

ARE YOU FORGIVEN?

All men need forgiveness, because all men are sinners. He that does not know this, knows nothing in religion. It is the very A. B. C. of Christianity, that a man should know his right place, and understand his deserts.

We are *all great sinners*. Sinners we were born, and sinners we have been all our lives. We take to sin naturally from the very first. No child ever needs schooling and education to teach it to do wrong. No devil or bad companion ever leads us into such wickedness as our own hearts; and yet the wages of sin is death. We must either be forgiven, or lost eternally.

Probably these pages will be read by some one who feels he is not yet a forgiven soul. My heart's desire and prayer is, that such a one may seek his pardon at once. And I would fain help him forward by showing him the kind of forgiveness offered to him, and the glorious privileges within his reach.

Listen to me, then, while I try to exhibit to you the treasures of gospel forgiveness. I cannot describe its fullness as I ought. Its riches are indeed unsearchable. Eph. iii. 8. But if you will turn away from it, you shall not be able say in the day of judgment, you did not at all know what it was.

Consider then, for one thing, that the forgiveness set before you is a *great and broad forgiveness*.—

Hear what the Prince of Peace himself declares :
 "All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men,
 and blasphemies wherewithsoever they shall blas-
 pheme." Mark iii. 28. "Though your sins be as
 scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though
 they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—
 Isa. i. 18. Yes! though your trespasses be more
 in number than the hairs of your head, the stars in
 heaven, the leaves of the forest, the blades of grass,
 the grains of sand on the sea-shore, still they can
 all be pardoned. As the waters of Noah's flood
 covered over all and hid the tops of the highest
 hills, so can the blood of Jesus cover over and hide
 your mightiest sins. "His blood cleanseth from
 all sin." 1 John i. 7. Though to you they seem
 written with the point of a diamond, they can all
 be effaced from the book of God's remembrance by
 that precious blood. Paul names a long list of
 abominations which the Corinthians had committed,
 and then says, "Such were some of you; but ye
 are washed, ye are sanctified, but ye are justified,
 in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit
 of our God." 1 Cor. vi. 11.

Furthermore, it is a *full and complete forgiveness*.
 It is not like David's pardon to Absalom,—a per-
 mission to return home, but not a full restoration
 to favor: 2 Sam. xiv. 24. It is not a mere letting
 off, and letting alone. It is a pardon so complete,
 that he who has it is reckoned as righteous as if he
 had never sinned at all. His iniquities are blotted
 out. They are removed from him as far as the east
 is from the west. Psalm ciii. 12. There remains

no condemnation for him. The Father sees him joined to Christ, and is well pleased. I verily believe if the best of us all had only one blot left for himself to wipe out, he would miss eternal life. If Noah, Daniel, and Job had had but one day's sins to wash away, they would never have been saved. Praised be to God, that in the matter of our pardon there is nothing left for man to do. Jesus does all, and man has only to hold out an empty hand, and to receive.

Furthermore, it is a *free forgiveness*. It is not burdened with an "if," like Solomon's pardon to Adonijah, "If he will show himself a worthy man." 1 Kings i. 52. Nor yet are you obliged to carry a price in your hand, or bring a character with you to prove yourself deserving of mercy. Jesus requires but one character, and that is, that you should feel yourself a sinful, bad man. He invites you to "buy wine and milk without money and without price;" and declares, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Isaiah lv. 1, Rev. xxii. 17. Like David in the cave of Adullam, he receives "every one that feels in distress and a debtor," and rejects none. 1 Sam. xxii. 2. Are you a sinner? Do you want a Saviour?—Then come to Jesus just as you are, and your soul shall live.

Again, it is an *offered forgiveness*. I have read of earthly kings who knew not how to show mercy,—of Henry the Eighth of England, who spared neither man nor woman—of James the Fifth of Scotland, who would never show favor to a Douglas.

The King of kings is not like them. He calls on man to come to him and be pardoned. "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men." Prov. viii. 4. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." Isaiah lv. 1. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." John vii. 37. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Matt. xi. 28. O reader, it ought to be a great comfort to you and me to hear of any pardon at all; but to hear Jesus himself inviting us, to see Jesus himself holding out his hand to us,—the Saviour seeking the sinner before the sinner seeks the Saviour,—this is strong consolation indeed.

Again, it is a *willing forgiveness*. I have heard of pardons granted in reply to long entreaty, and wrung out by much importunity. King Edward the Third of England would not spare the citizens of Calais till they came to him with halters round their necks, and his own queen interceded for them on her knees. But Jesus is "good and ready to forgive." Psalm lxxxvi. 5. "He delighteth in mercy." Micah vii. 18. Judgment is his strange work. 'He is not willing that any should perish.' 2 Peter iii. 9. He would fain have all men saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. 1 Tim. ii. 4. He wept over unbelieving Jerusalem. 'As I live,' he says, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: why will ye die?' Ezek. xxxiii, 11. Ah! reader, you and I may well come boldly to the throne of grace. He who sits there is far more

willing and ready to give mercy than you and I are to receive it.

