

# *Gospel Remission*



# *Gospel Remission*

*or*

*A Treatise Showing That True Blessedness  
Consists in Pardon of Sin*

*Wherein Is Discovered:  
The Many Gospel Mysteries Therein Contained  
The Glorious Effects Proceeding from It  
The Great Mistakes Made about It  
The True Signs and Symptoms of It  
The Ways and Means to Obtain It*

Jeremiah Burroughs

Edited by Don Kistler



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*Gospel Remission*

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## ENDORSEMENT

These are to certify to all into whose hands this book shall come that these sermons contained in this book on Psalm 32:1, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered," entitled *Gospel Remission*, and printed for Dorman Newman Stationer, are the painful and profitable labors of Mr. Jeremiah Burroughs, and published by the best and most exact copy extant.

January 17, 1668

*Philip Nye*

*William Bridge*

*Matthew Mead*

*William Greenhill*

*William Adderly*

*C. Helmes*

## TO THE READER

Christian Reader,

The providential care of God is manifested toward His people in the present preservation of and provision for them. To have the mouths of lions stopped when we are cast into the midst of their den; the waters to be a wall about us on the right hand and the left, which in their own nature and tendency would overwhelm us; to have the bush burning and not consumed, are as evident tokens of the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush, of God's presence with and owning of His afflicted people now as in the days of old. Yea, to have honey out of the flinty rock, manna in the wilderness, a voice behind us saying, "This is the way, walk in it," enforces as great an obligation to admiration and thankfulness upon us as upon the Israelites of old. Among the many English prophets who are dead and yet speak, the reverend author of the ensuing treatise may challenge a place with the first worthies: his works, not my words, are the best orators to commend him. That Scripture encomium may be written upon his Stepney and Cripplegate Lectures—this and that man were born there. For although many now living do, through mercy, enjoy able teachers and instructors, yet they owe to him the name of "Father" as an instrument of their conversion. I may boldly apply that saying to holy Burroughs, which was once spoken of a learned divine beyond the sea: Learned men would deserve to live even after their death, and by their writings to teach those unhappy enough to be born after them; and no one will forbid putting Burroughs in that class of men save he who mistrusts personal excellence.

These sermons presented to your view are, with the help of an able learned divine (who also heard these sermons

preached), cast into that form of a tract that you now see them in, without any material additions or alterations. The time when the reverend author preached them was next in order after those convincing sermons of the sinfulness of sin, so that this gospel soul-reviving discourse was then a word spoken in due season.

In this treatise you have gospel grace stated rightly, the justice of God cleared, the mercy of God exalted, poor trembling sinners encouraged to come to the blood of Christ for pardon, and presumptuous sinners awakened out of their deadly deluding dreams of heaven, when they are ready to drop into hell. In a word, here you may take a view of the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, the fountain opened for sin, and for uncleanness, cordial waters of life for sinking and fainting sinners. Here you may behold sin, damning sin; sin that God hates, and cannot but hate; sin that God punishes and cannot but punish, taken off the poor believing sinner and laid upon His surety; sin condemned and punished in Jesus Christ, and the believing sinner justified, pardoned, and acquitted. If, therefore, you prize peace with God through Jesus Christ, pray for light to direct you into a distinct knowledge of this gospel truth, and take up this book and read it, and the Lord give you understanding in all things, answerable to the design of the author, and the prayer of him who heartily wishes your salvation and growth in the knowledge of God, and of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

*C. Helmes*

*The Stationer to the Reader*

It is now long since I undertook the printing of this book, and as my encouragements were many, so I had obtained of one of those reverend divines that have given their attestation to it, to peruse the work, and had his testimony that he heard those sermons preached. And upon perusal of them was found no material left out of what the author, Mr. Jeremiah Burroughs, delivered. It is known that Mr. Peter Cole (who formerly printed many of the author's works) had long laid wait and endeavored to get this copy out of the hands of those that published the author's books, offering as great reward for the same, but could not obtain it. And now at last being so much wished thereunto by his friends; and being assured that as the whole is abundantly spiritual and lovely in its matter, and that wherein the very spirit and style of Mr. Burroughs is manifested, so there are many things (as I am informed) were never so much as touched upon or handled by any other writer; and yet, because these are of very great importance to be known by all intelligent and sober-minded men, I thought it good, having this assurance from them, to certify so much to the reader.

*Dor. Newman*



CHAPTER 1

*The Text Opened and the  
Main Doctrine Propounded*

*“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,  
and whose sin is covered.”*

PSALM 32:1

*I* have, as you may remember, in many sermons endeavored to show you the malignity and dreadful evil that there is in sin; and what more reasonable and suitable argument can we now treat than the blessedness of pardon of sin? How sweet and acceptable will this be to such souls who, by the former arguments, have been made apprehensive of the dreadful evil of it? How readily will they say with the prophet, Isaiah 52:7, “How beautiful are the feet of those that bring (such) good tidings?” Wherefore, I think, while I am reading this text, I should be like a man who, at an echo, hears the words thereof resounded back again by every broken-hearted sinner in this congregation, “Oh, blessed, blessed is

the man indeed whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sin is covered.”

“A word spoken in season (said Solomon) is like apples of gold in pictures of silver,” Proverbs 25:11; and considering how large I have been in opening the “Evil of Sin” unto you [Burroughs is referring to his classic work on sin entitled *The Evil of Evils*, published by Soli Deo Gloria], if ever a word was spoken in due season, I hope it may be out of this text: the word of reconciliation and pardon of sin. And if God enables me to clear up unto you the excellency of those truths contained in this Scripture, I hope they will prove in all your eyes to be as “apples of gold in pictures of silver.”

The words read are the first words of one of David’s penitential psalms, and they are indeed the genuine voice of a true penitent, the very character of a humble penitential soul; he is one that has admiring thoughts of the blessedness of the pardon of sin. I will not spend time in analyzing the whole psalm, because the sweetness and blessedness of the argument draw my heart to come presently to it; and blessed may your ears be, who, after hearing the dreadful evil of sin, may come to hear the blessed doctrine of pardon. It is that which God has denied to many thousands; and who knows but many even of those who in this congregation have heard the sorrow of that doctrine are now gone (perhaps to their own place) and feel what they then heard, and much more, and are past ever hearing the argument of pardon and forgiveness of sin. That blessed sound shall never come to their ears; but there shall be the horrid noise of yelling, roarings, and cursings of damned spirits, for the wrath of God lies heavy on them for their sin.

This psalm, in the title of it, is a Psalm of David, *Maschil*; that is, a psalm of instruction, or for instruction; and what is a more useful instruction than to instruct the soul where true

blessedness lies? And what is a better instruction than to tell man the way of the pardon and forgiveness of sin? The way to true happiness? The happiness of the reasonable creature is that which many wise men thought to find out, but after all their search, they were much puzzled, and in the dark, and could never come to find where it lay, by all the wisdom of the flesh. Only the rational creature is capable of blessedness, because it is capable of such an act as to reflect upon itself; that is the ground why the rational creature is capable of blessedness above all other creatures. No creature can truly be said to be a blessed creature but only the rational; because no creature else can reflect upon its own condition to know itself. But then not only to know ourselves, but our own happiness, where our blessedness lies, this must be a profitable instruction.

No philosopher ever gave such a description of happiness as this: "Blessed is the man whose...." Yea, David, who had monopoly of the comforts of this world to the full and had the crown upon his head, says not, "Blessed is he that is crowned and has a kingdom." David, who had the riches of the world, did not say, "Blessed is he that has this world's goods." David, who had honors and was reputed among the mighty men, did not say, "Blessed is he that has worldly honors." David, who had many victories over enemies, did not say, "Blessed is he that rides in triumph over his enemies." David, who had sumptuous palaces and the delights of this world, does not say, "Blessed is he that had them." But in the midst of all outward good things David enjoyed in this world, he found his blessedness to consist in this: the pardon and forgiveness of his sins. He pronounced them, and them only, blessed whose sin is pardoned.

This instruction of the blessedness of pardon of sin, as it lies here annexed, is of weight indeed, and of infinite concernment. Luther said, "The argument of free justification and remission

of sin is that which makes a divine.” And this may be added to that—’tis this which makes a Christian. To be instructed rightly in the justification of a sinner is that which makes a Christian. Nay, although we had ten thousand instructors in other things, not only in natural knowledge, but in divinity too, in all the points of it; yet we would never be wise unto salvation, except we were instructed with this instruction, in the blessedness of justification and pardon of sin. Luther says, “Let this doctrine lie dead, and all the whole knowledge of other truths is to little purpose.” Therefore, well may the title of the psalm be a psalm of instruction: “Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose iniquities are covered.” Wherefore our point of doctrine according to the words is this:

**DOCTRINE. The blessedness of a man, or of any soul, consists in the free grace of God forgiving of his sin.**

That is our point: the blessedness of any man or woman does not consist in the enjoyment of anything in all this world, but in the free grace of God forgiving of his sin. It neither consists in anything we can do or have, but in the free grace of God forgiving of sin; and that is the meaning of that text, Romans 4:6–7, which Paul cites from this place of Scripture. Observe it, it is to this very purpose, even as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness without works, saying, “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.” The scope of the apostle in this place is to declare that the blessing of Abraham, the father of the faithful, consisted not in anything he had or did, but in the free grace of God forgiving of his sin. In Galatians 4:15, Paul said, “Where is the blessedness you then spoke of?” for, “I bear you record, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and given them to me.”

Where is the blessedness you spoke of? What's the meaning of this blessedness? Certainly this blessedness in my text was this blessed doctrine—St. Paul being the first one who brought it to the Galatians, concerning the free justification of a poor soul by faith in Jesus Christ, in the free pardon and remission of his sin by faith in Christ. This is the blessedness spoken of. Now, because the Galatians, at the first hearing of this doctrine, were so mightily taken with it that they cried out, “Oh, this is a blessed doctrine; remission of sin by the free grace of God through faith in Christ. Oh, this is the blessedest doctrine that ever we heard!” they were so taken with it that, if possible, they would have plucked out their eyes for Paul, who brought them such a doctrine as this at their first hearing and receiving of it. But afterwards, the Galatians were turned aside by false teachers who had taken off the edge of their affections to this blessed Truth. Now Paul, coming to reprove them, says, “Where is then the blessedness you spoke of? There was a time when I first taught you the doctrine of the free forgiveness of sin by faith in Christ, and you said it was a blessed doctrine, and your hearts were mightily taken with it. Where is it now? How does it come to pass that your hearts are so taken off from the esteem you then had of it? Where is then the blessedness you spoke of?”

Thus it is usually: the ministers of Christ come and preach doctrine to people that their hearts are taken with, their spirits stirred, and they are mightily affected with the first hearing of it. But afterwards, by some sin or the company of carnal friends, their hearts are taken off, though while they were hearing such and such a truth their hearts glowed and burned within them. God grant it may not be so with some of you, who when you heard lately the doctrine of the evil of sin, your hearts were mightily affected, and you said, “Oh, what a dreadful evil is there in sin, in the least sin”; and being convinced of it, you

began to reform; yet afterwards you fell off again. May it not be said of you, "Where is the sense of the evil of sin you spoke of? Where is the bitterness upon your hearts, on the convictions you had of the evil of sin? Where is it? What is become of it? As St. Paul says, the blessedness you spoke of, where is it? What is become of all that strength and power the doctrine of remission of sin had upon your hearts?"

Take another Scripture. Remission of sin is the special blessedness of the second covenant that God made with Abraham when He came to Abraham and told him that in his seed all nations should be blessed (Galatians 3:17 compared with 3:24). In the 17th verse he speaks of the covenant made with Abraham, and that the law that was 430 years after, could not annul the promise that it should be of no effect. Verse 24: "Wherefore then served the law?" "Why," says he, "it was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." The scope of the apostle is to show that there is a covenant of grace beyond that of the law, and that the covenant of grace is in the 24th verse. "The law," says he, "was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ," that we might be justified by faith, and thereby receive remission of our sins, if the Scripture places blessedness in the remission of sin. That it is so, I suppose, is clear enough; the main business we have to do is to show how it is so; that is, to open unto you wherein the blessedness of the pardon of sin consists and show you in what particulars the blessedness of pardon of sin may appear unto you, and to that there are many things that may be said.

## CHAPTER 2

# *The Blessedness of the Pardon of Sin Appears*

1. Negatively, in the evil it frees us from. That which I have lately delivered of the evil of sin may be of great concern to discover wherein the blessedness of pardon of sin lies, and the deliverance from so great an evil as you heard the evil of sin was; surely, “Blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven.” If sin is so dreadful an evil as you heard, surely, blessed is the man who is delivered from all that evil; if it remains fresh upon your minds, what the evil of sin against God was and what it brought upon yourselves, you cannot but say, this is one principal thing wherein it appears: that man or woman is blessed who has his sin pardoned. If any man or woman is in any great danger or under any great evil or misery, and if he is delivered from it, we say that is a blessed man or woman who is released from such a woeful evil that was upon them; you account yourselves happy to be delivered from dangerous storms and to have a calm. Are not they then happy that are delivered from the evil of sin?

Let me speak a little to a poor sinner who understands what the meaning of sin is, and who understands something of the dreadful evil of it: I would ask you, oh, poor sinner, what do you see? The answer will be, “What do I see? Oh, I see the angry

countenance of an infinite God against me, whose eyes are a flaming fire looking with indignation upon me! I see a black dismal cloud of the displeasure of the Almighty hanging over me! I see a most hideous and dreadful sentence of wrath ready to fall upon me! I see woe, misery, and destruction pursuing me! I see blackness of darkness and desolation even surrounding me! I both see and feel the woeful accusations of a guilty conscience within me, condemning me, continually grating upon my soul and terrifying me with dreadful visions of eternal miseries to betide me! I see the chain of black guilt and horror on my soul, that I carry with me wherever I go! I see the bottomless gulf of eternal horror and despair with the mouth of it wide open to swallow me up!”

Now then, this sight being presented before an enlightened and awakened conscience, the pardon and forgiveness of sin come in whereby this dreadful cloud is dispelled. The tempest is gone. The darkness and misery vanish away, and all evil whatsoever. The soul is set free from sin and from all the dreadful consequences of it. Is not this a blessed man? Compare his former condition with his present state, looking on him as having the sense of the dreadful evil of sin upon his conscience, and the heavy burden of it on his back, ready to sink under it into the gulf of misery, and now pardon of sin comes. Oh, what a blessed change is this! Oh, blessed is the man whose sin is pardoned! Now what God had laid unto his charge, whether his own conscience, the Law, the devil, or the world, it is all done away. All is discharged and gone. Blessed is the man who is thus delivered. “Old things are passed away, and all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). It is meant not only of sanctification, but of justification also. He is a new creature. Old things are passed away and all become new. Brethren, by reason of the sin of man, there is a curse upon the whole creation, and this old creation

must come to confusion. Therefore, it is an evil thing for any man to seek his happiness in anything here in the old creation, for there is a curse upon it and it will come to confusion.

But there is a new creation of all in Christ, of all spiritual things in Christ. Now a sinner, when he comes to have his sin pardoned and be justified, comes into a new state which comes in by the new creation. The happiness of the children comes by and consists in the new creation. Old things are done away, and he comes to be seated in the new creation in Christ. This is the first thing wherein a man or woman is blessed, negatively, in being delivered from so great an evil.

2. Positively, in the good bestowed upon us. He is a blessed man whose sins are forgiven if we consider the excellency of that mercy God makes that soul partaker of whose sins are forgiven. Daniel 9:9: "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness." Forgiveness is the fruit of glorious mercies. Exodus 34:6-7: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity."

Now, I shall open this positively and show the riches of mercy in forgiveness of sin. When the Scripture applies mercy to forgiveness of sin, it has divers expressions: sometimes it calls it "riches of mercy" (Ephesians 1:7); sometimes "plenteous mercy" (Psalm 86:3); sometimes "God's fullness of compassion" (Psalm 78:38); sometimes "multitudes of mercies" (Psalm 51:1). I might give divers other places, but these may suffice. It is rich, plenteous, fullness of compassions, and multitudes of mercies. When God forgives sin, He shows mercies in all these expressions.

For the opening of it unto you, I shall show you what abundance of mercy God shows in the forgiveness of sin, and we

shall consider mercy: (1.) in the efficient cause of it; and (2.) in the final cause of it.

1. *Of the efficient cause of mercy in forgiveness of sins.* First, for the efficient cause, there is abundance of mercy which God manifests in the forgiveness of sin. He abounds in mercy; there is a sea, an infinite, vast ocean of mercy, in which the sins of the elect come to be swallowed up, though their sins are many, and great, and committed with many grievous aggravations. Yet when they come to an act of justification, to God, to be forgiven, God comes to the soul as an infinite Ocean of mercy that swallows up all the evil in sin.

Look, in the mighty ocean, whether you cast in a load or a shovel full of earth, the vast ocean makes little difference of either one. So it is when a soul comes to God in Christ. When it comes to pardon and justification, whether those sins are little or great, it is all one. The mercy of God makes no difference at all.

