hence, whatever may be God's design in any affliction He sends on godly men, it is their wisdom, while they are under the cross, to search out and be sensible of sin, and to be humbled for it before God, as we said before, when we

were on the second and third verses. That sense of trouble should be attended with the sense of sin. The sense of sin is good company when the sense of trouble is sharpest; and therefore, though Job was under a cleanly trial, yet Elihu tells him he had sin to deserve all that was come upon him, and if he considered his sin, he would quarrel less when his friends mistook him. Whatever other exercise affliction calls to, this is one, to search out and be humbled for sin. And it is a shrewd evidence that that affliction is not blessed of God that is not well varnished with sense of sin.

But, secondly, not only is sin the inlet to all afflictions, but even godly persons pardoned of sin may be under affliction upon the account of sin. I shall not speak of those common and absolutely determined afflictions, as that all godly men must die, and godly women must have pain in child-bearing, as well as others, but godly pardoned persons may come under peculiar afflictions upon the account of sin, and that either before sin is committed, or after sin is committed. Before sin be committed, godly men may come under affliction upon the account of sin. How many afflictions got godly men, upon the account of their corrupt dispositions, to prevent sin, to withdraw them from their purpose, to hide pride from man, to keep back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword? (Job 33:17,18). How many are such hard rocks that they must have hard wedges to rend them! How many are so prone to wandering that, were not their way hedged up with thorns, and the cross laid in their way, they would ruin themselves in following their lovers! How many would be intolerable to live with, if their nose were not holden on the grindstone! How many are made beggars, because they cannot bear wealth! Thus, ye see, godly men may be put under the cross with an eye to sin, in order to prevent sin. Again, they may be brought under peculiar afflictions, upon the account of sin, even when it is committed, and that either before it be pardoned, or after it is pardoned. Before it be pardoned, as when a sinner is lying under unrepented guilt, singing himself asleep in his provocations. If a godly man with David, 2 Samuel 11, drive such a trade, to fall into scandalous sins, and lie over in security, the Lord will send a hurt upon him, not to satisfy His justice, but to shake him out of his secure posture, and to set him to his feet, to the exercise of repentance and humiliation. He will send a rod that he may hear the voice thereof, and who hath appointed it. Hence David, Psalm 119:67, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; before I got the cross I wandered, and knew not what I was doing, but now have I kept thy word." That's affliction upon the account of sin committed, before it be pardoned, to waken out of security, and put to repent for it. Again, afflictions may come on the godly upon the account of sin, even when it is pardoned. When the pardoned man falls in sin, especially if it be a scandalous sin, he may not win easily away with that escape, but may be made to go with a borne-down back after it is pardoned, all his days. 2 Samuel 10:12,13, The Lord tells David that He had pardoned him, yet that the sword should not depart from his house, for all that. We suppose the Corinthians were godly men, and pardoned for the abuse of the Lord's Supper; yet, 1 Corinthians 11:30, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." Where ye may see affliction is let out upon the account of sin remitted, and if ye ask, Why doth the Lord so? I answer, not to take a satisfaction on to His justice, that's already completely made by Christ; but He doth it, partly to vindicate His own honour. Whatever be betwixt Him and His pardoned children, if they fall in sin that the world observes, He will let the world see that He will not wink at their miscarriages. The sword's not departing from David's house, was not to satisfy justice for his sins that were pardoned, but, because by his scandalous outbreking, he had made the enemies to blaspheme. He will let the world see that, if His darling David bourd (jest) with Him, and fall in sin, he hath made an ill bargain. Partly He doth this on account of sins remitted, that even the saints who are pardoned may see yet more the bitterness of their folly and wandering. The

Lord looketh not upon it as a sufficient discovery of sin, and the evil thereof, that a child of God may win to in repentance antecedent to pardon, but when he is pardoned, He will sharply afflict him, that he may know the bitterness of sin, and that he made an ill bargain when he gave way to it; and upon this it will result that, when the Lord afflicts the pardoned, they are not to forget daily to be humbled for pardoned sin. Though God be good and gracious in pardoning sin, we should be severe on ourselves for provoking Him. Though the pardoned man's count be cleared, he must lie in the dust for that he offended God, and brought so much woe and vexation on himself. And further, this will follow upon it, that God, by afflicting the pardoned sinner, invites him to mortify sin daily, that he may not fall in the like sin again. Yea, and further, when He afflicts the sinner, with an eye to sin that is pardoned, He invites the sinner to more and more thankfulness to Him for the pardoning of it, when he considers whatever afflictions or rods be inflicted, yet His pardon is ensured to him.