Besides this, it is a *tried forgiveness*. Thousands and ten of thousands have sought for-pardon at the mercy seat of Christ, and not one has ever returned to say that he sought in vain. Sinners of every name and nation,—sinners of every sort and description, have knocked at the door of the fold, and none have ever been refused admission. Zaccheus, the extortioner, Saul, the persecutor, Peter, the denier of his Lord, the Jews who crucified the Prince of life, the idolatrous Athenians, the adulterous Corinthians, the ignorant Africans, the bloodthirsty New-Zealanders,—all have ventured their souls on Christ's promises of pardon, and none have ever found them fail. Ah! reader, if the way I set before you were a new and untravelled way, you might well feel faint-hearted. But it is not so. It is an old path. It is a path worn by the feet of many pilgrims, and a path in which the footsteps are all one way. The treasury of Christ's mercies has never been found empty. The well of living waters has never proved dry.

Besides this, it is a *present forgiveness*. All that believe in Jesus are at once justified from all things. Acts xiii, 39. The very day the younger son returned to his father's house, he was clothed with the best robe, had the ring put upon his hand, and the shoes on his feet. Luke xv. The very day Zaccheus received Jesus, he heard those comfortable words, 'This day is salvation come to this house.' Luke xix, 9. The very day that David

said, 'I have sinned against the Lord,' he was told by Nathan, 'The Lord also hath put away thy sin.' 2 Sam. xii, 13. The very day you first flee to Christ, your sins are all removed. Your pardon is not a thing far away, to be obtained only by hard work, and after many years. It is nigh at hand. It is close to you, within your reach, all ready to be bestowed. - Believe, and that very moment it is your own. 'He that believeth is not condemned.' John iii, 18. It is not said, He shall not be, or will not be, but *is not*. From the time of his believing, condemnation is gone. He that believeth hath everlasting life. John iii, 36. It is not said, He shall have, or will have: it is *hath*. It is his own as surely as if he were in heaven, though not so evidently so to his own eyes. Ah! reader, you must not think forgiveness will be nearer to a believer in the day of judgment than it was in the hour he first believed. His complete salvation is every year nearer and nearer to him; but as to his forgiveness and justification, it is a finished work from the very minute he first commits himself to Christ.

Reader, I have set before you the nature of the forgiveness offered to you. I have told you but little of it, for my words are weaker than my will. The half of it remains untold. The greatness of it is far more than any report of mine. But I think I have said enough to show you it is worth the seeking, and I can wish you nothing better than that you strive to make it your own.

Do you call it nothing to look forward to death

without fear, and to judgment without doubtings, and to eternity without a sinking of heart? Do you call it nothing to feel the world slipping from your grasp, and to see the grave getting ready for you, and the valley and the shadow of death opening before your eyes and yet not be afraid? Do you call it nothing to be able to think of the great day of account, the throne, the books, the Judge, the assembled worlds; the revealing of secrets, the final sentence, and yet to feel, I am safe? This is the portion, and this the privilege, of a forgiven soul.

Such a one is *on a rock*. When the rain of God's wrath descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, his feet shall not slide,—his habitation shall be sure.

Such a one is *in an ark*. When the last fiery deluge is sweeping over all things on the surface of the earth, it shall not come nigh him. He shall be caught up and borne securely above it all.

Such a one is *in a hiding place*. When God arises to judge terribly the earth, and men are calling to rocks and mountains to fall upon them and cover them, the everlasting arms shall be thrown around him, and the storms shall pass over his head. He shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Such a one is *in a city of refuge*. The accuser of the brethren can lay no charge against him.—The law cannot condemn him. There is a wall between him and the avenger of blood. The enemies of his soul cannot hurt him. He is in a secure sanctuary.

Such a one is *rich*. He has treasure in heaven which cannot be effected by worldly changes, compared to which Peru and California are nothing at all. He needs not envy the richest merchants and bankers. He has a portion that will endure when bank-notes and dollars are worthless things. He can say, like the Spanish ambassador, when shown the treasury at Venice, My master's treasury has no bottom. He has Christ.

Such a one is *insured*. He is ready for anything that may happen. Nothing can harm him. Banks may break and governments may be overturned. Famine and pestilence may rage around him. Sickness and sorrow may visit his own fireside.— But still he is ready for all: ready for health, ready for disease—ready for tears, ready for joy—ready for poverty, ready for plenty—ready for life, ready for death. He has Christ. He is a pardoned soul.

Blessed, indeed, is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Psalm xxxii. 1.

Reader, how will you escape if you neglect so great salvation? Why should you not lay hold on it at once, and say, Pardon me, even me also, O my Saviour! What would you have, if the way I have set before you does not satisfy you? Come while the door is open. Ask, and you shall receive.