Take heed to what I say while I am speaking of forgiveness of sin. I shall make known so much grace that, if you abuse it, it will be one of the most dreadful things that you ever did; and, therefore, while I go along, take heed of abusing it, especially you who desire to hear of the pardoning mercy of God. Whether your sins are little or great, when you come to pardoning mercy, it is an infinite ocean that swallows up all. Those who do not have their sins pardoned, whether their sins are little or great makes no difference. They are truly damned for little as well as great sins. Both sink a man down into hell and the infinite ocean of wrath and horror swallows all up. So, in point of justification, whether your sins are little or great does not matter; pardoning mercy swallows up all.

2. *Of the final cause of mercy in forgiveness of sins.* As mercy is an infinite ocean that swallows up sin, so mercy is the final cause. It is to this end, that God might manifest the riches of His grace.

When God forgives any one sin, this forgiveness comes from God's mercy, and it is to the end that God may declare before men and angels, to all eternity, what the greatness and infinite riches of His grace are, what the grace of God is able to do when God comes to pardon sin. It is for this end.

It is as if God should say, "Well, I am about to pardon your sin now, and this work I am about to do is for this very end: that it may be known to men and angels, for all eternity, what the infinite riches of the infinite grace of God are able to do for poor sinners." Now, certainly, that man is a blessed man.

If the man whose sins are pardoned has such mercy shown to him, and such a blessed work is done upon him as is to that end that God may declare to all eternity what the glorious riches of grace of an infinite God are, surely, this is a great blessedness. When God shall separate a man or woman for this end, it must be very glorious. Certainly, therefore, pardon of sin is no light and mean thing, but it must be a most glorious work of God wherever it is. And this consideration is a mighty argument to uphold a poor soul under trouble of sin, and a great encouragement for him to come in for pardon.

Do you see, O troubled soul, God's wrath against you, and do you stand quaking at the apprehension of the evil of sin? Let not your heart sink. Come in and cast yourself on the free grace of God. There is a possibility of the pardon of your sin; for, when God comes to pardon sin, the mercy God shows in pardoning any one sin He shows to the end that He might magnify the riches of His grace to all eternity. And such mercy that serves to that end must be glorious. And will not such mercy serve your turn as must set out the infinite, rich grace of God?

God is pleased to manifest this much mercy for the forgiveness of your sin; and, where a sinner is forgiven, it is this mercy that is manifest. When men judge God by themselves, when

they judge God's thoughts by their own, they think slightly of Him. What is the reason that makes sinners have such slight thoughts of sin but because they judge God by themselves, that He abhors sin no otherwise than man does. And so they hope that they may do well enough, measuring the infinite hatred that God has for sin by their own.

So, on the other side, the sinner who is convinced of the dreadful evil of sin is ready to despair. Why? Because he judges God by himself, as if the mercy of God were no different than the mercy of man, not considering the mercy of God in pardoning sin is such mercy as is to show His grace in the riches of it to all eternity. Well, then, that man to whom such mercy is shown must be very blessed.

## CHAPTER 3

# *Eleven Wonderful Mysteries of Godliness in Forgiveness of Sin*

**B**lessed is the man whose sins are forgiven because there is a glorious mystery of godliness in forgiving sin. The work of God in forgiving a sinner has abundance of glorious mysteries in it. The argument stands thus: that man or woman for whom God shall work such a work as has a multitude of glorious mysteries in it, that man or woman is blessed. But wherever sin is forgiven, God works for that soul such a strange work, the strangest He ever did, a work that has so many admirable mysteries in it that the opening of them will declare every way that this soul is blessed. The business I would do is to open the mysteries that are in the forgiveness of sin. And it is to the end that I might set before you the great work of God in pardoning sin, so also that you might have higher thoughts of it than you ever had before; for that is what I aim at, to raise up the thoughts of men to the right understanding of this great point of the justification of a sinner, that you may sanctify God's name by having such thoughts of it as the thing itself calls for.

*The first mystery: It is by means of a Mediator.*

Where sin is forgiven, it is by means of a Mediator between God and the soul. It is through the mediation of the Son of God. Observe it, for there is no point in all of religion that is of greater use to understand than this point of the way of God in pardoning sin, because of the many mysteries of God contained in it. I hope I shall make it appear that it is no slight work and business.

Mark it then. When God pardons sin, it is always done through the mediation of the Son of God. God never pardons any sinner like a prince does. When a malefactor has offended a prince, he comes and humbles himself, casts himself at the prince's feet, and cries, "I pray, sir, forgive me." And the prince says, "Well, I will forgive you."

God never forgives any sin this way, and yet it is thus with people when they come to God for pardon. Most of them never think of any other way. Friends, there must be a great deal more than this, for whosoever has his sins forgiven, it must be by the virtue of the mediation and intercession of the Son of God. He must stand up before the Father and mediate for your soul. If all the angels in heaven stood up to mediate, it would not be sufficient; but the Son of God alone must do it. It is as if a malefactor's condition was such that the mediation of all the nobles could not prevail with the king for a pardon; but there must be the mediation of the prince himself to obtain it.

So I say, poor soul, you may think it a slight business, but know that if ever you are forgiven, it must be by the mediation of the Son of God. He must stand up to mediate for you and plead, "O Father, let such a poor soul that has been a Sabbath-breaker, a liar, a drunkard, an unclean person, let his sins be forgiven, and let him not be damned. Father, put in his name for pardon."

I shall not speak of how Christ mediates, but that is, and has

been, His work from all eternity: to mediate and make intercession for those He saw, in the eternal counsel of God, should live in such times; and whatever pardon of God is gotten, it is through Him. And if you, poor man, ever come to be pardoned, know that Christ has been mediating to God the Father for you. "O Father, such a poor creature that dwells, it may be, in such a cottage, or in such an obscure place, let his name be put in for forgiveness!"

And now, is this not a blessed thing, that you, a poor creature, should have the Son of God to mediate for your name to be put in for pardon! This is true. If there is any truth in the divinity of the Word, it is in this: that all the forgiveness and pardon any creature has is by the mediation of the Son of God, and His heart was upon it from all eternity. Surely here is abundance of grace in this one thing. Take heed of abusing it.

This is the first mystery. You must not look for pardon of sin in a natural way to cry for forgiveness, but you must go on in the name of the Mediator in this mystical way.

*The second mystery: It is through Christ undertaking the debt upon Himself.*

'Tis not Christ's entreating the Father that will serve the turn. If ever any sin is forgiven (I beseech you to take notice of it, for I speak in the name of God and, therefore, must take heed of speaking anything but the truths of God unto you), if any sin is pardoned, it is not for the prayer of Christ; that will not do it. But God the Father says, "Son, if Thou would have the sins of poor souls forgiven, Thou must take the debt upon Thyself. Thou must be their Surety, and Thou must enter into bonds to pay every farthing of what debt the sinners owe. Thou must pay it all if Thou will undertake for them. So it is; I will never come upon them, but on Thee."

Certainly there are these transactions between God the Father and God the Son from all eternity about the pardoning of any sin. However, you commit a sin and do not think of it, and cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me." You think you have done with it. There's an end; you think that is all. But I say unto you, if your sin is pardoned, Christ must take the debt upon Himself and be your Surety. 2 Corinthians 5:21: "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us." The way of pardon is by a translation of all our sins upon Christ. Christ Himself, God blessed forever, the Delight of the Father, must be made sin for the soul that has sinned. Consider this: all the sins you have committed, if ever they are pardoned, they must be pardoned by virtue of the covenant between God the Father and the Son. All your sins must be transmitted on Christ. All your oaths, drunkenness, and wickedness must be put upon Him, and He must stand charged with them all.

Oh, you who are so lavish in sin and take such liberty to do wickedly, I say, if ever your sin is pardoned, it must be laid on His shoulders! Run as fast as you will, if ever you are saved, your sin must be set on Him and charged upon His score. I remember that expression of Nathan to David in 2 Samuel 12:13: "The Lord hath put away thy sin." The words in the original read like this, "The Lord hath made thy sins to pass over," to pass over from you unto His Son; He has laid them to His charge.

This is the second mystery in point of justification: you are a poor soul, and you stand charged with your sin and are in danger of eternal damnation. Rather than you should eternally perish, God is content to pass your sins over to His own Son. Now, they must be blessed for whom God does so much; and know that if ever your sins are pardoned, God does this much for you.

*The third mystery: It is by Christ's sufferings.*

Wherever sin is pardoned, Christ stands charged not only with the sin, but to suffer as much punishment for your sin as if you were eternally damned for them. It is not such a pardon as that there is no punishment to be suffered, but whoever's sins are pardoned, there is this agreement between God the Father and the Son: that His own Son shall suffer as much punishment as if you should eternally suffer the wrath of God for your sin. This is done for you, and surely that man is a blessed man for whom Christ is content to suffer as much as your sins come to, or else you must have been eternally damned. This religion and the gospel teach us that we can never come to be pardoned any other way.

*The fourth mystery: Where sin is pardoned, the soul stands righteous before God.*

There is this mystery in it: wherever sin is pardoned, God not only passes by sin and forgives it, but He makes the soul stand righteous before Him. Every justified man stands righteous before the Lord. A malefactor may come to a prince and be forgiven his fault, and yet not be accounted a righteous man. He may be looked upon as a wicked wretch still, though out of free grace the prince forgives him; but God never forgives the offense of any one sin but that man is set righteous before the Lord. This is done by an act of justification. I do not speak of sanctification.

A prince may forgive a traitor, but the Law is not satisfied; but God, when He forgives sin, takes such a course as that the offense is not only forgiven, but the Law comes to be satisfied and the soul stands before God as a righteous person. And surely he who is righteous must be blessed.

*The fifth mystery: This righteousness is in another.*

This righteousness is in another, and it is a higher righteousness than ever that of Adam's was in innocence. It is a great mystery that a soul should stand righteous before the Lord, and yet in the righteousness of another and not of his own. In Philippians 3:8–10, St. Paul counted his own righteousness as dung, that he might be found in Him, that is, in Christ, "Not having my own righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God that comes in by faith." And also in Romans 5:19, Christ is said to be our righteousness: "As by the disobedience of one many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many shall be made righteous." It is a righteousness transferred upon us beyond our own.

Mark it. In forgiveness our sins come to be transferred upon a justified soul, and that soul comes to be righteous before God. Surely, then, blessed is that man who comes to have the shining garments of Christ's righteousness upon him. Xerxes could not think of a better way to honor Mordecai than to clothe him with the king's royal raiment and proclaim before him, "Thus shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honor," Esther 6:7. Surely that man or woman is honored indeed whom God would clothe with the shining robes of the righteousness of His own Son.

You who were clothed with the filthy rags of your own sin and wickedness, and had no other garments to stand in the presence of God, now He puts on you the righteousness of His own Son, and so your iniquity comes to be covered. Oh, that is a glorious garment! All the garments in the world, decked with diamonds, are but filthy garments in comparison to the garments of Christ's righteousness that are put upon a man when his sins are forgiven.

*The sixth mystery: A near union is made between Christ and the soul.*

When God comes to forgive sin, the way God takes is this: He brings a man into such a near union with His own Son as makes you to be one with Him; yea, to be one with Christ so that no two things in the world are joined together as you and Christ are. The soul that God pardons, He does it this way: it is not that you have sinned and I will pardon you; it is no such slight business in a sinner's pardon. No, for when God forgives you, He makes you one with His own Son so that no two things in the world are as near together as you and Christ are. Therefore, the Scripture expresses it by the union of branch and root, body and members. That is a near union of flesh and bones in one body, so also the union between man and wife; but the union between Christ and a justified soul is nearer than any of these.

There is one expression in Scripture that Christ uses in John 14:20: "You in Me, and I in you." There are no two things so nearly united. Though the members are in the body, the body is not in the members; though the branch is in the root, the root cannot be in the branch. But the union between Christ and us is Christ in us and we in Him. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." It is a spiritual union, and the union of spiritual things is the nearest that can be. Now, blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven because, by this means, God brings the soul and Christ to such a near union that all natural unions are but dark shadows of it.

*The seventh mystery: It is by faith, yet boasting is excluded.*

It must be by faith, and that is the most glorious work that God ever enabled a poor creature to do. Yet boasting must be

excluded; the Scripture excludes boasting from both, not only from the Law of works, but the Law of faith.

But you may say, "How can both be excluded, both the Law of works and the Law of faith? For works may be excluded, say some, because works are our own; but faith is the gift of God. God enables us to believe; therefore, there can be no boasting of faith because it is the gift of God, but works are our own."

This answer is but a fiction, for if we are enabled for the performance of any work, that is of God too. The work of any grace is the gift of God as really and truly as faith is the gift of God. All gracious works are performed by the grace and gift of God. Adam could not do what he did in innocence but by the gift of God; and, therefore, to say boasting is excluded by faith because faith is the gift of God will not serve the turn. Therefore, the mystery of justification is a great mystery that, notwithstanding, faith is such a glorious work as it is one of the most glorious works that ever any creature did. Yet that this should be excluded, by this I cannot but be persuaded that there is more in the work of faith than in anything Adam ever had, and that faith, the power of believing, was not in Adam in the state of innocence. Why? Because it is now made such a grace as excludes all kind of boasting. For were it but the stirring up of any power we had in Adam, it would no more exclude boasting than if God stirred up any other grace such as love, hope, fear, and the like. But that it excludes boasting, this may be the most satisfactory answer. Work could not exclude boasting. Why? Though they were from the grace and gift of God, yet they belonged to man's nature; for if God will make a rational creature, He must give it those perfections that are due to that nature.

Now the image of God was, in some regard, due to such a nature. But now, when God comes to give faith, He gives a

higher thing than ever was due to the nature of man. Hence there is a greater mystery in faith than in any other grace; and, therefore, it is a great mystery that God should justify a man by faith, and so this excludes boasting more than any other thing.

**OBJECTION.** Aye, but the Scripture says that God imputes faith for righteousness. Thus, when God enables us to believe, is it not our own?

**ANSWER.** Yes, when we have it, it is our own; and when we are justified, it is imputed to us for righteousness. But mark what I shall say, it will be useful for understanding that text in Romans 4:22 where it says, faith was imputed to him for righteousness. You must not understand it to say that God, through the grace of Christ, now accepted Abraham's faith as his righteousness whereby he should stand to be justified by it in the sight of God. He did not thus accept faith for righteousness. No, not through the mediation of Christ, nor by virtue of any covenant made by God with Christ. God never made any covenant with Christ that, whereas man owed obedience to all the Law, such should have been his righteousness had he continued in it. But now man, being unable to perform it, finds God so favorable to him that He accepts faith for righteousness. That is not the meaning of it. The word in the original translated "for righteousness" is "imputed unto righteousness." It is the same word used in Romans 10:10, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Now confession with the mouth is not made salvation itself, but unto salvation; so faith is not the righteousness itself, but unto righteousness; that is, by faith we come to get righteousness.

**OBJECTION.** But why does the Scripture say that God imputed it unto righteousness?

ANSWER. I say this: that forasmuch as faith is so glorious a principle (infused of God) above anything of our own, God is pleased to account it as if it were our own, and so imputes it unto righteousness. The truth is, it is not our own; no, not so our own as other graces are our own, but God, in point of justification, is pleased to impute it as our own that we may come to have righteousness by it as if it *were* our own.

Now this is a great mystery, that God, in the work of pardon of sin, should do it by the grace of faith and that this excludes all boasting; and yet righteousness is imputed to us as if it were our own. Hence, by the way, let us take heed of the opinion of those who say, "Faith itself is imputed for righteousness," and that God through Christ accepts faith as the matter of our righteousness. The Papists say we are justified by works, and that God is pleased through Christ to accept not faith only, but humility, fear, love, repentance, joy, etc. Though they are imperfect, yet He is pleased to accept these for our righteousness. The other opinion says that faith is our righteousness; though God might require exact obedience to the whole law, yet He is pleased to accept faith. Both these opinions are besides the truth and, therefore, there is the same danger in the one as in the other, and therefore both are to be avoided.

*The eighth mystery: God is infinitely just,  
and yet infinitely merciful.*

The eighth particular is this: pardon of sin is a great mystery because, wherever God pardons sin, He is infinitely just and yet infinitely merciful. There is an admirable reconciliation between God's justice and mercy which shows it to be a great mystery. There are three great mysteries in religion:

The great mystery of the Trinity, that there should be divers persons and yet but one God.

The second is that in the person of Christ there should be two natures and yet but one person.

And then the third is the reconciliation of the mercy and justice of God in the forgiveness of a sinner. Many people, when they seek pardon for sin, only think of God's infinite grace and mercy, but not of His justice; but certainly whoever he is that comes to be pardoned, God shows Himself infinitely just as well as merciful. That He is merciful is clear to everyone; but how does it appear He is so infinitely just? There is a clear text for that in Romans 3:26: "To declare at this time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." God, in justifying him who believes in Christ, is just as well as merciful.