These are some of the blessed ends why the Lord, with an eye to pardoned sin, is pleased to let out afflictions and chastisements upon justified persons, and it is upon this account that chastisement with pardon is put in the covenant (Psalm 89:32). That, however, He will not take His loving-kindness from His children, nor suffer His faithfulness to fail, yet He will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; therefore we would mind this well. It is no great wonder that Antinomians say, God chastens not the saints at all upon the account of sin, for they say, God sees no sin in them to chasten; but let us not deceive ourselves, but when the rod is laid on, let us "hear the voice of the rod, and who hath appointed it" (Micah 6:9). Ye have heard that all afflictions come in by the door of sin, and therefore it's a sweet study, under afflictions, to be sensible of sin. Ye have heard that God may send afflictions on justified persons to prevent sin, and to waken them out of security and put them to repentance when sin is committed, to imprint upon their spirits the folly of their wanderings and the bitterness that follows sin, to caution them for the future against relapsing in sin, to stir them up to mortify sin, etc. These are better lessons than the dreams of Antinomians, that God hath no respect to the sins of His children when He afflicts them.

And yet I shall add a third word more for caution against their error, that is, that God's afflicting of saints, with an eye to sin, doth not at all clash with that which they assert, that the afflictions of the godly are for the trial of their faith. That they are merely for the trial of their faith, we deny; that they are for the trial of their faith, we grant. For, though afflictions be for the trial of faith, yet they are also for other ends, as before they repent to stir up to repentance, in order to pardon, and after repentance to humble them, and caution against sin, and for producing other effects, yet they are still trials of faith, whether they will adhere to God; yea, so much the more trials of faith are they, as we have not only trouble to grapple with, but guilt that brought on the affliction. It is easier for faith to hold its feet under a cleanly trial than when affliction is lying on, and conscience of guilt is staring us in the face. And therefore we shall easily grant, providing the mind of God in other ends of affliction be not neglected, that, when we have done all, we should look on the trial of faith as a main end of affliction, and when in affliction we cast away confidence, we miss a main end, and impede the good that we might get by affliction.

The time having prevented me, and I cannot win to the other two questions, whether the truth of pardon depends on the intimation of it to our hearts, and whether pardon be irrevocable, so that guilt makes not former pardon void, though it needeth pardon, and ought to be mourned for. I shall not now break in upon them. The Lord bless His Word to you.

*[Continued in November 1920]*

[October 1920]

## A Sermon.

By the REV. GEORGE HUTCHESON, M.A., of Edinburgh and Irvine (1674).  
(*Thirteenth Sermon of Series on Psalm 130.*)

“But there is forgiveness with thee” – Psalm 130:4.

Though I have insisted long, and may insist yet some while upon this great privilege, the forgiveness of sins, yet ye may know that I am not upon an unnecessary subject. I am upon a subject that will be found absolutely necessary for you, to make your testament comfortably with, and with the cordials thereof ye may digest any bitterness that occurreth in your empty pilgrimage. These general heads, on which I am now treating, want not their ground in the text and context. That which is pardoned (to which I have spoken), the text tells that it is iniquity: “There is forgiveness with thee of these iniquities, which if thou mark, who can stand?” The author of this benefit of pardon is expressly held out in the text, “There is forgiveness *with thee*,” and the benefit itself, the nature whereof I am now inquiring after, is held out in that term of forgiveness, “There is *forgiveness* with thee.” Now concerning this, having cleared negatively, what it is not, I told you particularly, that pardon takes not away the filth and being of sin, but the guilt of sin. God, in pardoning the sinner, remits the offence done to Him by the violation of His law, and restores the pardoned sinner to His favour, and exempts him from the deserved punishment of sin. And in pursuance of this, I spoke to two of four questions, which are needful to be discussed, for clearing the nature of remission.

1. I cleared to you, that though guilt be inseparable from the filth of sin, yet the sinner might be pardoned, though the filth of sin remain; and how that his pardon did not take away the desert of sin, considered in itself, but that it takes away that desert and guilt, as it results on the person sinning, so far as it never taketh effect on him; so that, though the person who fled unto Christ for refuge be troubled, not only with the pollution, but with the guilt of sin, yet he needs not be afraid, for it takes no effect against him, since he has betaken himself to the city of refuge. And to confirm this, I gave you several scriptural expressions of pardon, which may quiet the conscience, and be ground of peace; that although the filth of sin, and the inherent desert of sin remain, yet pardon is a real security to the pardoned sinner.

