No. 13.

Forgiveness of Sins

AND ITS RESULTS.

BY

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AND ITS RESULTS.

THERE is no subject of such vital importance to the awakened soul as *the forgiveness of sins.* Apart from the knowledge of forgiveness, it is impossible to have rest as to the present or certainty as to the future. Repentance toward God must ever precede the knowledge of forgiveness. Repentance is a confession of guilt, and that it is really felt in God's sight. For why repent if there has been no wrong-doing —no sins committed? Remorse is not repentance. There will be the deepest and most painful remorse in hell, but no repentance. Indeed, remorse, which is always accompanied with the remembrance of guilt, will be one of the most

bitter ingredients in hell's awful cup. A great poet has solemnly and graphically expressed it:—

> "The mind that broods o'er guilty woes
> *Is like to scorpion girt by fire.*"

Remorse in itself is no evidence of repentance toward God. True repentance is the fruit of godly sorrow. It is the judgment I form of myself and of my sinful history in the light of God's holy presence. Abhorring myself and my sins, I turn to God with an open, honest heart in the confession of them all. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

Do not think me severely personal if I ask you a few plain questions. Have you repented of your sins and bowed before God in the confession of them? Do you know the forgiveness of your sins? Is your soul at perfect peace in regard to all your past history, as it will appear in the light of God's judgment throne?

Do not say, "*No one can know.*" It is far too bold a statement, and, moreover, it goes right against Scripture and the experience of tens of thousands of God's people. One verse is enough to settle the point and to silence every doubt: "I write unto you, little children, BECAUSE YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN YOU *for his* [Christ's] *name's sake.*" (1 John ii. 12.)

I propose to look at—

1. The basis of forgiveness.
2. The way of forgiveness.
3. The fulness of forgiveness.
4. The results of forgiveness.

1. THE BASIS OF FORGIVENESS.

Perhaps there is no statement in all Scripture so hard for the human mind to understand as "A JUST GOD and A SAVIOUR." How a God of inflexible justice can forgive and save a sinner from the just and awful consequences of his sins, is a problem that the mind of man cannot solve. God's righteous-

ness against sin is inexorable. His holy nature hates sin, and in justice He must punish it. For God to forgive sins without a righteous basis is impossible. His justice would be tarnished for ever. To admit an unholy sinner into heaven would be to deny His holy nature. God is God, He cannot change, and sin is sin.

The gospel of God is the full and perfect revelation of what He is, both in His love and mercy, in His justice and holiness. It is not one-sided. His mercy is as prominent as His righteousness, and His love as manifest as His holiness.

Where, then, do we see the full display of what God is? Not in creation. Not in the law. It is in the death of God's Son that we see God manifested. His hatred of sin, His righteousness in dealing with it, His mercy, His love for the sinner, all shine forth in that death of shame and agony. "God commendeth his love toward us, *in that while we*

were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.)

A full and sufficient atonement having been thus made, God can now forgive and eternally save without tarnishing His holiness or impairing His righteousness in the very least degree. Nay, more, His justice is now set forth in forgiving those who believe on Christ, whom He raised from the dead and glorified at His own right hand.

Hear the good news, "To him give all the prophets witness, that THROUGH HIS NAME WHOSOEVER *believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*" (Acts x. 43.) "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that THROUGH THIS MAN [Christ Jesus] is preached unto you THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS." Complete absolution is here preached in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ apart from every other name, and apart from all merit in ourselves. This is the attitude which God now takes. He proclaims forgiveness to all, because Christ has died and made propitiation.

In His death sin itself has been judged, and God is just in forgiving all who believe in Christ. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, *the forgiveness of sins*, according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. i. 7.)

2. THE WAY OF FORGIVENESS.

We all know how much depends on the way or manner in which a thing is done. For instance, if a person in bestowing a gift makes the receiver feel that he is conferring a great favour upon him, all the bloom and beauty of it is gone. Or suppose you offend someone, and you frankly confess your fault and apologise, you do not like the offended person to forgive you with a grudging mind. You would rather be met with a smiling face and a warm shake of the hand.

How beautifully Luke vii. shows the way of God's forgiveness. "There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred

pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, *he frankly forgave them both.*" Perhaps there is no one more to be pitied than a penniless debtor with his creditor pressing his claims. It is no enviable position, surely. Such was our position in the sight of God. God could have justly pressed His claims by bringing the full force of the law upon us. He was justly entitled to what was His own. He could have imprisoned us until the last mite was paid. But instead of pressing His claims, He frankly (freely) forgives. God ever acts like Himself, and so rich is His grace that He not only forgives us freely, but for ever forgets. Blessed be His name! "Their sins and iniquities *will I remember no more.*" With beaming face the Father received and embraced the prodigal, even in his rags, and covered him with kisses. Such is the love of God! Such is the way or manner of God's forgiveness!