Now, then, poor sinner, lay these together, that God should work so strangely in bringing about the pardon of your sin in such a mysterious way as this is. Certainly it demonstrates that you are a blessed man. I beseech you to think of what has been said and lay it in your breasts. Go away with this upon your spirits: "Lord, I heard much of the evil of sin, and that it was a greater evil than I ever thought it to be; and now I have begun to hear of the mighty work of God in pardon of sin. I hope I shall forever retain higher thoughts of it than before."

Brethren, there is nothing in the world that people have slighter thoughts of than pardon and forgiveness of sin; they think it a slight matter. But if there were any work that ever took up the heart of God from all eternity and shows God to be God, it is this about the pardon of sin. This is a great doctrine, the doctrine of the work of God in the justification of a sinner. It is one of the greatest doctrines in divinity; and therefore, that you might sanctify the name of God in it, and give Him that glory that is due in this great work, it is needful to search that we may find out what is the work of God in it.

*The ninth mystery: When God forgives sin for the present, He forgives all to come.*

This may seem one of the strangest of all: when God forgives a sinner any one sin for the present, He likewise forgives him all the sins that ever he shall commit afterwards. This is a mighty mystery, for when God takes a poor soul and forgives his sin, He not only forgives him his present and past sins, but lays in a pardon for all the sins that shall ever be committed by him afterwards. This is a way of pardoning sin proper to God alone. There is no creature who pardons the offense of another as God pardons here. Therefore the Prophet cries out in Micah 7:18: "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage?"

Who is a God like to Thee? Who in all the world can pardon sin as God does? No father pardons the sin of a child, no prince pardons the sin of a subject like God does. Now, because this is a point of admirable comfort to all the saints of God, 'tis fit to be opened and made out. When God pardons sin at first, He gives in a pardon for all they shall commit afterwards. I manifest it thus: in Romans 8:1 the apostle says, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." From this I argue as follows: unless God pardoned whatever sins should be committed when He justifies a sinner, then at any time when a justified person sins, until he renews an act of faith for pardon, there must be condemnation to him; for whoever is in such an estate as has any sin unpardoned, for that instant he is in the state of condemnation. But there is no instant of time when it can be said of any justified person that he is in the state of condemnation. I say no instant of time, for though a justified person may fall into sin after he is justified, yet, at that instant when he falls into that sin, there is a pardon applied by God that was laid in before, although an act of

faith is not renewed in regard of that particular sin. That is the point I would make good.

Though it is true, there is an act of faith required as our duty to lay hold of our pardon, yea, it is also required in respect of comfort too, for we cannot have comfort of the pardon of a new sin committed unless there is a renewal of an act of faith. But yet this renewal of an act of faith, though it is necessary because it is commanded and for our comfort, yet it is not absolutely necessary to free us from condemnation. But once a person is justified by Christ, there is a pardon laid up. So that, upon any act of sin newly committed, this pardon is applied by God Himself, though we are not able by the renewal of a present act of faith to sue out pardon anew unto ourselves.

Nay, the truth is, if this were not so, there could be no instant of time wherein a believer was not in the state of condemnation; for there is no instant of time wherein a believer does not sin against God some way or another. Further, it is apparent and undeniable that there is not a necessity of renewing an act of faith upon every sin committed for the pardon of it. This argument cannot be denied, because otherwise there would have to be a necessity of renewing an act of faith after the last act a believer does; for, in the last action a believer does in this world, there is some sin in it. Now, if there is some sin in the last act of all, then there cannot be of necessity another act required for the applying of the pardon of that sin a believer did in the very last act he did in this world.

Those who hold that a believer cannot finally fall away yet say that he may fall totally. Many hold that if once a man is justified, he can never go to hell, but yet they hold that he may so sin that he may be brought into a state of condemnation. He may be brought into such a state that, if he should die at that moment, he would perish. But, they say, God takes care

that he shall not die until there is a renewing of an act of faith for pardon.

To that I answer, there is nothing in Scripture to prove there is not any instant of time wherein a believer may not die. And yet, if he does die, he must then perish, because an act of faith was not renewed.

True, they say further, all sins do not bring into the state of condemnation. There may be pardon, of course, for sins of infirmity, but other sins that waste a man's conscience, there a believer is brought into the state of condemnation until there is a new act of faith renewed for pardon.

I answer, if any one sin brings a believer into the state of condemnation after conversion, where shall we put the limits? It is as if you are saying, "If you go this far, you are not in a state of condemnation, but if you go a little further, you are." God puts no such limits in Scripture, but all sin in its own nature brings into a state of condemnation, and yet no sin brings a believer into the state of condemnation. Therefore, this is a great mystery of God in the pardoning of sin. When God pardons the sin of a believer, He not only pardons what he has done at present, but for what he shall do. He lays in a pardon, and Christ has purchased it for us for all sins yet to come. 'Tis like a son running into arrears. His father comes and pays his debts, but because he sees his son will run further into arrears, he lays in so much as will pay all for time to come so that, if he runs into arrears, he will not be cast into prison.

It is just so with God. God pardons all our sins at first, and then He lays up a pardon so that, if we run into arrears, we shall not lie in prison to be condemned and suffer for them. This is a great mystery, and those who teach otherwise rob the people of God of an abundance of comfort that they might otherwise have, were this truth made clearly known unto them.

**OBJECTION.** Is not this doctrine a doctrine of liberty? If they have knowledge that God pardons for sins past and lays in a pardon for sins yet to come, will not people then take liberty to sin? May they not say that, though they sin, yet there is a pardon laid in for them beforehand?

**ANSWER.** Here you speak as one who does not understand the grace of the gospel; it is another manner of thing than you are aware of. There is not that malignity in the grace of the gospel to cause such effects in the hearts of believers. Luther compared sin to lime, and the law to water that makes the lime hotter. But the grace of the gospel, says he, is like oil, and oil will quench lime, but water will not. So the oil of the gospel will quench the sins of men, and certainly the more there is of the grace of God revealed in the gospel, the more the lusts remaining in the heart of a believer come to be quenched. This is an evident argument of the great difference between the mercy of God revealed in the gospel and received by faith and that which is received only in a natural way.

You who are believers and receive the gospel only in a natural way, your lusts may be nourished, and you may take liberty for wickedness; but if once you come to receive the mercy of God in and through Christ Jesus, then that mercy will be the greatest opposer of your lusts and sin as anything can be in the world. Certainly, you who reason this way do not know the work of God in Christ forgiving sin. I shall show you plainly that the knowledge of the great work of the propitiation by Christ brings the soul into a hatred of all sin and is thus no nourisher of it. In 1 John 1:9, the apostle speaks of the wonderful grace of God in Christ to us: if we confess our sins, He is not only ready to forgive, but to cleanse us from them. And 1 John 2:1 says, "My little children, I write unto you that you sin not," that you do not take any liberty in any sin.

You might say, “You write these things that we do not sin, but we have sinful natures and so shall certainly fall into sin for all this.”

Well, for the comfort of saints he says, “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father.” Jesus Christ is presently an Advocate, though you sin through ignorance and negligence and do not renew present acts of faith to sue out a pardon. Yet, says the Holy Ghost, Jesus Christ is an Advocate with the Father. The Lord Christ stands before the Father pleading that no evil may befall you for your sin. This is the admirable privilege of the saints of God, a most blessed privilege they have by the covenant of grace, that when they commit a sin—and, it may be, take no notice and their conscience is numbed at present—they do not go to God to seek a pardon, but lie in sin a long time together. Yet, says the text, you have One who pleads your cause, and it is from this that God’s wrath does not come out against you, because you have an Advocate with the Father.

Well, says the second verse, He is the propitiation not only for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world (he means believers). Now in verse 3 he says, “Hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.” It is as if he had said, “If we do not take heed of sin and keep His commandments, we do not know this grace of pardon.”

If anyone hears us ministers teaching this doctrine and says they know Him, and have no care to keep God’s commandments, it is quite contrary to what the apostle says. He says, “Hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.” This knowing Him, as it is a means to keep His commandments, so it is an argument that we know Him when we keep His commandments. Verse 4: “He that says I know Him (that is, knows Christ to be a Propitiation and an Advocate), and keeps not His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in Him.”

That man who reasons thus says, "Well, I believe in Jesus Christ, and I know my sins are pardoned through faith in Him; yea, and all the sins that shall be committed, a pardon is laid in for them, and I shall never enter into condemnation." Do you say so and yet do not keep God's commandments? Have you not the conscience, and even more upon the knowledge of this, to keep God's commandments? The Holy Ghost says, "You are a liar and there is no truth in you, and you were never acquainted with this mystery of godliness."

When it is understood in a natural way, men may abuse it. You may know what I mean by a natural way, and God knows you have need of information. By a natural way I mean by the light of natural reason and all other helps of learning on this side of the work of the Holy Ghost. But when men understand it by a powerful work of the Holy Ghost, they who know it thus, this knowledge will make them more careful and conscionable to keep God's commandments. And if any man says he knows it thus and does not keep God's commandments, he is a liar and the truth is not in him.

Further, suppose a man should reason thus, "Well, if there is such a mystery in pardon of sin, and if God, when He pardons sin at first, lays in a pardon for all sin afterward, this will make way for more sin."

Take notice here of the infinite perverseness of the heart of man. Suppose it were not thus, but the contrary were true, that God indeed pardoned the sins of a believer coming to Him, but if ever he sinned after pardon, let him look to it. He shall then be under the sentence of death and condemnation. Upon this, a man's heart would not be more engaged to seek Christ but would reason thus, "Well, I may labor and take pains and suffer much to get a comfortable assurance of the pardon of sin, but what of all this? The next day, the next hour, I may sin again

and be in the same case I was before.” So that, whichever way things go, men will reason against God for their lusts.

I shall put it to you, or to any heart that may be supposed to have attended on God, yea, and has received grace. Which of these doctrines most engages the heart for God? This doctrine or the other? You believe that God will pardon sin, yet, if you fall into any new sin, you are under a sentence of condemnation. Or, God is so gracious that He not only pardons sin for the present, but, for your encouragement, He so pardons it that, though you through infirmity fall again into sin, He will not cut off His kindness from you. Which of these is the greater encouragement?

Certainly, to a slavish spirit, the one may be more than the other. But, to a spirit that may be supposed to have any ingenuity in it, the latter words must far more engage him to walk with God all his days. What, is God’s grace so free that He should have such pity on poor creatures not only at their first coming in and casting themselves on Christ as to pardon all their sins, though they are never so many and great? Is this such a covenant that, upon my coming in, God will discharge all sins that shall be committed for time to come, that though I am ready to fall into sin daily, yet I shall not come into condemnation? Oh, what will so infinitely engage a gracious and ingenuous spirit as this does! Surely nothing like this. Now, if this is true, that man who is forgiven is thus forgiven: not only for time passed but also for time to come. Then blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven and whose iniquities are pardoned.

*The tenth mystery: God pardons a sinner not because he is changed, but that he might be changed.*

The tenth mystery is this (for I would endeavor to show you what a mighty work pardon of sin is, and raise up your hearts to have

higher thoughts of it than ever you had before): God does not pardon because a sinner has his heart and nature changed, but that he might be changed. And thus the pardons of God differ from all other pardons. A prince pardons a malefactor or a father a child, but upon what terms? A prince expects his subject should be changed as far as he can discern, and a father (though never so tender) will not pardon a child unless he comes in and manifests a change in his disobedient spirit, and then he pardons.

God does not pardon because we are changed, but that we might be changed. His pardon comes first. Romans 4:5 is the text, and it may encourage any poor soul who is troubled for sin to come in and lay hold upon God's mercy in Christ. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted unto him for righteousness." Mark it, when God comes to justify a sinner, He looks upon him as ungodly. He does not wait until the sinner is made godly and then justifies him, as a prince waits until a malefactor's heart is changed and he becomes a loyal subject, and then pardons him. God is not so in justifying souls. He justifies the ungodly. One who is ungodly coming to Him, He justifies.

This is a mighty argument. I name it because I would teach people that, notwithstanding any sin or guilt that lies upon their spirits, yet they have a liberty to come in and lay hold upon Christ for justification.

Do not say, "I am ungodly. I am a great sinner and have a vile heart. I do not find my nature changed and, therefore, how dare I lay hold upon God's grace for mercy and pardon?"

Yea, you may, because God justifies the ungodly. Though your nature is not changed and sanctified, as you say, take it thus: you may lay hold of God's grace for justification that you may be sanctified—not only pardoned, but sanctified. Come with your heart affected to close with the grace of God that you

may be sanctified as well as pardoned. Though for the present you do not feel any sanctification, yet you may have right to lay hold upon Christ as well as anyone whatsoever.

**OBJECTION.** Will not this be presumptuous for a sinner thus to lay hold on Christ?

**ANSWER.** If faith were merely a persuasion that Christ died for them, or, as many men think, “Well, God is merciful and He will pardon me, Christ having died,” there may be presumption in laying hold on Christ. But now, as justification is a great mystery, so is faith. Faith is a mighty work of the Spirit of God in the soul that causes the soul to roll and cast itself on the free grace of God in Christ, venturing itself and all its hopes for good and happiness on Him. There is not only a coming to Christ for pardon, but for grace, holiness, light, good, and happiness here, and for whatever it expects hereafter. It looks for all from Him.

Now, when there is such a work upon the soul in casting itself on God in Christ, though there is nothing at present but ungodliness in the one appearing, yet such a one may—and has right to—come unto God for pardon, for God justifies the ungodly. Romans 5:6: “Christ died for the ungodly”; and verse 10: “If when we were enemies, we were reconciled by the death of His Son.” When we were enemies and had base hearts full of enmity to God, then Christ died to reconcile us to God. You may then venture to come to Him for pardon, and it is no presumption. Though you see no change in yourself, yet He pardons that you may be changed.

Here is a glorious work of God in pardoning the sinner, that God should pardon, justify, and reconcile us when we were enemies to Him. Here is a glorious work of God for a sinner to be justified and reconciled, and yet when the sinner was an enemy to Him.

*The eleventh mystery: God Himself purchases the pardon.*

When God pardons a sinner, He Himself is willing to purchase the pardon, and this is different from the manner of pardons among men. A prince pardons a malefactor, but the prince himself does not purchase the pardon. If one has offended you, you pardon the offender, but you who are offended do not purchase a pardon for the offender. Possibly some friend may come and purchase a pardon at the king's hands for an offender, but the king himself does not purchase it. Yet it is thus with God. God does not pardon any one sin but it costs God Himself dearly before He gets it. Therefore, it is not such a slight thing to be pardoned.

You must not think to go to God and cry, "Mercy!," and then He will pardon you. In a natural way, God never pardons sin but that it costs Him dearly; yea, in a way which is worth more than all the world. If that could have done it, God would rather have dissolved heaven and earth than given what He gave. What was that? It was the blood of His own Son. God gave Him up to death for the sin of mankind, and for the purchasing of a pardon for man.

But, some may say, what need did God have to purchase a pardon for man? Could he not have forgiven him by His absolute prerogative?

I answer, there was need because of the satisfaction of justice. He purchased it out of the hands of justice. God was willing to lay down a price to justice before He Himself could pardon one sin. Justice must be satisfied before He could give out one pardon.

Well, take all these together: Christ must be our Surety, take the debt upon Himself, and suffer as much punishment as we should have done in hell to all eternity to make the soul stand righteous before God. Though this righteousness is in

another, yea, a near union is made between Christ and the soul.

Yet further, it is by faith, and boasting is excluded. God is infinitely merciful and yet infinitely just; and when He pardons one sin He lays in a pardon for all sin for time to come. He justifies the ungodly, pardons sin, and yet purchases the pardon.

These eleven meditations about the pardon of sin make it appear to be a wonderful work of God. Put these together and then the result according to the point will be full and clear: Blessed is that man whose sins are forgiven. And, surely, if there is such a mysterious and glorious work of God in pardoning sin, that man for whom God shall work such a glorious work is a blessed man indeed. And now, having done with this argument of the great mystery of godliness in forgiveness of sin, I proceed to another.

## CHAPTER 4

# *Pardon of Sin Is Not Only a Mercy in Itself, but the Foundation of Many Other Mercies*

**P**ardon of sin makes a man blessed. Why? Because it is the foundation of an abundance of other mercies. It is an inlet to many other mercies; therefore it is a great mercy. It is a leading mercy; it is the queen of mercy that has a great and glorious train of other mercies attending her. Indeed, it is the very foundation of all the mercies of the covenant of grace; it is the principal mercy, the very foundation of all the mercies that are in the covenant, and the inlet and opening to them all. The covenant of grace is a rich treasury; it has an abundant store of mercy in it, and this opens to them all.

The current of all God's mercies was stopped by man's sin. Though God had an infinite ocean of mercy, yet the source and vent of all God's mercy was stopped. Now, when God pardons sin He takes away the stop and opens the sluice so that His infinite grace and goodness may flow forth plentifully and sweetly to the soul, body, and state, yea, to all that belongs to a believer. You

may conceive God's mercy to be as an infinite stream of goodness, running with a full current towards His creatures, for God delights in the communication of Himself to His creatures.