2. Another case or question which I spoke unto was, that seeing pardon frees the pardoned man from obligation to punishment, whether or not doth, or may, the Lord pursue a pardoned justified man with any chastisement or punishment for sin. And there, not to resume what I spoke unto you the last afternoon, I gave you some grounds of refutation of the Popish doctrine, who will have the fault or guilt remitted when the punishment is retained; which is to say, that sin is remitted, and it's not remitted. And upon the other hand, I cleared to you against the Antinomians, how that, as all trouble came in by the door of sin, the Lord may and doth chasten the pardoned sinner upon the account of sin; partly to prevent sin, partly to rouse him up to repentance when he hath sinned, and partly to set sinners on their feet, that they may be rightly affected with sin when it is pardoned, and that they may be excited to make a right use of pardon.

There remain yet other two questions or cases to be cleared, anent the nature of remission of sin, to which I shall now briefly speak, as the Lord will give.

3. The third case or question in order to this is whether the truth of pardon depends upon the intimation thereof to our hearts, yea, or no, as when a sensible sinner is fallen down at God's foot-stool, in the confession of sin, and crying for pardon through Christ, yet he finds nothing like a pardon intimate to his conscience. In this case the question is, whether hath he ground to doubt, that neither hath he repented of sin, nor gotten a pardon from God for it. The general answer to this is, that pardon, and God's intimation of pardon to the conscience, are not to be confounded. The apostle (1 Corinthians 2:12) gives a general rule concerning all supernatural gifts, that when we have received these things freely of God, we must receive the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God. It's one thing to get these supernatural gifts gifted to us, another thing to get the Spirit which is of God, to know they are given us; and this hath place particularly in the matter of pardon of sin, for the pardon of sin is a sentence already past to the Word of God in favour of all believers and penitents in Christ, so that no sooner doth the penitent sinner flee unto Him and look unto Him, as to the brazen serpent, for pardon and cure, but as soon as that pardon becomes his, before he can subsume (conclude) "I am fled unto Christ for pardon, and am pardoned." His direct act of faith draws out pardon, before he can reflect and pass a judgment on that, his pardon. And hence, when Nathan hath pronounced that David's sin is pardoned him (2 Samuel 12:13), yet in the 51st Psalm he cries instantly for mercy, for pardon, and blotting out of his transgression. Why? Though he was pardoned in the court of heaven, yet he was not pardoned in the court of his own conscience. The intimation of pardon was suspended and kept up. And hence is that which I named before, Matthew 9:2, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." It's one benefit to him to have his sins forgiven him, and another benefit to be of good cheer on that account: therefore, as Christ tells him that his sins are forgiven him, so He must bid him be of good cheer. Thus ye see the truth of a penitent's pardon depends not on the intimation thereof to his conscience.

But this wakens up another case or question, the following forth whereof will deduce this more distinctly, and that is, how it comes, and for what end it is, that a child of God cannot get it discerned and closed with, that he is pardoned. For clearing of this case, we should look first to ourselves, and then to a wise hand of God suspending the intimation of pardon. If we look to ourselves when we are pardoned, we cannot discern it because of our weakness, that cannot discern our happiness; we are blind and discern not our happiness, discern not our health; we confound the reality of pardon with the sense and feeling of pardon, and we will not believe pardon, except we feel the effects of pardon. And it is also because we are ignorant of getting pardon through the satisfaction of another. When we are brought to be sensible for sin and to look to Christ for pardon, and God hath spoken pardon, we are like the sea, which being raised by a storm, doth tumble awhile after the

storm is over, and there is a calm. These are some hints on our part why the pardoned sinner gets it not discerned that he is pardoned. But if we look to God, He may have a holy hand in keeping up the intimation of pardon upon several accounts.

1. The Lord would have us looking more to His Word, wherein pardon in the Gospel is holden out to us on Gospel terms, and less, to sense. He would breed us to grip the promise while sense come, and to grip the promise that sense may come. And they that will suspend all assurance of pardon until it be sensibly intimated, the Lord in His holy providence keeps up the intimation of pardon from them, to teach them to pay more due respect to His Word, and to seek and feed upon the consolation that depends upon pardon promised and pronounced therein, that by following His method by faith, they may come to sensible intimation of pardon.