3. THE FULNESS OF FORGIVENESS.

"Having forgiven you ALL trespasses." (Col. ii. 13.) Nothing can be wider in its extent than *all.* It includes every sin known and unknown, forgotten and remembered, secret and open, big sin and little. It is exclusive of none. "The Lord *hath laid on him* [Jesus] the iniquity of us all." All was charged to Him when He died, and His atoning death settled fully and for ever the whole account. If one sin had been left out of the number, that one sin would be sufficient to condemn my soul for ever. If all was not settled when Christ died, it will never be settled. "Who his own self *bare our sins in his own body on the tree: . . . by whose stripes ye were healed.*" (1 Peter ii. 24.) He either bore all or none. "Without shedding of blood is *no remission.*" He can never die and shed His blood again. He lives in heaven now. He has sat down at the right hand of God because His work is

completely and eternally finished. The believer can now look to heaven and see Jesus there without the sins He once bore on the cross. He appears in the presence of God for us. He represents us in the heavenly courts.

Do any think such teaching dangerous, and only tending to laxity of conduct here? Such forget that from the moment we believe in Christ and receive the Holy Spirit, our standing and condition are entirely changed. We are begotten of God, and hence are in a new life and condition. We are brought into an entirely new relationship. We are made the children of God. Though our responsibility as children of Adam has been met in the death of Christ and closed for ever, yet we are responsible to walk here for God's pleasure as His beloved children. "Be ye therefore *imitators of God* as dear children." "Let him that stole *steal no more*, but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, *that he may have to give* to him that

needeth." Where the power of divine grace is allowed to work unhinderedly in the soul, the thief not only ceases to thieve, but is changed into a giver. What a wonderful thing divine grace is!

But suppose any of God's children do err from the path of rectitude. What then? Thank God, we have an Advocate with the Father. Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us. The effect of His all-prevailing advocacy is that we are led to see and judge our folly and confess our sins, whereupon we receive the Father's forgiveness. We do not come to God as criminal sinners as heretofore, but as children who have grieved the Father. And the apostle John says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." What a comfort! Sin is in us still, and if we are not watchful and dependent on God, who alone can keep us, we may be ensnared by it. Hence the importance of the exhortation, "Let us lay aside every

weight *and sin which doth so easily beset us.*"

Of course, it is possible for a saint to do things of which he may have to reap the bitter fruit all his earthly days. Moses was the meekest man in all the earth, yet he spake unadvisedly with his lips, and misrepresented God before His people. On account of this he was hindered from entering the promised land. David unrighteously took away another's life, and so the sword never departed from his house. Samson joined himself to Delilah, and disclosed to her the secret of his Nazariteship; so he fell from the place of public testimony, and was taken prisoner by the Philistines, and made to grind in a prison-house to the end of his life, with both eyes put out. The hand of God in government is one thing, and the love of His heart is quite another. Though we in our foolishness may do things that may bring God's hand upon us in government, there is no reason, *if we are humbled and broken*

about it, that we should not be restored to the full enjoyment of His love.

His love never changes toward us under any circumstances. We may not enjoy it so much at one time as at another; but all the same, it is unchangeable, and it is always there to be enjoyed, even as the sun is ever in the heavens, and shines whether we feel his cheering rays or not. Nothing that we discover in ourselves ever surprises Him, for He knew it before He set His love upon us. His love does not depend on what we are, or on the way we conduct ourselves toward Him. It is true that if we do not walk in obedience and holiness we grieve the Holy Spirit and cannot enjoy His love. *Our enjoyment of His love* depends entirely on our walk. The more obedient we are, the more separate and holy we shall be; and the more separate and holy we are, the more the Holy Spirit who dwells within us will occupy us with Christ and with the love of God, which is the spring and source of all our happiness.

There is such a thing as governmental forgiveness, according to James v., where we find the sick person raised up in answer to prayer—"If he have committed sins *they shall be forgiven him.*" Instead of being taken away by death, and his sins thus bound upon him governmentally, he is raised up to life. How wonderful are the ways of God! all His dealings are in perfect love. His only object is to break down the pride of man and bring him into the light of the purpose of His own love. However hard His dealings may appear, we may depend upon it "He is *full of pity*, and of *tender* mercy."

4. THE RESULTS OF FORGIVENESS.

There are three results which flow from the knowledge of God's forgiveness.

(i.) We enter into the enjoyment of peace with God. The Lord said to the woman, "Thy sins are forgiven. Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Sweet words—"*Go in peace!*" The

dark thunder-clouds of judgment have all been scattered, the storm hushed, the raging of the tempest made to cease; the sea is perfectly calm—"Go in peace."

(ii.) Our hearts are drawn toward and knit to the One who has forgiven us. "Which of them will love him most? he to whom he forgave most." The greater the record of guilt, the greater the grace needed and the richer the grace shown. The more deeply sensible of our guilty state, the more deeply our hearts will be affected by the grace that freely forgave us all. How very expressive the words, "She loved *much*." We are His debtors indeed. Oh! to love Him more, and to prove our love by a life of whole-hearted devotedness to the Lord who so loved us as to give Himself for us. His love claims our hearts. It is *hearts* He wants, *not heads*.

(iii.) We walk in the spirit of grace, and thus in the spirit of forgiveness toward all. "If any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you,

so also do ye." "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, *forgiving one another*, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." What a measure! "*Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*" "*Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*" See how beautifully this spirit is seen in the history of Joseph's dealing with his brethren. He says to them, "Be not angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither. God meant it to preserve life." "I will nourish you and your little ones." That was not only forgiveness, but overcoming evil with good. It was heaping coals of fire on their heads. Such is the Spirit of Christ, such is the spirit of grace. What an effectual way of killing enmity! "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head."

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