But now, man's sin made a dam and stopped the pipe so that not one drop of mercy could come forth. Not a drop flows of all that mercy that, in the eternal purpose of God, He has appointed in time shall come forth to such and such a poor creature; but when He comes to pardon and justification, He pulls out the plug and pulls up the floodgates and sluices, and then mercies come flowing in again. When sin is pardoned, then the full streams of all the mercies in the covenant of grace come flowing into the soul. Well, then, if it is the case that pardon of sin is an inlet to other mercies, then he who has his sin pardoned is a very blessed man. I shall open this idea that pardon of sin is the foundation to, and opens the sluice to let in, all other mercies. Jeremiah 31:31: "Behold the days come that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and the house of Judah."

Here, God opens His goodness and tells them He will make a new covenant, not like the one He made with their fathers, verse 32. But this shall be the covenant, verse 33, and He instances in some particulars: "I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their heart...and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know Me." But what is the foundation of this? The end of verse 34: "For I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more." The promise is: "I will make a new covenant with them, and put My Law into their inward parts, and they shall all know Me."

God is saying, "I will come in with all My mercies and blessings, illumination, and sanctification." He mentions these instead of the rest, as in a grant of great things some particulars

are mentioned. But then He comes in with a general statement, "For I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more." It is as if it should be said, "Why, Lord, wilt Thou come in thus to Thy people in such an abundant way of mercy more than formerly, and let in these graces of Thy covenant?" Why? Here is the ground of all: "for I will forgive their iniquity." So that forgiveness of iniquity is the special inlet of the mercies of the covenant.

Now, more particularly, I shall show you what those special mercies are that pardon of sin is an inlet to, and that will further show the blessedness of those souls who have their sins pardoned, because pardon of sin is an inlet to many other mercies.

### *1. Pardon of sin is an inlet to peace with God.*

Romans 5:1: "Being justified," that is, pardoned through faith, what follows? "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The ground of our justification and reconciliation is not our humiliation, no, nor our sanctification. Observe that the very bottom and foundation of our justification and reconciliation is neither of these (though we ought to be in the use and exercise of them); but pardon of sin is through the free grace of God applied by faith. This is the ground of all our peace and reconciliation with God. And thus men and women should seek their peace with God. The main thing they should lay the weight of obtaining peace with God upon is the work of faith applying the righteousness of Christ for pardon, rather than any work of humiliation or sanctification by the Spirit of God. Yet both these are sweet and comfortable when we rest the bottom and main foundation of all our peace on the free grace of God pardoning our sin, and justifying us through faith in Christ.

God does not say, "You who are great sinners, stay till you are humbled and are brought to hate sin, and you shall have peace with God." No, you may be much troubled for sin, and may leave it and reform in many things, and live better lives than before, and yet your peace is not made up with God. How then shall it be? This way: being justified by faith, looking up to the free grace of God in Christ for pardon of sin, we come to have peace with God; and this is a great privilege.

But consider, on the other side, a creature not reconciled cannot look upon the infinite Creator without terror and shaking and tremblings of spirit. He cannot have any thoughts of God without thinking of Him as his enemy, and that all the excellencies of God are working misery and ruin to him. This is a sad thing. But when pardon of sin comes, God is reconciled and all fears and terrors from the Almighty are gone. Those fears whereby the soul was afraid that God was secretly working ruin to it are dispelled. And if any judgment of God comes close and near, and befalls any in the sight and hearing of a guilty soul, he would be thinking, "God is coming to me next." But a justified soul may say, "Though the judgments of God are never so terrible in the world and in the Word, which before terrified my conscience, yet now, my sin being pardoned, my soul is reconciled and the Word of God speaks nothing but good unto me, and all those fears that before so terrified me are dispelled."

**OBJECTION.** But may not a pardoned man have these fears, or something of the nature of them, resting on his spirit after he is pardoned?

**ANSWER.** Yes, he may, but the ground of them is dispelled and gone. It is not the work of God's Spirit that causes these fears, as it did before. Romans 8:15: "You have not received the spirit of

bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption whereby you cry, 'Abba, Father.'" You may have some fears, but being justified by faith you have not again received the spirit of bondage. If hereafter you have any fears of God's judgments and wrath against you, it is not the spirit of bondage, the Spirit of God, that causes these fears. Your own selves may mistake the matter; for those who once receive the spirit of bondage never after receive it.

You may have fears through your own mistakes, but not by the Spirit of God. The spirit of bondage showing us that our bondage bears sins, and working terrors on the soul for it—these fears are dispelled. For in our peace with God in the pardon of sin, the matter of enmity between God and the soul is taken away. There is this in it which might have been added in the mysteries: when a prince pardons a malefactor, he gives him his life, and he is glad and goes away. But the prince regards him no more, and, possibly, the malefactor may have enmity in his heart against the prince still. But when God pardons a sinner, not only is the enmity taken away, but forthwith that soul is brought into the state of infinite friendship. He receives the soul into His very heart so that there shall be a greater and more intimate love and friendship between His Majesty and that soul than ever was between the greatest and dearest friends in the world. This is wonderful, and yet this is so. When God comes to pardon sin, not only is the guilt of sin taken away, but the soul is made actually righteous in justification; so also there is not only a taking away of the enmity between God and the soul that was there before, but He receives the soul into infinite love and takes him into infinite friendship with Himself.

Oh, the sweetness and blessedness of that man's state whose sins are pardoned! Reconciliation with God follows thereupon, and He takes the soul into His bosom-love. Further, upon this, two things follow: peace in conscience and with the creatures.

Being justified by faith, he has peace with God, and, as the immediate consequences thereof, peace in conscience and with all the creatures.

*2. Peace in consciences and peace with creatures.*

Peace in conscience. Those fears, those grating terrors that arise on guilt of conscience, are gone. Those dismal accusations of conscience are stilled. It is true, a man's conscience may trouble him after pardon and justification, but that is a mistake. The ground of all those troubles of conscience is gone. It is with trouble of conscience after pardon of sin as it is with the sea. You who are mariners may see the wind at sea raising the boisterous waves on high, yet after the wind has quieted down it is a great while before the waves are still and quiet. So in men's souls it is guilt of sin that causes woeful disturbances. But when God pardons sin, He comes into the soul, as Christ in the ship, and bids all be still. And though through our weakness, after the sting and guilt is removed, conscience is troubled, yet God is pleased to help the weakness of His people sooner or later—not only to pardon sin in the court of Heaven but in the court of conscience too—and then all fears and troubles are gone. Certainly those who know what the burnings, throbbings, and ailings of an accusing conscience mean know what a blessing it is to have peace of conscience. It is a great blessing to have all well there, because the soul has much to do with conscience, and conscience has much to do with God, yea, only to do with God. And if all is well with that which has so much to do with the Almighty, it is a great blessedness. Blessed is the man who is thus pardoned.

Peace with the creatures. If I should meet with these in a full text, each of them might require a sermon itself to show the

excellency of a quiet conscience and peace with the creatures. But I must only touch it here. God is Lord of Hosts, and all the creatures stand armed, ready to avenge God's quarrel. And not only do they stand in readiness, but there is a kind of cry in the creatures to God to make them the executioners of His wrath. "Shall I go and strike this drunkard?" says one. "Shall I strike this blasphemer?" says another. All the creatures in heaven and earth cry against you every day. But when God pardons your sin, all the creatures immediately become your friends. When the judge has acquitted a malefactor, the under-officers have nothing to do with him. Conscience and the creatures are under-officers, and when God is at peace they are at peace too. When Joab came and established Absalom, the ten young men who were his armor-bearers did so too, 2 Samuel 18:15. So, if God comes to an unpardoned sinner and gives him a stab, all the creatures will be ready to stab him too. But when God comes and pardons your sin, He makes a league with you and the stones of the field, as the Scripture speaks in Job 5:23. That is the first great mercy that flows into the soul upon pardon of sin and peace with God.

### *3. God reveals His secrets to those He pardons.*

This follows upon pardon of sin. God comes in a wonderful, gracious way to reveal Himself to that soul. He comes to reveal His secrets to the soul He pardons. And pardon of sin is the very ground of the revelation of the secrets and mysteries of God by the Spirit to that soul, Jeremiah 31:33. Among other particulars in the New Covenant, God promises they shall be all taught of God. The text of Hebrews 8:10–11 is quoted more fully than in the prophet: "They shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord;

for they shall all know Me from the least to the greatest.” Mark it, “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” Pardon of sin is made the grounds of God’s teaching them His covenant. “They shall know Me from the least to the greatest.” You little ones and young ones, if God is pleased to bring you to Christ and pardon your sin, a glorious light shall come into your souls. God will show Himself in a glorious manner to you. There shall be another manner of light to shine in your hearts than ever before. The mysteries of God will be opened to you, and you shall understand more than many of your fathers, who have not had this mercy to be rightly acquainted with the justification of a sinner. And therefore, you young ones who much desire knowledge, the main thing to be acquainted with is this great doctrine of justification and pardon of sin. Luther said, “Three things—prayer, meditation, and temptations—make a divine.” So I say, the right knowledge of justification makes a Christian, and they who do not have a clear knowledge in this point only bungle and are extremely weak in all other points of religion.

But once the soul comes to be justified, what a glorious light is let into the soul, as you all know who have been made partakers of this grace. And you young ones, you may come to have sin pardoned as well as others, and to have the knowledge of the mysteries of God revealed unto you. Compare 1 John 2:12 with 13: “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for His name’s sake.” Even little children, I write to you, your sins are forgiven. Oh, it is a happy thing for young children to have faith wrought in them, and to have their sins forgiven them early! And then in verse 13: “I write unto you, little children, because you have known the Father.” Oh, what an admirable light springs up in the souls of little children when their sins are pardoned! They come to the

knowledge of the Father, and this is the reason why many great and learned men, who are men of excellent understanding in the knowledge of natural things, are not yet acquainted with the mysteries of godliness and think but meanly of them. Do not marvel at it, for the knowledge of the mysteries of godliness comes in by pardon of sin. When God pardons sin and justifies a soul by faith in Christ, then God opens the covenant and all the glorious mysteries of it to such a soul.

A prince does not reveal the secrets of state to a traitor who lies under bolts and chains. But if a prince is pleased to pardon him, knock off his bolts and chains, raise him unto favor, bring him into his private chamber, and open his whole heart and all the mysteries of the kingdom to him, here is a great change. Thus God does to poor sinners whom He pardons.

A soul that lies under the guilt of sin is for all the world like a malefactor who lies in a dungeon, who has bolts and fetters on him. The guilt of sin is like bolts and fetters on your soul. Well, you sit there fast bound, but when God comes in with pardoning mercy, He sends for you in this dungeon and knocks off your bolts by pardon, and not only so but calls you into His private chamber and opens His heart and bosom unto you, revealing those things that were kept secret from the beginning of the world. Princes do not always deal so with malefactors. If they pardon them, they think they have done enough for them. They may afterwards go and shift for themselves who are not called into the private chamber to have the king open his secrets unto them. But it is certainly so to every soul God pardons. He pardons none but whom He calls into His privy chamber, and reveals unto him the great counsels of His will and what have been the great thoughts of His heart for the good of that soul from all eternity. Though some souls have more light than others, yet there is no soul that is pardoned but God comes in with

a great and glorious light. And, in respect of the light of nature, it may be called a glorious light.

There is not the weakest and poorest creature in the world who is pardoned but he understands more of the light of God's grace and covenant than the greatest doctors or rabbis in the world. And though he cannot speak or talk so much of these things, yet he dares to venture his soul on those thoughts he has of God's good will made known unto him in the covenant. No rabbi in the world, though he can talk much of these things, dares not venture his soul for the eternal welfare of it and his estate upon God, to do with him as He pleases. But a believing soul dares venture his name, his estate, his life, yea, his eternal life on God. He dares to put them all into His hands. And to such a soul God will reveal His covenant (Psalm 25:14). God will grant this mercy: He will reveal His covenant, and all the secrets of it shall be made known unto him.

You who complain of dullness of understanding may say, "I hear excellent mysteries and do not understand them. There is surely much in them. I see some weight and excellency in them to be found out, and I hope God in time will reveal them unto me. But little I know for the present." You take a course to get understanding by attendance on the outward ordinances. It is good to use all means, such as reading and conferring with other Christians, and praying over what you hear. These are excellent. But the great and special means to get saving understanding in the mysteries of the Gospel is this: cast down your souls at the footstool of God and cry for pardon of sin. It may be the guilt of sin is upon your heart. Let it be your work to get off the guilt of sin and cry for God's justifying mercy in Christ. Guilt being removed, God will let out to your soul the revelation of His covenant in a glorious manner. He will reveal His secrets to you so that,

upon this, there is a holy boldness a sinner comes to have in the presence of God.

Suppose a malefactor came to court, his guilt being unpardoned. Alas, he scarcely dares to look in at courtgate. And when he comes, he keeps in some outer room and dares not stir any further than he is called.

But take another criminal who is pardoned. He comes in boldly and goes from one room unto another, yea, into the very presencechamber, and there can open his mind fully to the king and speak out all his heart. This is a great difference between one who is under the guilt of sin and another who is pardoned. One under the guilt of sin scarcely dares go to prayer. He thinks God casts away his person and his services, and that nothing is regarded. But when God comes to pardon, He calls the poor sinner who was under trouble before to come and draw near to Him, saying, "Fear not. Open your mind and heart to Me." Lamentations 3:55-57: "I called upon Thy Name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon. In the day that I called upon Thee Thou drewest near, and saidst, 'Fear not.'"

Every poor soul who is justified may say, "God knows that when I was under the guilt of sin I was cast into the low dungeon and the chains of guilt were upon me there, but through Thy grace Thou hast heard my voice. Hide not Thy ear at my breathing, at my cry."

You cannot cry; yet, if you are one whom God has received to mercy, you may have confidence that God will hear the voice of your breathing. You come to prayer and cannot tell what to say. Mark, can you breathe? God's ear lies open to the breathings of a soul He has received to mercy. "Thou camest to me, I was a great way off shaking and trembling, and Thou drewest near to me, and saidst, 'Fear not'" (verse 57). So a poor soul under the guilt of sin stands shaking and trembling, but when

God comes to pardon, He says to you, "Fear not." And because you dare not come to Him, He comes to you and says, "Peace be to thee, fear not" (Hebrews 10:16). The apostle, speaking in verse 17 of the covenant that God will make, says, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." And verse 18: "Where remission of sin is, there is no more offering for sin." In verse 19, he infers that now, therefore, "We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." And verse 21-22: "Having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

Since God has made a new covenant and said, "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more," therefore we have boldness, says the apostle, to enter into the Holy of Holies. In the time of the Law, under the Jewish pedagogy, none might enter into the Holy of Holies but the High Priest. There was but little access into the Holiest in the time of the Law. But since the gospel came, Christ having offered up Himself a sacrifice, there needs to be no more sacrifices. He at once, having purged away sin by His own blood, has opened a new and a living way that we may come with boldness now into the Holiest. So a believing soul no longer needs to stand afar off shaking, but may come into the privy-chamber, enter into the Holy of Holies, and draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. And this comes from sin pardoned. Oh, blessed is he who has his sin pardoned, that has such a privilege following thereupon! Ephesians 3:12: "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." Christ being our High Priest, "we have boldness, liberty of speech," so it is in the original.

A great many know not how to pray, and they think all the prayers of the saints have nothing in them but a great deal of nonsense because they understand not what the work of God is in the hearts of His people. The saints have, by faith in Him,

liberty of speech. There is a blessed freedom a gracious heart has, being once justified by Christ, to open His soul unto God, which cannot be done by any other way in the world. To have liberty to pour out our whole souls into His bosom is from faith and comes in as a fruit of justification. David pardoned Absalom but would not let him see his face. But God never pardons any soul but He gives free liberty for that soul to come into His presence and open itself fully unto Him. This is a third privilege: pardon of sin is an inlet to many other mercies.

#### *4. Pardon of sin makes all other mercies to be mercies.*

Pardon of sin is not only an inlet to many other mercies, but it is such a mercy as makes all other mercies to be mercies, and without which no other mercies would be mercies. By this all other mercies are mercies. Once a soul comes to be pardoned, it may look upon all it has in a far sweeter way than ever it could before. By this he may look upon house and land, wife and children, estate and friends as mercies indeed. Why? Because he has a pardon. His sins are pardoned. Suppose a man were to be charged, found guilty, and condemned, having a fair house, rich furniture, sweet yoke-fellow and children, and all things he could desire. But, says he, "What are all these to me, seeing I am a condemned man?" Well, he goes and gets a pardon unexpectedly, and now he returns to his house, wife, and relations again, and all are sweet unto him. When he enjoys them with a pardon, he looks upon them with another manner of eye than he did before. Thus there is this difference between the enjoyment of outward comforts in this world when sin is pardoned and before it was pardoned.