2. The Lord may keep up the sensible intimation of pardon from the penitent and pardoned man, that He may learn him to look upon pardon not as a necessary result and effect of his repentance, but as a free gift of God, which though the Lord will not bestow without repentance, yet He doth not bestow it for repentance; therefore doth He suspend the intimation of pardon from the penitent man, that he may learn to look less to his repentance, and more to the free grace of God in obtaining of pardon.

3. The Lord sees it fit to keep pardoned sinners in suspense as to the sense of pardon, or the intimation of it, that He may let them see that when He is provoked by their sinning it is not so easy to recover themselves and get into His favour. Therefore, though He has pardoned them, yet He will keep them at the back of the door, as to the intimation of it; partly, that they may be put to resent how bitter a thing it is to depart from God and to raise a cloud betwixt Him and them; and partly, that they may be affrighted to dally with sin again. He will have them to know that though He give them mercy, it is not so easy to bring a delinquent in court and favour again.

4. The Lord keeps up the intimation of pardon from the penitent and pardoned sinner for this, among other ends, that he may be fit for sympathy with others that may come in the like case with himself. He may cause his reconciled people feel the bitterness of departing from Him, and may suffer them to lie in the sense, and under fears, of their unreconciled condition as to the intimation of pardon, that they may bear burden with others that come to be in their case.

5. The Lord keeps up the intimation of pardon from them, that He may set them on work to repent more, that they may search out sin more, and repent more for their sin, and for the sinfulness that is in their sin, that possibly as yet they have not laid well to heart. These reasons of suspending the intimation of pardon, even where pardon is really past, were they well pondered by us, we might get a better account of our pardon and the petitions we put up for it.

And particularly to speak a word here to them, who though they are in the use of the means, running to the open fountain and serious to know the mind of God as to the pardon of their sin, and their being in favour with God, yet can find no intimation thereof. Beside what general directions they may gather from that which I have spoken, I shall offer three or four words further. Thou that art a sensible sinner in the use of the means, fleeing to the remedy, yet can find no warmth or sweetness, through gripping to the promise of pardon – thou findest nothing like that, “Son, or daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee,” for such, I say, as thou art, I offer these four words of direction.

1. I would have such persons looking upon it as a mercy, that they are not deluded as to the matter of their pardon, as many are who never doubt of it. I confess they are in an error on the one hand; but the error of the other hand, that doubts not of pardon, is the more dangerous. Thy continuing doubtful is dishonourable to God, and thou impedest and provokest Him to suspend thy comfort: but the other that doubts not of pardon, they are deluded; they take it for granted that they are pardoned, or desperately they will take their venture whether they be pardoned or not; and therefore thou that art kept in exercise about the intimation of pardon, ought to bless God that thou art not in the error of these self-deluders.

2. I would recommend to such, that they would justify God whatever He do; that is David's remark, Psalm 51:4, "That he might be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges." If thou fall a-carping and quarrelling, that will not shorten thy distress, it may well provoke God to hide His face even more, till thou learn to justify Him.

3. I would recommend to them that are about the means using for pardon, and yet cannot win to the intimation of it, that they would look well to their repentance, and there are four things to be looked to in repentance.

1. They should look well that it be sincere, that it be repentance for sin as sin, and not a rueing for it, as it is disgraceful to them and prejudicial; many beguile themselves with a rueing for sin, and never repent sin:

2. They should look if their repentance be universal for all sin, which is another mark of sincere repentance; see that thou be not seeming to rue over one sin, while thou art hugging another in thy bosom.

3. They should labour to have their repentance deep and thorough. I mean not to recommend to any a trade of discouragement, but any who read in what plight David was, Psalm 32, Psalm 38 and Psalm 51, they will readily find that the repentance of the generality is not thorough.

4. They should look to it if their repentance be constant. It is marked of Christ, that, "When he was in an agony, he prayed more earnestly" (Luke 13:24). So such as are suspended and kept at the door, while they are about the work of repentance, they should be more fervent, and hold on in the work of repentance.

5. They should stick well by faith. There is a word to this purpose, Isaiah 50:10, "Who is there among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light," no intimation of comfort, "Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." In this case, faith closing with the promise of pardon must be stuck by, and to help you to stick by faith in such an exigent, I would have you considering partly,

(1) that many a pardon is past in heaven, whereof the sensible sinner wants the comfort.