You may have houses and land, sweet yoke-fellow, and children, trading at sea and land, and all the things you can desire;

but what is all this to you while the guilt of sin lies grating on your conscience? Well, if God comes to you with pardoning mercy and takes away your sin, the guilt of which lay corroding on your conscience, then you may look upon your estate, wife, children, and all as coming from the same eternal fountain of God's eternal love that Jesus Christ Himself came from. This is a mighty argument to persuade men to seek after the pardon of their sin, that you may have your comforts and enjoyments in this world and outward things sweet unto you. And if there were no other reason to persuade you to seek after forgiveness, this might be enough, that you may have all your outward mercies in mercy to you. You may have an estate, a sweet yoke-fellow, sweet children, and all you can desire, and these are mercies, but they are but such mercies as God may give to those who are enemies to Him. They are but outward mercies at the best, coming not to you as fruits of the covenant, and so are not the sure mercies of David, nay, not worthy to be accounted mercies. Consider but two things:

First, the guilt of sin upon your soul is so great an evil that it takes all these things at the best. They are but as a grain of sugar put into a ton of gall. If a ton was filled up with bitter gall, and one grain of sugar put into it, would not all the sweetness of it be swallowed up in the ton of gall? So, were the monarchy of the whole world made over to you, yet if your sin is unpardoned there is so much evil in it that all you can enjoy is but as one grain of sugar put into a ton of gall. The evil of sin would swallow it all up.

Second, you do not know what you have, whether it is out of God's love or hatred. Nay, you have rather cause to conclude that it is out of God's anger and hatred than out of God's love. How can you then account it a mercy when all the comforts you have may come out of God's infinite anger and hatred to you rather

than out of love? Therefore, till you are assured of pardon, you have no mercy that you can be assured is in mercy to you.

This shows that the great vanity of men and women who look after pardon of sin, but only at such times as God takes away all other comforts from them. For example, they think to satisfy themselves with the creatures while they can enjoy them, while they can go up and down among friends, eat good cheer and have all coming in. But when God takes away all these, as on a sickbed, then they will cry for pardon, "Oh, mercy, Lord! Oh, mercy! I am a wretched miserable sinner. Oh, mercy!"

Well, now you would have mercy. Why now and not before? Before you had other things and you quieted your hearts with them. And why not now? Were not they mercies? But I know not whether they were out of love or hatred, you say. Well, yet you quieted your hearts with them; and now they are all going. Do you now think it a fit time to cry for mercy? Oh, how infinitely were you mistaken in that you did not cry for mercy before! You think it now a fit time to cry for mercy. Why? You had no mercy that you could take the comfort of as a mercy, unless your sins were pardoned. And therefore you have now cause to cry for pardon. When sickness comes, and God takes away this and the other mercy, you think you are left naked. If you knew all, you would realize that you have been naked all along! And, therefore, would you live a comfortable life in this world, and have your house, estate, and all relations be as mercies to you? Never be at rest till you have gotten your sins pardoned and forgiven. This considered might be a mighty argument and means to draw the hearts of men to get pardon, that all their outward things might be sweetened to them.

This also shows that if all outward good is not a mercy unless sin is pardoned, then what good will you or anyone get by the

increase of sin? You think it to be a good. Why? All you have now is not a good, is not a mercy; and do you think to get good by the increase of sin? When a temptation comes to draw you to sin, think thus, "I have heard this day that all I have is not a mercy unless my sin is pardoned. And therefore I can never get any mercy by the increase of sin." Certainly, if men and women understood themselves, they would easily answer the devil by this kind of reasoning.

*5. Pardon of sin makes all afflictions easy to be borne.*

Wherever sin is pardoned, it follows that anything that befalls that man or woman is very easy to be borne. It is an easy matter for anyone who has his sin pardoned to bear any affliction, and this is a great blessedness. Or rather take it thus, either such a one may be assured that afflictions shall be removed or otherwise made easy to be borne. For pardon of sin delivers us from abundance of afflictions that otherwise might befall us in this world. Though it is true, God lays many afflictions on His people after their sins are forgiven, yet it is more than they know. But if their sins had not been forgiven, they might have had other manner of miseries than they do now meet with. Perhaps you meet with some now, more than you did before, but for all you know those miseries you meet with now might have been seven-fold more than they are now, and another manner of wrath than you now think of. Isaiah 40:2: "Cry, her warfare is accomplished, for her iniquity is pardoned." Where iniquity is pardoned, there warfare is accomplished. If afflictions are not quite removed, yet they are made very easy to be borne, and that upon two grounds.

First, because the greatness of the good that there is in pardon of sin makes the most bitter and sad evil there is in

affliction to be as nothing. For instance, suppose a malefactor who is condemned to some grievous and hideous death should have a friend at the court to sue for pardon, or he comes up to get pardon. Well, he is admitted to come into the king's presence, and he receives him graciously, pardons him freely, acquits him fully of all his guilt, and puts him fully out of all the danger he was in. And then suppose that, as he is coming from the king, he loses his glove or handkerchief. Would it not be an unseemly thing for a man, after he has gotten his pardon, to whine and wring his hands because he has lost his glove? Would that not be an unreasonable thing?

Certainly it is as unreasonable for any man or woman who has the pardon of their sin to wring their hands and whine, and keep a stir as though they were undone because they are afflicted. The greatest affliction that can befall any in this world, compared with the good of pardon of sin, is not as much as the loss of a glove for the saving of any man's life by the king's pardon. Though your afflictions may be more than the loss of a glove, your pardon of sin is greater than any king's pardon in the world. Put these together and know hereby the unreasonableness, and when to check yourself (having any assurance of pardon of sin) that you should be so troubled at any affliction and have so much good from God in the pardon of your sin. Further, for those who are troubled at afflictions, I would put this to them: either you are pardoned or not pardoned. If you are pardoned, why are you so troubled? If you are not pardoned, then you need to spend the strength of your spirits by waving your grief for afflictions to seek pardon of your sins.

Second, pardon of sin will make afflictions easy because the soul may be assured that the evil of affliction is gone. He who has his sin pardoned may be assured that nothing can befall

him in this world but that, if he knew all, he would be willing with all his heart that it should be so. And is not this a blessed condition for any man while he lives here in this world? There is an abundance of evil, yet how blessed it is to be in such a condition as that we shall certainly know that there shall nothing befall us as long as we live in this world, but that, if we knew all, we ourselves would choose it, and account it to be a better condition than any other! It is a blessed estate to be in such a condition as this is, for God to testify from Heaven unto us that it shall not be in the power of any creature in the world to do us any hurt. Certainly once a man or woman is justified, God as much as speaks from heaven to that poor soul saying, "Soul, now you are safe. Be certainly assured that there is no creature in all the world can do you any hurt." See Psalm 116:7. You may say as David, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee."

God has pardoned your sin and delivered you from death. And now, my soul, return unto your rest. The word translated "rest" in the original is plural: "Return unto thy rests." There are rests enough for a soul whom God has delivered and pardoned. All afflictions to him are but as the viper on Paul's hand which he shook off. They will do him no hurt. The sting of death is sin, and the sting of afflictions is that they are the beginners of death. But to one who has his sin taken away, the property of affliction is altered. They come not as acts of revenging justice, but as effects of love and mercy. The principle whence they come and the end to which they tend are different from what they were before. When trespasses are forgiven, deliverance from evil will follow after, as it is in the Lord's Prayer. True, as you heard before in the former point, if once we come to have afflictions as the fruits of sin, then they are heavy and grievous indeed. In this case, when affliction

comes for sin and sin comes to prey upon a man in time of affliction, it is just like a bailiff sent by a cruel creditor who comes to a poor man in debt who lies sick. The bailiff takes away his stools, table, bed pillow, and all he has to help and comfort him, and leaves him no pillow to rest his weary head upon. So, when a sinner lies sick and under affliction, the guilt of sin comes and takes away all his comforts.

If you have any promise as a pillow to rest your head upon, the guilt of sin will take it away. Guilt of sin pulls and tears away every comfort and every good that sinners should have to refresh themselves with while in affliction. But when the guilt of sin is gone, you may lay your head down in quiet and rest upon a promise, and it will make affliction very easy. You shall have no cause to make complaint as formerly you had. Isaiah 33:24: "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." Mark the ground of it, "for the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." When God comes to bestow this great mercy of pardon, the inhabitants shall not make such dolorous complaints of affliction and trouble upon them. Luther said, "Strike, Lord, strike, for I am absolved from my sin." Once God has absolved you or any poor creature from their sin, it is not in the power of any affliction to disturb them. Job 34:29: "When He has given quietness, who can give trouble? And when He hides His face, who then can behold Him?" When God gives quietness, as He does in forgiveness of sin, then who can make trouble? Let there be never so many rumors in the world of war, blood, and miseries, as if Heaven and Earth met together; yet if God gives quietness to the heart in assurance of forgiveness of sin, who can bring trouble? It is not in the power of all the world to disturb his soul whose sins are forgiven. Pardon of sin is that peace the world cannot take away. Therefore, blessed is the man that has his sins pardoned.

*6. Healing is the fruit of pardoning mercy.*

Where God pardons sin, He heals that soul and sanctifies it by the immediate fruits of the Spirit wherever it is, and this is a great blessedness. Who is there that understands the evil of sin who sees not that this is a great blessedness, not only to be delivered from the guilt of sin but also from the uncleanness of sin too? That sanctification (or freedom from the power and slavery that there is under the bondage of sin) is a fruit of forgiveness of sin will appear by divers texts of Scripture. I shall not speak to all, but only some that make this blessing to be the consequence or immediate fruits that flow in upon forgiveness. In Jeremiah 31:33–34, God promises to put His law into our inward parts. But what is the ground of it? In verse 34, “I will forgive their iniquities, and remember their sins no more.” The writing of God’s Law in our inward parts, delivering us from the power of sin and sanctifying our hearts, comes in as a fruit of God’s forgiving us our iniquities. Romans 6:14: “Sin shall not have dominion over you.” Why? “Because you are not under the Law, but under grace.”

Now this is the great grace of the gospel—forgiveness of sin. You are under that, and therefore sin cannot have dominion over you. It is as if the apostle had said, “You may resolve against sin, do what you can to oppose it, and strive, as much as you are able, to subdue it; yet as long as you remain under the law sin will certainly have dominion over you. And you will be under the slavery of it until you come under the grace of the gospel and partake of that.” Colossians 2:13: “And you hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” So that quickening and sanctification are fruits of forgiving all their trespasses. 1 Corinthians 15:56–57: “The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The

strength of sin is the Law. God's justice in the Law giving men up unto sin, there lies the strength of sin. But now God through Christ, coming to men in the grace of the Gospel, gives deliverance from the strength of sin. Perhaps some of you have lain under the burden and power of sin, and you have thought the only way to get victory has been to resolve and strive against it. And you have done so, and yet you cannot get power over your sins. I remember one wrote to Luther, telling him that he had vowed and covenanted against his sin, and yet his sin prevailed against him until he understood the grace of the Gospel. And so maybe have you done, and yet your sin prevails because you take not this course.

Try the work of faith in point of justification. Renew your faith in God for the forgiveness of your sin through Jesus Christ. That's the ready way; try that course. You who have tired of laboring against corruption, you have resolved and prayed and shed tears, and yet that will not do. Try this way: renew your faith daily in point of justification by laying hold of the infinite riches of the grace of Christ in the gospel for pardon, for healing power to come in to help you against that which holds you, and this will not hinder your duties. You may pray, resolve, and fast as much as before, but be sure your great care is to renew your faith in point of justification, and there will come more healing in your souls by that than by anything else. Once you can touch Christ, the bloody issues of your sins that ran before come to be dried up, which you could not dry up, though you spent your time and pains and did all you could do. Here is a great difference between God's forgiveness and man's: a king may forgive but he cannot change and heal. But when God forgives, He heals and takes away that evil disposition from you that so weakened you for all good. When Christ comes, He comes with healing in His wings. Now blessed is the

man whose sins are forgiven, for there follows deliverance from the power of sin and a healing of the soul.

*7. Comfort against death follows pardoning mercy.*

Blessed is he whose sins are forgiven, because such a man may look in the face of death and judgment with comfort. When death comes to a natural man, he comes as a messenger of God to arrest the soul at God's suit. But where sin is forgiven, death is made a means to bring you to rest. That which would have arrested you is a means to bring you to your rest, Hebrews 2:14–15.

Christ came to die. Now what was the great business He came to die for? It was to purchase a pardon for sin, and by His death to take away the power of the devil and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Nothing in all the world can deliver from the fear of death but forgiveness of sin, and then this makes a man look on the Day of Judgment with comfort. For one special end of that day is that there may be a declaration of the infinite mercy of God in forgiving sin. Acts 3:19–20: “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; when He shall send Jesus again, which before was preached to you.”

Certainly, as soon as ever a man comes to believe, his sins are blotted out. Aye, but when the times of refreshing shall come they shall appear to your own selves and to all the world, men and angels, more fully than ever before. Some interpreters think (and I dare not deny it) that there will be a time of refreshing in this world before the great and terrible day where Christ will make it appear that the sins of the elect believers are blotted out in another manner than now it does. But it will fully appear at that day, and then that day that will be so terrible to

the ungodly will be refreshing to the saints. Why? Because they shall find their sins blotted out then, and that will make that day a refreshing day unto them. Although the heavens be all on fire and shriveled up like a scroll, and there shall be dreadful shriekings of ungodly men, yet it shall be a day of refreshing to the saints because their sins are blotted out. Oh, blessed is the man that has his sins pardoned now, for he shall have that day to be a day of refreshing to him! But woe to you, O soul, whoever you are, that does not have your sin pardoned! If but one sin stands upon the score not blotted out, woe, woe will betide you forever more. But they who find their sin pardoned shall find that day to be a day of such refreshing as ever they beheld. Therefore, blessed is the man who has his iniquities forgiven.

*8. Security against the world's reproaches is the fruit of pardoning mercy.*

Where God has forgiven sin, such a one need not care for the censures of all the world and the reproaches they cast upon him. The men of the world cast many reproaches on the saints and say they are hypocrites: that though they will not swear, yet they will lie; that they are false, proud, and the like. Why, now, the soul that finds itself acquitted before the Lord need not care for all the censures and condemnations that can be cast upon him from the men of the world. In Romans 8:33, having spoken before of the great grace of God in justification, Paul speaks as if he had made a challenge to all the world: "Let them all come in; let me see who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect." Why? Because it is God who justifies. Many will charge them of grievous things. Aye, but it is God that justifies. What will a man care (if the king has given him a pardon) if some kitchen boy, some beggar about the court, should rail

against him, as long as the king has pardoned him.

Bernard had a notable speech concerning David. When Shimei railed, David was not troubled, said he. He did not feel the injury heaped upon him because he had felt before the grace of God towards him. The feeling of God's grace towards him in pardoning made him not feel the railings of Shimei. So it was with Christ Himself. Isaiah 50:6: "He said before, I gave my back to the smiters, and hid not my face from shame and spitting." They spat upon him. This is apparently spoken of Christ, but what upheld Him? Verse 7: "For the LORD God will help me; therefore, shall I not be confounded for all this; therefore have I set my face like a flint against all scorns, railings, and accusations in the world." But what was the bottom of all this? Mark, verse 8: "He is near that justifies me, who will contend with me? Let us stand together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me; let my adversary come and do his worst, He is near that justifies me."

True, Christ had no sin personally to be pardoned, but He had the sins of all the elect charged upon Him; and upon that he suffered death. Now, we are to know, Christ is justified as well as a believer; and the very ground why a believer is justified is because Christ is justified Himself. Christ being justified, a believer comes to be justified. This might have been opened in the mysteries of pardon of sin. There is a justifying first in Christ as in a common public person, and then by faith in our own persons. Now, though, in the Father's justification of Christ He justifies us, yet not as particular persons, but in Him as a common person in the name of all the elect.

Faith comes in that we might be justified in our own particular persons, as before we were in Christ as a common person. Now Christ is justified first and acquitted from all our sins, and this acquittal is made the ground of His challenge

to all His adversaries in the world. Though the prince of devils comes with all his power, yet, says Christ, "He is near that justifies Me, and He will make My face as a flint. It is God who acquits Me. Who is My adversary? Let him come near." Oh, it's a blessed thing when you have gotten the pardon of your sin! You need not care for all the reproaches the world can cast upon you. You may go up and down and challenge any in the world to come in against you. "I care not for man's judgment, He that judgeth me is the Lord" (1 Corinthians 4:3-4). The word translated "judgment" in the Greek is "man's day." Man has his day here, and he thinks to weary out the people of God. Why, says Paul, I care not for man's day. He who has the supreme judgment in His hands has acquitted me, and I am well enough.

*9. The foundation of eternal life is laid in pardoning mercy.*

Blessed is the man who has his iniquities forgiven, for this is the foundation of eternal life. Whoever has this mercy has a certain pledge put into his hands of eternal life. Romans 8:30: "Whom He predestinated, them He called: whom He called, them He justified: and whom He justified, them He glorified." You who are justified and have your sin pardoned shall certainly be glorified. A prince may pardon a man but he cannot assure him of eternal life, though he gives him his natural life. But if God pardons, He makes it known to that soul that he shall live eternally with Him in glory. Oh, blessed is he then who has his iniquities forgiven, for this is a pledge unto him of eternal life.

*10. Pardon of sin is the bottom of all true comfort.*

Blessed is he who has his sin pardoned, for pardon of sin is the very bottom of all true comfort. Be of good comfort, your sins

are forgiven. If Christ speaks but this word to a soul, though he be never so much dejected, it is enough to raise any drooping soul from the gates of hell itself. Be of good comfort, O soul, your sins are forgiven you! Isaiah 40:2: "Speak you comfortably to her, for her iniquities are pardoned." God calls to comfort her when her iniquities are pardoned. This is the foundation of all true comfort. If you lay any other foundation to build your comforts on, certainly that building will totter and come to nothing, if this is not the foundation.

You would rather have comfort, and you are, every one of you, looking for comfort. And indeed it is as natural for the soul of man to seek for comfort as it is for the fire to burn. There's no man but would rather have comfort. Now look to the foundation if you would not have the building totter. Lay a good foundation. Many lay the foundation of their comforts in their sins, and others in the creatures. But you must lay it in the pardon of your sin, in the free grace of God justifying your soul, and that building will hold. Lay it there and you shall be comforted here and forever hereafter. And thus we have done with that particular: that pardon of sin is a great mercy because it is a foundation and inlet to many other mercies. Blessed is the man who has his iniquities forgiven, who has such a grand mercy upon which many other mercies follow.

## CHAPTER 5

# *Pardoning Mercy Passes Through a Great Many Difficulties*

**B**lessed is the man who has his sins forgiven; for, indeed, it is a mercy that passes through many difficulties before it comes to the soul. It is strong and great indeed, and therefore makes the man blessed because grace that passes through many difficulties is strong and great indeed. It is an argument of a great deal of strength of grace, when grace shall pass through many difficulties, as it is an argument of the great strength of sin, when it passes through many difficulties to bring forth. When a soul is set upon by sin, there lie a great many difficulties in the way; yet lust to that sin, being strong, will break through all difficulties to get to it. So it is in mercy: when God comes with mercy to forgive a soul, this mercy of God must go through an abundance of difficulties before it gets to you, which argues it to be wonderful, strong mercy and therefore makes him blessed that partakes of it. When God made the world, it was done with a word spoken. God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. But when God comes to

pardon a sinner, heaven and earth must be moved. There must be a greater work of God in pardoning a sinner than in making the world. Certainly the work is greater, and passes through more difficulties.

First, all the wrongs that ever you have done to God stand between you and pardon. Never did any man in the world wrong another man as you have wronged God. How sin wrongs God has in part been held forth to you in the evil of sin [Burroughs' book *The Evil of Evils*, published by Soli Deo Gloria—Ed.], and how contrary sin is to the infinite holiness of God, yet mercy breaks through that—yea, above all, that great and difficult work of satisfying the infinite justice of God—yet mercy breaks through that, and there stands in that.

1. *Before you can be pardoned God must be made man, and yet must remain the same God He was before.* You cry for pardon of sin or you are undone. Suppose that God's bowels of mercy even yearned towards you to pardon your sin. Yet before this is done, there must be this great work done: God must be made man, and yet remain the same God He was before. Here is a mighty difficult work, a greater work than making the world, and yet mercy breaks through this.

2. *This stands between sin and pardon: When God is made man, He must die and be made a curse.* And not only so, but God the Father must do it. He must take His own Son and stab Him for you. He must Himself take Him and put Him to death, and He Himself must pour out His wrath upon His own Son before your sins can be pardoned. Now, that God the Father should take His own Son, the Son of His delight, stab Him to the heart, and Himself put Him to death, this is a mighty great work. And yet this must be done before you can be pardoned.

3. *There's this difficulty standing in the way: before sin can be*

*pardoned, the blind, dead, wicked, carnal, sottish heart of man must be raised up to perform the most glorious act that ever any creature did, which is an act of believing.* Yet, says God, that your sin may be pardoned, “I will put forth My infinite power to effect it, to raise that blind, dead, sottish, carnal, wicked heart of man, so full of all wickedness, to perform the greatest work that ever any creature did, for so is believing.” God’s mighty power is put forth to effect this.

Now, there are all these difficulties lying in the way, and yet mercy passes through them all to pardon sin. Surely, then, that soul must be blessed who has his sin pardoned, whom God sets His heart upon so much that rather than not showing mercy to him, he will pass through all these great difficulties that lie in the way. And truly, on considering this, before I pass any further, there are three meditations that may be collected hence, and may come with a great deal of power upon all our souls.

First, it must be a great taking of the name of God in vain, for any man or woman to hate slight thoughts of such a mercy as pardon of sin is that comes through so many difficulties.

Second, this may come with power upon our hearts: if God’s mercy passes through so many difficulties for the pardon of your sin, you may be content to endure much difficulty in seeking for the pardon of your sin. You see what an evil sin is, and are more sensible of it than ever you were before. Well, you are seeking for pardon, and you complain that you have waited long for pardon. It may be a quarter year or half a year, or it may be twelve months, and you have gotten little assurance of pardon. And you find it much more difficult than you thought it would be. Temptations come stronger than ever, and the devil suggests more evil thoughts than ever. You find duties hard to flesh and blood, and you are wearied and tried with temptation. These are some difficulties, but yet you are about

that great work of seeking pardon of sin. Be content to suffer some difficulties, yea, ten times more than you have.

If God sees fit to lay it upon you, for God's mercies pass through difficulties to pardon your sin, and if you get through, though you meet with difficulties, you have no cause to complain at all. Why should you not be willing to pass through difficulties in seeking pardon when God's mercies pass through many difficulties to come to your soul? You are going to God and seeking Him for mercies, and there lie many difficulties in the way. When God was coming to you, there lay many difficulties in the way, and yet He passed through them all. Therefore, you may be content though you meet with some difficulties in seeking the pardon of your sins.

Third, this may make you willing to go through any services, though they be hard, if you are getting a pardon. Suppose God sets us about some hard work that has many difficulties in it. Do not complain as if God were a hard master when he sets you about any hard work. For be it known to you, you are never set about any such hard work for God in all your life that has so many difficulties in it as the work of God in pardoning your sin has. There are more difficulties when God comes to pardon your soul for sin than in any service whatever that God requires of you. You look upon the service of God, and there are many difficulties in it. Be content, do not complain, for God passed through many difficulties to pardon your sin. And this is another consideration: the difficulties God passes through to pardon sin are a greater argument that the soul is blessed which has his iniquities forgiven.

## CHAPTER 6

# *Pardoning Mercy Comes from the Fountain of God's Everlasting Love*

*W*hen God comes to pardon sin, it is such a mercy as comes from the fountain of God's everlasting love. Other mercies do not. Where this is not present, you cannot have evidence of God's eternal love. If God gives you health of body, good voyages at sea, and good comings in respect of the world, you cannot draw arguments from hence that God bears eternal love to your souls. But when He comes to pardon your sins, it is a certain evidence that God has set His love on you from all eternity. If there were a chain let down from heaven, and you could take hold but of one link that would certainly bring you there, both ends would come together.

In Romans 8:30, there is a chain of many links let down, and if you can catch hold of the link of justification, you may certainly catch hold of predestination, for all hang together. If you are justified, then know for certain that you are a predestinated man or woman whom God has set His heart upon from all eternity to do good. And this is a great happiness for a poor

creature while he lives in this world, to know that God has set His heart upon him from all eternity to do him good. And, indeed, we can never be at rest until we come to this.

If your heart is right, you cannot be at rest in the enjoyment of such poor fare as God casts to reprobates. You must have other comforts than anything the world can afford. If your heart is right, you will never rest until you come to know God's thoughts in His eternal purposes towards you. It is no nicety or vain curiosity for men and women to seek to know what were the thoughts of God toward them from all eternity. It may be known, and God has revealed it, especially in the times of the gospel. God has opened His bosom to reveal unto His people the thoughts He had of them from all eternity. This makes a pardoned sinner to be so blessed, and this is more than any malefactor can have from a prince. He may be persuaded to pardon him, and yet his heart may be as much set against him as against any man. Yet now, having gotten his pardon, he thinks himself blessed and goes his way. But when God pardons it is not an act of a day, but such an act as God has set His heart upon from all eternity to do. It is such an act as the infinite wisdom of God has been set on from all eternity to effect.

If a malefactor came to a prince for pardon, and the prince said, "I have been setting my thoughts a work to pardon you ever since I heard of your crime," this would bring some comfort. But what is this to the comfort God brings to the soul that He pardons? When God comes to a soul, He does not only pardon. He does not say, "Soul, I pardon you," but He says, "Know, oh soul, for your comfort, that this is a work that My wisdom and the councils of My will have been contriving from all eternity to bring about your pardon with My own honor. And here it is for you. Take it as a fruit of My eternal councils."

Therefore, blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, because such purposes have been taken up in God's eternal councils.

## CHAPTER 7

# *Pardoning Mercy Is a Work that All Three Persons in the Trinity Are Engaged In*

**B**lessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, because as there is no one thing which has taken up the heart of God more than this, so this is a work that all three Persons in the Trinity are engaged in—God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

*1. God the Father.* In Isaiah 43:25, God claims this as His own glory: “I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for My name’s sake, and will not remember thy sins.” It is His prerogative: “I am He.” God glories in it as a peculiar, belonging to none but Himself. In Exodus 33:18, Moses desired to see the glory of God, and God promised to make all His goodness pass before him. In Exodus 34:6–7 he proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands....” And then to the point in hand, “...forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.” Here’s the glory of God.

Would you have a demonstration indeed that God's heart was set upon this as the greatest work that ever was done? Take it in this: the very thoughts of effecting this by the death of His own Son made God very well-pleased and delighted with His death. Surely, then, His heart was much set upon it. Rather than not effect it, He would part with His own Son. Never was there such a hideous thing as the death of the Son of God. And, therefore, if there were any delight to be taken in it, if God the Father was going to take delight in it, there must be some great thing to sweeten it. Such a horrid thing as the death of the Son of God would need to have some great thing to sweeten it.

What sweetened this to God the Father, that His own Son should be put to death? Why, nothing but this—that hereby sinners might come to be redeemed, justified, and pardoned. Nothing else would sweeten it to God the Father but this. Isaiah 53:10: "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." And again: "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand."

The Scripture says that God takes no delight in the death of a sinner, and yet God took delight in the death of His Son. It pleased God to see His Son bruised. When God the Father saw His Son under His wrath, sweating drops of water and blood under the curse of the Law, it pleased God well. Certainly, then, there must be some mighty thing that sweetens this and makes the death of His Son a delightful object to Him. Why, the very thing that did it was this: Christ, being made a curse, thereby redeemed us from the curse, procured the pardon of our sins, and reconciled us unto God. And this very thing sweetened the death of the Son of God unto God the Father. Therefore, the heart of God was much in it.

2. *Christ the Son.* What was the business that brought Him from the Father's bosom, made Him content to take our nature

upon Him, to suffer and be made a man of sorrows so as to delight in it? There was a kind of delight for Christ in enduring the wrath of God, for “with desire have I desired to eat this Passover,” said Christ in Luke 22:15, because it was the preparation for His death and sufferings of the wrath of God in all the fruits and effects of it for the sin of man. And when Christ came to institute the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, and to give His blood for the remission of sins, Matthew 26:26 says, “He gave thanks.” What did He give thanks for? Surely the thing for which He gave thanks (upon which the Lord’s Supper is called the Eucharist, from the Greek word that signifies thanksgiving) was this: by His death, remission of sins should be obtained.

When Christ was to die and suffer all the wrath of God that was due for our sins, Christ blessed God and thanked God the Father for it. Surely there must be some great matter to sweeten it that He should be so affected as to bless God the Father for that which cost Him His life; and yet He did. Mark what it is that satisfies Christ in all this. Isaiah 53:10: “It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, and His soul was made an offering for sin.” All was laid upon Christ. Well, but what did Christ look for in all of this? Verse 11: “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.” That which shall satisfy Christ for all His pains, labor, and suffering shall be to see the travail of His soul.

What is that? What is the travail of Christ’s soul? Why, “by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many.” It is as if Christ had said, “This is the very thing My soul travails for in all that I have done or suffered in all My life, that I might bring this great business to pass, to justify some souls, to get the sin of those poor souls that are Thine elect pardoned and their persons justified. This is what My soul travails for,

and O Father, let Me but see this, the travail of My soul, and I am satisfied!”

Christ accounted it worth all the travail of His soul in all that He did and suffered that He might justify some souls. It is as if He had said that He wished no other boon from His Father but this: “Father, if Thou wilt but recompense all My travail with this, I shall forever account Myself to be satisfied and have enough.”

How should we be satisfied with Christ, when Christ accounts the pardon of our sins satisfaction enough? Shall Christ say, “Notwithstanding all My sorrows, let your sins be pardoned and I will have enough”? Will you not now say, “And let me have Christ and I have enough”? Christ says to God the Father, “Let Me have those souls pardoned and I have enough.” Oh, then, you say, “Let me have Christ and I have enough.” Surely Christ is enough to satisfy you when the pardon of your sin is enough to satisfy Him.

*3. The Holy Ghost.* As the heart of God and Christ are in this great work, so the heart of the Holy Ghost is in this business too. The great work the Holy Ghost has to do in this world, and the great business for which He was sent, is to convince poor souls of the righteousness there is to be had in Christ for justification, John 16:8–10. Christ will send the Comforter, and first He will convince the world of sin; second, of righteousness. What is that? That is, when the Spirit comes, He will clear it up unto unbelievers and convince them that the righteousness that they must have to stand righteous before God is in the righteousness of Christ alone. And this is a mighty work of the Spirit of God, a work that would never have been done had He not come to have done it. It is such a great mystery that we should be righteous by another’s righteousness that it

is above the reason of all men and angels. All men and angels were never able to fathom this infinite depth; it is above their apprehensions that we should ever come to be righteous in Christ, and very few yet where Christ is made known are convinced of it.

Those men who take up religion in a natural way are never convinced of the righteousness of Christ. It is a riddle and a mystery to them. Only to those few souls whom God intends eternally to save is the Spirit of God sent from the Father and the Son, to clear it unto them that the righteousness wherewith they must stand before God is the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This is the great work of the Spirit of God, and He comes on purpose to enlighten you in this great point, and to witness this great truth unto you. Hebrews 10:15: "Whereof the Holy Ghost is a witness, for after that He had said before, 'This is the covenant that I will make....'" Verse 17: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," as the principal part of the covenant, and of this the Holy Ghost is a witness.

The Holy Ghost comes to bear witness of this great truth of the forgiveness of sins, and seals to your soul that your sins are forgiven. This is the great work of the Holy Ghost after believing—to seal up the forgiveness of sin. And this is one great reason why the Holy Ghost has the title of Comforter, because as He comes to convince of sin, so also to witness and seal up forgiveness of sin to the soul. And indeed, as it shows the excellency of the mercy of forgiveness because the Holy Ghost is so much in it, so the greatness of it, that it must have so high a person to witness it. And indeed, the soul is not satisfied until it has this special witness of the Holy Ghost.

'Tis true, there may be arguments drawn by signs of God's love unto us, and the Holy Ghost may come in those signs, but besides that there is the immediate witness of the Holy Ghost.

To limit Him to witness by signs only is more than any man can have warrant for. And this I say further, all the signs of God's favor we can have will not satisfy the soul until there is this special work of the Holy Ghost, sealing and witnessing the favor of God unto us.

There are many signs of God's favor in 1 John 3 verse 9: "He that is born of God doth not commit sin." Verse 19 and 24: "Hereby we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before Him...and he that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him and He in him." That's another sign. But the conclusion of all is in verse 24: "Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us." The Holy Ghost must convince and satisfy the soul of God's love. There are many who would be willing to have their sins pardoned and would have some signs of it. And perhaps I may hereafter give some signs, but now know that all the signs in the world will not serve to quiet the heart. It may return again to its former doubts till God comes to pacify the spirit by the witness of the Holy Ghost. For it is so great a matter that once the soul understands the infinite breach made between God and it by sin, it must be more than an ordinary work to assure the soul of God's reconciliation to it. Nothing can do it satisfactorily but the Holy Ghost. He must come to the soul to assure it of this thing.

Perhaps the case of the soul is thus. Suppose a prisoner lies in jail bound in fetters for some great offense against his prince. And suppose some friend comes and tells him there is hope of pardon. Oh, says he, 'tis too good news to be true. Well, another comes to the gate of the prison and tells that he hears from the court that the king has sealed pardons and put this man's name in. This is some comfort, but it does not free him from fear and doubting.