(2) When faith is the exercise that thou hast no will to make use of, I would have thee to consider, that it is a notable refutation of temptation, to go and mourn over thy atheism and unbelief, and for that thou hast such an aversion to the way of faith, whereby only thou canst win to the shore.

(3) Consider that it is a most cleanly and noble act of faith, in despite of Satan's temptations, and the fears of thine own conscience over the belly of unbelief, to cast thyself in the arms of Christ, and in the bosom of the promise, and if thou perish, thou perish. There thou castest thyself, and there thou leavest thyself.

Now to come to the fourth, or last case or question I proposed to be spoken to, Whether pardon of sin be a revocable or irrevocable sentence? That is, whether when a pardoned sinner falleth in a new sin, his new guilt cancelleth all former pardon till he repent all over

again, and get a renewed pardon for all. It is to no purpose here to trouble you with the differences, betwixt the canonists and the school-men, betwixt Gratian and his glossator, in this matter. That which lies in our plain road in clearing this question I shall reduce to five brief assertions.

1. It is to be granted, and experience witnesseth it, that in the case of new guilt, Satan by temptation may be ready to cast all loose, to call in question all former pardons, so to a man's sense, all former iniquities may come to remembrance; and it may come in question, whether or not they have been pardoned, which is a proof of the saints' tenderness, though it be clogged with a mistake. Their pardon may fall under debate, as we see in David and Job – in David, Psalm 15:7, who prays "That God would not remember the sins of his youth"; and in Job 13:26, whose temptation is, "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the sins of my youth." He looks on sins long ago pardoned, as pursued by God.

2. It is to be granted, that as Satan by temptation, and saints through their own weakness, may bring former pardon in question, so the Lord in His providence may see it good to concur in something like that; He may, though He do not recall pardon, yet bring pardoned sins to memory, open these unripe graves, and hold their heads over them, when they fall in the committing of new folly. And this the Lord doth partly that He may affect the sinner the more, when he reflects on his guilt against God, that hath pardoned him so; and partly, that the sinner may thereby be excited to vomit up by repentance his new contracted guilt; all terrors for former guilt recurring, he may not dally therewith anymore; and partly he calls former guilt to remembrance, that He may make the sinner afraid to be adding to that account.

3. This is a thing to be yielded to, that is, that however it stand with a man as to the pardon of bygone sin, yet God allows him no consolation in the pardon of sin, so long as he wallows in new provocations without repentance. Be his pardon revocable or not revocable, it shall be all a matter to him, if he study not tenderness in his walk. And any man that is going on in new provocations and doth bless himself in former pardon, I shall not say that he is blessing himself with a lie, but sure he is blessing himself with a false comfort in his right hand.

4. This must be granted, that as the school-men say, sins that are pardoned do recur upon the commission of new guilt, not formally considered as in themselves, but in so far as these former sins that were pardoned are virtually contained in the ingratitude that is in that new guilt. That is, though formerly pardoned sins return not upon the delinquent, yet there is so much of ingratitude to God in new contracted guilt, that in some respect the sinner may be accounted no less guilty, as if all the former guilt were contained in that one provocation. But when these four must be granted, yet,

5. in the fifth place it is still to be held, that a pardon past by God is a sentence irrevocable; it is a sentence not made void, nor cancelled by any new guilt. It is one of these gifts of God that are given "without repentance," and this is clearly intimated to you in these Scriptures that I gave you before, while I shew you how satisfactorily the Scripture speaks of the pardon of sin, as it is looked on by God; how it is called "A blotting out of sin," "A covering of it," "A putting it out of his sight," "A casting of it behind his back," and "In the depth of the sea"; and so, "As though it be sought for, it shall not be found," and how, speaking of pardoned iniquities, He says, "He so blots them out, that he does not remember them"; and "He will forgive their iniquities so, as that he will remember their sin no more." These Scriptures evince, that pardon once past is irrevocable. As for these Scriptures the canonists and Lutherans urge, as Ezekiel 18:24,26, "That when a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations of a wicked man, all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned, he shall die in his sin." That would seem to make all void, but the answer is easy, that either the text speaks of a

temporary righteousness of a man that was never pardoned, and from which he may totally and finally fall away; or if it speak of true righteousness in the pardoned man, it holds only by way of supposition, that, "If the righteous man should fall away, his righteousness should not be mentioned"; and this supposition says nothing to the possibility of the thing, but is a blessed means to prevent his falling away. There is another word, Matthew 18:32, spoken of, "The wicked servant that had his debt forgiven him, and had no compassion on his fellow-servant and was delivered to the tormentors," that the ancients trouble themselves much about, and speak of a baptismal remission, that is gotten in baptism; but that text is a parable, and a parable is not to be strained beyond its scope. Parables are like pictures wherein are many flourishes, which are not lineaments of the thing portrayed. The scope of that parable is, to prove that Christ will pardon the sins of none, but such as forgive others; and such as will not forgive others, though they seem pardoned folk, they will find their sins retained; and that this is the scope, is clear from Christ's explaining it, and no more.