But now suppose the favorite of the prince comes from the king himself, one who is of the king's bed-chamber, and one to whom the king opens his whole soul, and there is nothing the king does but he is acquainted with it. This one comes to this poor man and bids him be of good comfort: "I come from the king and bring you a pardon from him." He shows it to him and says, "There it is, take it." Oh, this revives his spirit when such a special messenger is sent to him!

So in this case I may compare all signs to be like some friend or other who goes by the gate and speaks of the happiness of such a man that he is pardoned. But the soul is under such blindness and fears by reason of the guilt of sin that God knows it is no easy matter to persuade it of pardon. But now God, for the comfort of those to whom He intends good will, sends His own Spirit, that lies in His own bosom and knows all His secrets, to declare the mind of God and say to such a soul, "Peace be to you, your sins are forgiven." Now this satisfies the soul.

**OBJECTION.** But here it may be objected, "How may I know it is the Spirit of God that witnesses and not my own fancies or the delusions of Satan?"

**ANSWER.** I answer, as we know the sun by its own light, so we may know the Spirit by its own testimony. And though there may be some ebbs, yet it will rise again. There is such a witnessing work of the Spirit, by a kind of sweet and secret intercourse between God and the soul, whereby God overpowers all doubts and fears. Though I do not say that every one has it in a like sensible measure, yet I do say this: when this full assurance comes, although there may be doubts and many questions before in the soul, for fear of being deluded (for certainly many are deceived and deluded), yet then the Spirit overpowers all doubts and fears and witnesses to the soul its own work. Do you not say that,

because some are deluded with fancies, there is no witness of the Spirit? There is scarcely any point in the gospel of which the Scripture speaks more than this of the witness of the Spirit. Indeed, they who judge the mysteries of the gospel by human reason, and understand no further than that reaches, and who are little acquainted with those conversations that are between God and a believing soul, may slight this witness of the Spirit. But you must know that there is no soul who has assurance he shall go to heaven but it is wrought in a high, supernatural, and mysterious way. And if there were no other way to evidence this to the soul but by some signs, this would be no higher evidence than by way of reason.

But we are to know this: as “great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16), so also “great is the mystery of godliness,” God justified in the Spirit. God justified in the Spirit is a great mystery. Christ’s incarnation is a great mystery. So is a believer’s justification as well as Christ’s incarnation, and so also the witness of justification is a great mystery. Therefore I beseech you to look up higher than for such signs as reason may reach to. Beg God to reveal this unto you that you may have the witness of the Spirit of God to testify unto you that your sins are pardoned. Now blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, seeing God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are so much in it.

## CHAPTER 8

# *Pardoning Mercy Is a Perfect Mercy*

**B**lessed is he whose iniquities are forgiven, for this mercy is a perfect mercy. That is, where God pardons any sinner, such a one stands as perfect before God in point of justification as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or any of the prophets or righteous men who ever lived in the world. You poor soul, man or woman, youth or servant, if God comes to you and pardons any of your sins, you stand as fully justified as Abraham, Paul, Peter, or any of the apostles and prophets. Though in sanctification you fall short of them, yet you are justified as perfectly as ever they were. Justification is an act that is done altogether and at once; therefore it is a perfect work. And this is an argument of infinite consolation to the saints of God, that the great business between God and them in point of justification is perfected.

In Psalm 51:7, David prays to God that He would purge him with hyssop so that he should be clean, that is, that he might be cleansed by justification, by having the guilt of sin taken from his conscience by a renewed act of pardon. And then it follows, "I shall be whiter than snow." Though the saints of God are sanctified, they are not whiter than snow in sanctification; but in

justification they are whiter than snow. There is no spot at all in them (Ephesians 5:27). Christ presents His church unto Himself without spot. In point of justification, every believing soul is without spot before the Lord. Numbers 23:21: "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob." That is, though God knows there is iniquity there, yet He does not see it so as to charge them with it or impute it to them. All is done away in that regard by justification.

What we have in Song of Solomon 4:7 is observable for this purpose: "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." No spot in you. There are spots in respect of sanctification, yes, but in respect of justification it may be said of her, "There is no spot at all in thee; Thou art all fair, my love." These are the words of Christ. He comes forth and says, "Thou art all fair, My love."

Alas, when the believer looks at himself, his own duties and performances, he sees nothing at all *but* spots, all smeared and spattered over. Why, though you look on yourself as spotted, yet Christ looks on you without spot, and God the Father looks upon you through Christ without spot and says, "Thou art all fair, there is no spot in you."

You think it may be that if God should make a discovery of your heart to all your Christian friends and acquaintances, you would appear so foul that they would cast you out of their society and never have anything more to do with you. Yet, for all this, Christ says, "Thou art all fair, there is no spot at all in thee." Justification admits of no degrees. No, not in heaven—you are not more justified there than you are here. You are now as perfectly justified as ever and as accepted of Christ as ever. Sanctification is renewed day by day, being a work of God in us. We increase in it daily. But justification is a work of God outside of us and so is perfected at once. Hence, then, this makes a pardoned soul blessed, because pardon of sin is of such a nature that it is a perfect work. Hence, then I will but touch it.

1. Here abundance of comfort is imparted to a pardoned soul. Though you are weak in sanctification, and it troubles you to think how far you come short of Abraham's faith, Moses' meekness, David's love, Paul's zeal, Solomon's wisdom, and Job's patience, yet know this—you are equal in justification with Abraham, Moses, David, and all the prophets. And this may be a mighty comfort to you against the weakness of sanctification.

2. This should be a mighty engagement upon your spirit. Has God made you equal to them in justification? How should you labor to be like them in sanctification! Think thus with yourself: "Is the mercy of God so rich and glorious to me, though I am a poor, wicked, wretched, vile sinner, that I should be made equal to the greatest saints in justification? Oh, how should I labor to follow hard after them and get as near to them as I can in point of sanctification!"

This argument should come with power and strength upon our hearts to stir up all our endeavors to be like them in point of sanctification with whom we are equal in point of justification. How should we imitate Moses' meekness, David's love, Paul's zeal, and Job's patience!

## CHAPTER 9

# *Pardoning Mercy Is an Irrevocable Mercy*

**B**lessed are they who have their iniquities forgiven, for it is an irrevocable mercy. When God pardons sin, He never revokes it again. It is true, the soul that is pardoned may afterwards commit many offenses that may provoke the displeasure of God against Him, yet he shall never so provoke God so as to cause Him to revoke this mercy of pardon to all eternity. If you are once pardoned, you are pardoned forever.

It is not so with God in pardoning as it is with men. A king pardons a malefactor on condition of his good behavior afterwards. Though it is true, a believer will be more careful of offending after he is pardoned than ever before, yet God does not pardon me so much on condition of my good behavior as of His free grace; therefore it abides. He does not say to a poor soul, "I will pardon you, but it shall be on this condition: you behave yourself well, and if you are found tripping in any one thing, I will recall My pardon back again."

It is so with a prince's pardon. Take a man who is pardoned for his life and afterwards offends and perhaps breaks the peace. In another man it would not be so great a matter,

for he could soon satisfy the law for it. But if a man who is pardoned for his life breaks the peace, it costs him his life. If another man strikes a man, it is but an assault and battery in him. But he who has his pardon for his life, for such a thing done by him, his pardon may be revoked again and it may cost him his life.

I hope you will not abuse this grace of God. I do not know how to open it to believers but with a great deal of danger to others. But however much danger it may be to others, yet it must be opened and delivered to believers. It is God's mind that His grace should be made known unto them. He would have them know it to the fullest that His pardoning mercy is irrevocable. And therefore a believer should not question his justification upon every failing in his sanctification. It is a dishonor to the free and rich grace of God if on every failing we call in question that great work of the justification of our souls either to say or think, "I indeed hoped before that God had pardoned the sins of my youth and all my ancient sins, but falling into sin again I am afraid all is undone. All that God has done unto me is undone again, and I must answer for all my sins."

I confess, this will come upon the conscience, especially on the committing of any new sin. But though it does, if ever you have been assured of the pardon of your sin, know this mercy shall never be recalled again. "The foundation of God standeth sure" (2 Timothy 2:19). And this is a fundamental mercy that always abides. Therefore, as we observed in Song of Solomon 4:7, Christ says, "Thou art all fair, My love, there is no spot in thee." But in 5:2 we find the beloved was in a sleepy, secure, and sinful condition like a man or woman asleep. They might do what they would with her. Men might impose what they would upon her, put her in whatever posture they pleased, and yet she was

insensible. Yet in this condition her heart was awake: "I sleep, but my heart waketh." There remained a principle of grace alive in her. But mark what Christ says, "Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled." This was spoken when the Church was in a secure, sinful condition, yet this is the voice of Christ calling the Church His sister, His love, His dove, His undefiled one when she was in that secure condition. This shows that the grace of God in pardoning sin is not called back again.

And because this is a point wherein much treasure lies, I shall open a little the irrevocableness of God's mercy in His pardoning and justifying grace. And for this I shall give you some places of Scripture which being opened will show the greatness of the mercy and will afford abundant matter of consolation and encouragement to every believing soul.

1. The first Scripture expression I shall name is in Isaiah 43:25, where the Lord tells His people that He blots out their transgressions. God seems to take much delight in this phrase and therefore doubles it: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Now this phrase of blotting out is taken from the custom of tradesmen who have their account books wherein they enter all their debts owed them by such and such men. Now when these come to be paid, the debt book is crossed or blotted out. If any of you owe a debt, when you come to pay it you call for the debt book to see it crossed or blotted out, and then you assure yourselves that you shall never hear of it again.

Now you must know that all sinners are debtors to the Lord. They are in a debt of punishment for want or failure in paying Him a debt of obedience. Many men, by their sin, run into debt with God daily, and because God does not call for the debt immediately they think there's nothing between God and them, but they carry it as if all were well. Many gallants run into

tradesmen's debt to hang fine clothes upon their backs, and ruffle it up and down in the world, never thinking of their debts until their creditors come and arrest them and cast them into jail, and there they lie in prison for all their ruffling it up and down in the world. Just so, men and women by their sin run into debt with God, and though God does not call for the debt immediately, yet it is recorded in heaven.

It is certain that every sin of any man or woman is set down in God's debt book, as any debt you owe is set down in your creditor's debt book. And as certain as any tradesman will call for payment of his debts, just that certainly must your debts be called for, and satisfaction and payment made unto God for them.

Now this is the work of justification between God and your souls, if you would know the nature of it. When Jesus Christ sees a poor soul, whom God the Father has given to Him to save, run into debt, Christ comes and lays down a price before God the Father to pay this debt. And Christ sees that the debt is blotted out of the book. Now when God comes with pardoning mercy to a soul, He shows the debt book to a believer and causes him to see all his debts blotted out. And by that He certainly assures the soul that his debt shall never be called for again. This is such a mercy as is irrevocable. It shall not be brought back again; the debt, once paid, shall never be called for again.

This is the first expression, and it is a blessed one. Many men are run into debt and are in danger every hour to have some bailiff arrest them. They cannot look out their doors without having a bailiff ready to fall upon them. They would think themselves happy if they might have any who would come and lay down all and satisfy the debt. If they could see the debt blotted out they would think themselves happy indeed. Well, know that it is so with God. When He comes to pardon sin, the debt book is blotted out and all bonds canceled.

2. The second expression is this: though they may be blotted out, yet they may be before God's face; and God may see them though He will not call for them again. Therefore the Scripture tells us that God will take that course with the sins of believers so that He will cast them behind His back and never so much as lay the debt before His face to look upon them. Isaiah 38:17: "Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back." That which Hezekiah spoke of himself is true of every believing soul. God casts the sins of every believer behind His back. When a man casts a thing behind his back, he does it to the end that he might take no further notice of it. But though God casts a man's sins behind His back, yet if they are not very far He may easily turn His face and look upon them whenever He will. Therefore mark further:

3. The third Scripture expression is Psalm 103:12: "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." Thus God expresses Himself to satisfy the souls of His people that their sins shall never be called for again. The east and west is an expression to note the utmost distance. The east and west are so remote that those two points can never come together. So the sins that God has pardoned to any soul shall never be called for again.

4. Though they are removed as far as the east is from the west, yet God's eyes may look a great way off. Though these points are at so great a distance to our eyes, yet not so to the eye of God. Therefore there is another expression that may make it more full that God will never look upon the sins again of those whom He has once pardoned. He blots them out. He casts them behind His back. He removes them as far as the east is from the west. And if that is not enough to satisfy you, see Micah 7:19: "He will cast them into the bottom of the sea." Things that we cast into the bottom of the sea are utterly thrown out of sight, never

to be looked for again. Well, but though God casts them into the bottom of the sea, He may think upon them. Therefore:

5. Mark another expression further to satisfy you: God says that He will remember them no more. They shall be so far from being thought upon that God says He will not remember them any more.

But you will say, "It is impossible for God not to remember them." Yes, but when God pardons it shall be as irrevocable as if God never remembered them. There are divers remarkable texts for this. Isaiah 43:25: "I will blot out thy transgressions... and will not remember thy sins."

Aye, maybe not now, you may say, but He will hereafter. Then see what is said in Jeremiah 31:34: "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Neither now nor hereafter: "I will remember their sin no more."

6. They shall be so forgiven that there shall be no more mention of them. There shall never be the least mention of a believer's sins before God, and for that see Ezekiel 33:16. It is spoken of every godly man who turns to God and is a believer, "None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him." By the way, let men take heed how they upbraid the people of God for any of their former sins. Perhaps you knew such a one in the times of his ignorance, and you say that he was a liar or a drunkard. But now God has revealed His mercy to him in the pardon of his sin, and God says He will not mention them any more. Take heed how you cast their sins, committed in the times of their ignorance, in their teeth saying, "Oh, you are so precise now. I knew what you were a little before." Shall the God of heaven say He will not mention their sins any more, and yet will you do it? God will take this very ill at your hands.

This is admirable comfort to every believer, that God will not remember their sin any more. He would have you

remember them to humble your soul for them and renew your repentance; but He will not remember them to upbraid you with them, nor would He have others do it. Beza spoke of what he was like when he was young. He said that he made some vain and sinful poems which his enemies upbraided him with afterwards and cast them in his teeth. He said, "These men envy me the grace of God, because God has vouchsafed to me His grace. They envy me and cast in my teeth that evil that I have formerly done."

Oh, what a comfort and privilege is this to you! Oh, you believing soul. Though you were never so wicked and abominable before, yet I tell you from God this day, in whose presence you stand, that He will never remember your sin any more. And this may be a mighty encouragement for men and women to believe and turn from all their wicked ways. Though you have been never so vile, abominable, and wicked, yet be it known to you this day that if you will come in and believe, God will never mention any of your wickednesses. More, they shall be so forgotten that they shall never be mentioned.

It may be that you are afraid that either here in this life or at the day of judgment all your sins shall be charged on you. Well, do not be afraid. Perhaps there are many of you who are conscious of great sins committed. And you would give a thousand worlds to be discharged of them.

Oh, say some, there are such and such sins committed that are so great they cannot be forgiven. I may mourn and grieve for them, but what shall I be the better? The sins of my youth lie so heavy on me, and God and my own conscience upbraid me. And what comfort can I have in my life when God and my own soul upbraid me?

Well, be of good comfort, and be encouraged this day to come in and believe these blessed tidings that where God

pardons sins He will mention them no more. And He will take it very ill at the hands of any who shall mention them to upbraid you for them.

7. This sets forth the fullness of this mercy. When God pardons sins, they shall be so done away that they shall not be found. Jeremiah 50:20: “In those days...the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found. For I will pardon those whom I reserve,” and if I pardon them then they shall be so done away that they shall not be found.

Further, the righteousness believers have in Christ is called “an everlasting righteousness,” and therefore abides forever and cannot be afterwards taken away. Daniel 9:24: “Seventy weeks are determined...to make reconciliation for iniquity and to bring in everlasting righteousness.” The righteousness that is put upon your soul by Christ in the pardon of your sin is an everlasting righteousness and will abide everlastingly.

Further, in Hebrews 10:14, it is said, “That Christ by one offering hath perfected forever them that are sanctified,” that is, justified. Justification is called by the name of sanctification in the phrase “them that are sanctified,” that is, set apart to be made partakers of the great blessing of the New Covenant, to have a share in the blood of Christ for justification. Christ, by one offering, has forever perfected those who are sanctified. Therefore, since they are perfected in justification, there is no recalling this mercy back again.

Once more, this mercy is set out by the typical service of the scapegoat. Leviticus 16:21–22: “On whose head they were to put all the sins of the people, all their transgressions, and all their iniquities, and send him into the wilderness,” or land of forgetfulness, among wild beasts, never to be looked after again. So are the sins of all believers laid upon Christ and

carried into a land of forgetfulness, and shall never come to be charged any more.

So much for that particular of the irrevocableness of pardon of sin, which shows that blessed is that man or woman who has their sins pardoned, because they shall never be recalled again.