From this that I have been speaking about the irrevocableness of pardon, there are some uses that I intended to have spoken to, which I shall name and close:

One is, that as they who have been pardoned, and can reflect how much they have been humbled for particular sins before they attained to pardon, they should walk tenderly, for fear of wakening old sores and the guilt that God hath covered with the veil of pardon, as they would not have these laid in their dish, and be made to look upon these unripe graves of abominations.

And another word that I intended to have spoken to, is, that a sensible child of God, though he fall in new guilt, is not obliged to look upon former guilt, which hath been pardoned, as unpardoned, though he ought to be humbled for, and repent the present guilt. If Satan, and the conscience, and God to His holy providence, call to remembrance sins pardoned, and waken them about his ears, the sensible man in that case should not question former pardon, though readily there is some unpardoned sin, where these bygone counts are back-speared (questioned again), that should be sought out and mourned for; yet all are not to be looked on as unpardoned, but as beacons and warnings, to make conscience of repentance for unpardoned sin, that we may get that breach cemented, and that wound bound up again. God bless what ye have heard!

*[Continues in July 1921]*

[November 1920]

## A Sermon.

Preached by the REV. D. M. MACDONALD, Portree,  
as Retiring Moderator of Synod, at Inverness, on 18th May, 1920.

“For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” – 1 Corinthians 1:21.

The circumstances which gave rise to this Epistle are revealed in the preceding verses of the chapter. Corinth was a large city, and many of its inhabitants were of different nationalities. Some of these had embraced the Christian religion, and being of different origin to the Jewish believers, strife and dissension were easily provoked by headstrong parties among them. The apostle exhorts them to unity, and reproves their unseemly dissensions. He declares that the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, and that the preaching of the Cross is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe.

The Greeks were very fond of philosophical disputations, by means of which they sought to show their wisdom, but Paul points out that the highest wisdom is to be acquainted with the saving power of the Gospel, and to live in the exercise of faith on Christ. In dealing with the verse, we propose to notice: –

- I. – The world’s ignorance of God;
- II. – God’s method of saving the world; and
- III. – The effects of His Gospel method.

I. – *The world’s ignorance of God.* In his original condition man had a true knowledge of God. This knowledge was lost by the Fall, and ever since it is impossible for man to know God savingly until quickened by the Holy Spirit. The worship of God at the outset was observed in families, but in the course of time, owing to the gradual spread of heathen practices, true religion was confined to a few people. The Jewish dispensation continued from the time of their bondage in Egypt down to the death of Christ. Notwithstanding the efforts of priests and prophets their religion degenerated into mere formality. When the Lord Jesus preached the Gospel personally, He was strongly opposed by self-righteous scribes and Pharisees. He saw that the Jews were steeped in self-righteousness. This was the outcome of their ignorance of Him whom they professed to worship and serve.

If the Jews were so ignorant of God, despite their privileges and their possession of the Scriptures, wherein He reveals Himself, how much more was this true of the Gentile world, characterised by the apostle as being without God, without Christ, and without hope! Their condition was altogether lamentable. Now, it is evident, considering all the privileges and knowledge that Gospel hearers have, that, unless God Himself will deal personally with them, in order to save them, they must perish in their sins. The world by its own wisdom can never attain to a saving knowledge of Christ. Its wisdom is always opposed to the wisdom of God. The greatest philosophers amongst the Greeks, although they concluded that God existed,

knew Him not. God, in His infinite wisdom, permitted this ignorance in order that His wisdom might be displayed in the plan of Salvation. A mere head knowledge of this plan will save no sinner. The belief prevalent amongst many in these times is that birth in a civilised community is all that is required, along with some hazy ideas of the Christian religion, in order to be saved, so deep-rooted is man's ignorance of himself and of his Creator. The false religions of the world only confirm sinners in their ignorance and folly. It is the glorious Gospel of Christ alone that can impart life and salvation.