## CHAPTER 10

# *Pardoning Mercy Is Such a Mercy as Is Denied to the Fallen Angels*

**B**lessed is the man who has his iniquities forgiven, for this is a mercy that God has denied to the fallen angels. God, in pardoning your sin, does more for you than He did for those thousand millions of angels. It is a mercy that God has denied to those millions of angels who sinned against Him.

Suppose a poor wretched man is guilty of treason against the king. And as he is, so a great part of the chief nobility of the land are guilty as well as he. But now, when the king comes to look upon them, he sets his heart on this poor man (who, perhaps, begged from door to door) and says, "This poor creature shall be forgiven. I will pass by his offense, and not only so but advance him into high and great favor at the court." And then the king condemns all the nobles.

Now this poor man sees all the noblemen in chains who were guilty but of one offense. And he, perhaps, had been guilty for acting in a treasonable way for forty, fifty, or seventy

years and the noblemen guilty but for one offense. And this poor wretched creature sees these noblemen in chains and knows that every one of them is condemned to suffer most dreadful tortures, to die a most dreadful, torturing, tormenting death. What a mighty aggravation is this of the mercy of the king who shall pardon the offense of this poor creature! How will he stand amazed, admiring the greatness of it! "I am guilty of the same offense, yea, more guilty than they, and I shall be pardoned; and the chief of the nobility of the kingdom must die a most torturing, tormenting death for their offense. What a difference has the king's favor made between me and them!"

Certainly this is the case for all the world with any poor soul whose sins are pardoned. God has done as much for you to the full. The angels were the most glorious creatures that ever God made, and you are but a poor worm in comparison to them. They sinned against Him but once, and you are guilty of millions of transgressions. Yet God sets His heart on you and says, "I will do great things for you, though I pass by thousands, millions of angels. I will magnify My rich grace to this poor creature in pardoning his sin and advance him to high favor, though I condemn them into everlasting chains of darkness."

Now when a poor creature comes to see the infinite riches of God's grace that have made such a difference between him and the angels, how will he stand admiring it! I think this should mightily work upon the hearts of all poor sinners, and make them to say, "What, shall God pass by such excellent creatures as the angels, the most excellent creatures that ever God made, and come to me, a poor worm, to set His heart on me and show mercy to me? Oh, let me pass by all the excellencies of the creatures to perform my duty unto Him. Has God passed by the most excellent of His creatures that mercy might come to me? Oh, let me pass by all the glories and excellencies of

anything in this world that my soul may come in a way of duty and service unto Him. Shall God leave the glorious angels to show mercy to me and to do good for me, and shall not I leave my base lusts for Him? Shall not I be content to leave anything to serve Him? Shall I satisfy any base lust with the neglect of Him? God forbid.”

This is another argument, that they are blessed who have their sins pardoned, because God does that for them that He will not do for the fallen angels.

*Pardoning Mercy  
Is Given but to a Few*

*F*urther, blessed is he who has his iniquities forgiven because it is a mercy that is given but to a little handful of the world. The whole world lies in wickedness like carrion in a ditch or like prisoners under the chains of guilt of sin, and yet that God should pull some of these out who lie as in a filthy dungeon is a wonderful mercy. A prince who has many offenders usually pardons the most and executes the fewest, but God usually executes the most and pardons the fewest.

OBJECTION. But how does it come to pass, seeing God is a God of more mercy than any prince? How is it that a prince should pardon most and execute the fewest and God do the contrary?

ANSWER 1. Because the execution of many who are guilty would be a troublesome and dangerous thing to a prince. He cannot do it when the most have offended. But God can easily execute thousands of thousands, and all with one word speaking.

ANSWER 2. Further, if a prince should execute all who offend, he would have a lack of subjects. But God does not lack creatures. He has no need of us. A prince may need his subjects,

and therefore if there is any way in the world to preserve them, and keep them in any way subject to him, the prince will not destroy them.

ANSWER 3. Besides, the prince executes the fewest and saves the most because the execution of a few may be a means to bring others unto allegiance. But when God comes to execute malefactors, the execution of some cannot be a means to work good on others, especially at the great day. 'Tis true, in this world God is long-suffering and executes a few that it may be a means to work good on others.

But how is God said to be a God of rich and glorious mercy, and yet pardons very few and executes most (for all the world has been in treason against Him)? How is it that God pardons fewest and destroys most? I hope to give you very good reasons and satisfaction in showing you how the infinite glory of the mercy of God appears and yet but few are pardoned—yea, rather the more because few are pardoned. God would thereby manifest the more His glorious mercy.

1. It may well stand with the glorious riches of the mercy of God that many are destroyed and yet but few pardoned. God would have a proportion between His justice and mercy. You say, "He would have a proportion. Is not He as merciful as He is just? Then there must be as many pardoned as condemned." No, if God will observe a proportion between His mercy and justice so that He will have His justice appear as well as His mercy, then more must be damned than saved. How does that appear? Because the glory of God's justice in damning two thousand is not so much as the glory of His mercy in saving two.

You may conceive it by what is ordinarily done among men. If the king saves but two men who are malefactors, he magnifies his mercy as much in that act as he would his justice if he

hangs a hundred. So if God saves but two, His mercy is as much magnified as His justice in damning two thousand. The reason is that there is something in the creature that calls for God's justice, something that requires that. But there is nothing in the creature that requires His mercy. When God manifests His justice, He does such a work as is due to the creature. There is something in the creature that challenges such a work from God, but when God comes to manifest mercy there is nothing at all in us that should require such a work from God. No, His mercy is free, altogether from Himself. 'Tis His own work and proceeds from His own heart's love, and there is nothing in us that may challenge it from Him. Now seeing there is that in the creature that challenges justice, and nothing at all that can require mercy; therefore, if God shows mercy but to a few it is as great a glory to His mercy as it is to His justice if He condemns a hundred. But if He should save as many as He condemns, the mercy of God would be beyond all proportion to His justice. But because that cannot be, hence it is that few are saved and many damned.

2. There are more damned than saved because God would hereby manifest His mercy the more to you who are saved by suffering so many others to perish. This is one end that God has in it—that their destruction might set out the excellency of the glory of His grace to you. When an artist would draw a picture, he lays the groundwork in black, and then the beauty of the other colors will thereby most appear. Oh, soul who has your sin pardoned, know that God lays the groundwork of your mercy in the black, dismal destruction of multitudes of ungodly sinners. He gives them their due, that which is their right; but the ultimate aim of God in it rises to this—that their destruction may make the brightness of His glorious grace appear the more gloriously to those who are saved.

He does it that the saints whose sins God has pardoned may in heaven have this argument to praise His grace so much the more, because they are culled out of the mass and multitude of sinners who are damned. This will mightily enflame the hearts of saints in giving God glory in heaven when they shall see so many thousands and millions of thousands cast down to eternal destruction, that God should do this to set off the riches of His grace to them. How will this enflame their hearts in giving God glory! And this is what God aims at as the top of His glory, that He might have a company to be the eternal objects of the riches of His grace. And this shows the base and low account God has of wicked men, that He lets them perish eternally that He might magnify the glory of His grace to saints. What an aggravation is it of the greatness of God's mercy to saints when He is content to have so many thousands of others perish that His mercy to those saints may more gloriously appear?

When a prince has a child born, he shows his honor to the child in solemnizing the christening of the child. It may be thousands of oxen and sheep shall lose their lives in the solemnizing of the joy the prince has in his child. If the solemnity of the joy the prince has in that little infant is the cause of thousands of creatures losing their lives, this shows the dear respect he has to his child, or else he would never let so many creatures go to the shambles but that he might show his respect for his little infant. "So," says God, "there is a handful of people to whom I have thought to do good for all eternity, and I have set my heart upon them. And that I may manifest the greatness of My mercy to them, I will let thousands of others perish eternally to be but as a background for that glorious work that I intend to manifest in the riches of My grace in Christ in the pardoning of their sin." Thus you see it is a peculiar mercy, and therefore blessed are they that have their iniquities forgiven, for it is a

mercy that is peculiar to them only. Oh, how ought they to bless God that He has called them out of the multitude when He has left others to the sway of their own carnal, sottish, and malicious hearts to go on against the ways of grace; and all because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy.

## CHAPTER 12

# *How the Possibility of Pardoning Mercy Would Be Prized by Poor Souls Now under Wrath*

*F*urther, blessed is he who has his iniquities forgiven because the very possibility of it to thousands of creatures now under wrath would be prized more than ten thousand worlds, to have but a possibility of it upon *any* terms. There are those who are now damned in hell and see the stroke of God's dreadful wrath against them for their sin, who are now swallowed up in the gulf of misery and condemnation. If they might have but any possibility to have their sins pardoned, how would they prize it if such a messenger were sent from God to hell's gates to call there and cry out, "O you damned spirits, behold a message from the Almighty! I come unto you from Him, and this is the message—to let you know that there is a possibility upon some terms (that God will require) that your sins may be pardoned and you may be delivered from that dreadful wrath you now lie under"? How would the damned spirits sing and rejoice, and look about them to

attend this message! What acclamations would there be in hell in the midst of those fiery flames! What holding up of hands and rejoicing would there be to hear of such a thing, that there is a possibility on any terms! They would not stand to inquire what the terms were, whether hard or easy. They would answer, "Let them be what they will, if there is but a possibility it is enough," everyone thinking it might be he who is being called.

Well, then, if the possibility of being saved would be received with such joyfulness by the damned in hell, what then is the possession and glorious knowledge of it to a soul that is already pardoned? They would all cry out on the supposition that a message delivers a possibility that some should be freed from hell and have their sins pardoned: "O blessed, blessed indeed is he who shall have his sins pardoned and be delivered from hell!" If they would give this testimony, let us give it much more. Though there is a blessed difference between their condition and yours, yet not long ago there was not. It may be, for all you know, some of them might go to church with you, sit in the same pew, and hear those sermons on the evil of sin [Burroughs again refers to his sermons on sin published by Soli Deo Gloria as *The Evil of Evils.*], and now they are gone to hell, and are shut up in the bottomless pit beyond any possibility of pardon. But this is granted to you all who are before the Lord this day: in the name of God I can boldly preach unto you that if you come in and believe there is a possibility—yea, even for the worst of all—you may come in and be pardoned.

Now if the damned in hell would prize it so highly if there were a possibility for them to be pardoned, shall not you prize it as highly as they? I remember in setting out the evil of sin that one thing that aggravated the sin of men above that of the devils was that the devils believe and tremble, and yet some men will not do as much as the devils. So now I say, if there were but

a possibility of pardon to the damned in hell how would they rejoice. And shall not you rejoice more than the damned souls in hell would?

Think to yourselves, if the damned souls in hell would rejoice if they could have a message of a possibility for them to be saved, I think you should not be quiet if you do not find the same workings in your hearts as would be in theirs. Shall a poor minister be forced to say there is less hope to prevail with you than if he were to preach to those in hell? Shall he say there would be better hearers in hell than are here? God forbid it should be so, that there should be more stirring in hell (if they might but hear of a probability of being pardoned) than there is with you if your hearts are not stirred at the hearing of this blessed doctrine of the pardon of sin; or that there would be better hearers in hell than you are, whose hearts are not stirred in hearing the glorious mysteries of the gospel opened and how a sinner may come to get the pardon of his sins. God forbid it should be so.

## CHAPTER 13

# *Pardon of Sin Is the Special End of All God's Ordinances*

*F*urther, blessed is he who has his iniquities forgiven because forgiveness of sin is the special end of all the ordinances of God. The ordinances that God has appointed and set up in His church attain their end in this blessed effect—the forgiveness of sin. And it is an argument that there is much blessedness in pardon of sin because those precious ordinances of Christ attain their special ends in it. There are three great ordinances I shall enumerate: the Word, the sacraments, and discipline. And the people of God should count themselves in a happy condition when they see those blessed ends wrought on them which God has appointed those ordinances to effect.

1. *The Word.* Hearing the Word is a great ordinance that Christ has appointed. When He ascended on high He gave gifts unto men. Upon Christ's triumphal ascension to God the Father He gave this great gift unto His Church, that His Church should have pastors and teachers. This, by the way, argues the horrible wickedness of those who slight pastors and teachers of His Church, because it is part of the glorious gift of Christ

when He ascended on high. Well, did Christ ordain pastors and teachers for preaching the Word? Surely it is for some great end and purpose that He has in it. There is surely some great glory He intends to reap by it. What is the end for which Christ has set up this great ordinance? 2 Corinthians 5:18: "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself, and hath committed to us the ministry of reconciliation." Ministers of the Word are ministers of reconciliation that God has given to His people. What is that? Read the next verse, to wit, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

Now, then, there is a word of reconciliation, and this is committed unto us. God has appointed that we should have this word of reconciliation to convey it unto you. What is this? It is that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their sins. So, then, forgiveness of sin is the end of this doctrine of reconciliation, that there should be forgiveness and pardon of sin to poor souls in and through Christ Jesus. This shows the great scope and end of this ordinance, to wit, forgiveness of sin.

Therefore, no wonder we stick in this point, because the great business we have to do is to declare the ministry of reconciliation. When a minister is about that, he is about the work that God has appointed him to do. All other doctrines are but to make way for this and to teach people how to walk worthy of it. And this is only taking doctrine to all those to whom God has appointed this mercy. Though we ministers of Christ preach against the vanities and profits of this world, this is neither the main thing nor the right method of preaching to work upon the hearts of people, nor the great end of Christ's ascension. He did not give gifts principally for these things, but that men should be able to reveal the great doctrine of pardon of sin. Ministers need not keep a stir to get

esteem and love, and to make themselves honorable among the people. If they did but apply themselves to preach this great doctrine God has set them about—that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their sin—they cannot but gain honor in the hearts of those to whom God has appointed this mercy.

Many complain they lack respect and honor; let them take pains in this doctrine and they *must* get honor once this word of reconciliation takes hold on any man's heart by faith and repentance. Let men speak against such a minister never so much, say what they will of him, his heart will not be taken off from him, but will be ready to answer as the poor blind man did the scribes and Pharisees who railed on Christ in John 9:24–25: “Give glory to God; but we know this man is a sinner. He answered, ‘Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see, He it was that opened my eyes.’” Thus he answered their slander. So when others clamor against a minister and speak evil of him, the soul that has his eyes opened will say, “I am sure God has done great things for me by him. He has showed me the evil of sin and the sad condition I was in by nature. He has revealed to me the exceeding riches of the mercy and grace of God, and my soul has found it so. God has come to my soul in his preaching.”

Now such a ministry as this will certainly engage the hearts of people to them. 'Tis not the man so much as Christ *in* the man, and this is the end of our ministry: not to tell this or that conceit or story but to show you the riches of the grace of God in the pardon of sin, and the justification of your souls through Christ Jesus, your acceptance and reconciliation through Him. This is the first ordinance.

2. *The Sacraments.* For what purpose has Christ ordained them? The main end for which they were ordained is for

sealing. In the Supper is sealed up God's mercy in the pardon of sin. In Matthew 26:28, Christ tells His disciples, "This cup is the blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sin." It is as if Christ had said, "This is the great ordinance to seal unto people the pardon of their sins."

Brethren, the king does not usually set his broad seal to trifles, toys, and fancies, but unto things of great concern and consequence. They must be such things as shall have the broad seal. So here, because pardon of sin is such a blessed thing, the broad seal of heaven is ordained to seal it; and when the sacrament is administered rightly, it is no other than the broad seal of heaven to seal up the pardon of your sin. And so should men and women come to receive the sacrament. They should think this day is a sealing day. In courts of justice they have their sealing days, and 'tis usually said, "Such a day is a sealing day." So a sacrament day is a sealing day, sealing up to you the great blessedness of forgiveness of sin.

A soul thinks thus: "I am a poor, wretched, vile sinner before the Lord. Woe unto me! Thus and thus have I done, woe is me! But I have heard of the riches of God's grace in pardoning my sin, and this day God calls me to come in and have the pardon of my sin sealed with the broad seal of heaven that my soul may be assured, and I may go away in peace and be comforted and quieted in the great business that lies upon me. Those sins of mine that have so grated on my conscience, and for which I have had dreadful apprehensions of the clouds of God's displeasure hanging over my head—this day I am to go to have the sealing of a pardon of them all." Thus should men and women come to the sacrament with such thoughts upon their hearts as an ordinance appointed and ordained by Christ for the sealing up of the pardon of their sins.

3. *Discipline.* Whose sins forever you remit are remitted

(John 20:23), and those who are cast out of the Church and then received in again find it to be an ordinance of Christ to assure them of remission of their sins. It casts out those who are scandalous, and when they repent it receives them in again and thereby assures them of the pardon of their sins.

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## A TRANSITION TO THE APPLICATION

Having done with the explication, if you would run over and make some recollection of what has been delivered of the glorious blessedness of this mercy of forgiveness of sins, you might see the effects following thereupon. I have shown you the abundant grace of God that is declared in the forgiveness of sin. I have shown you the many mysteries that there are in it, and that it is an inlet to many other mercies. I have shown you the great difficulties it passes through, and how much the heart of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost was in this mercy. I showed you it was a perfect and an irrevocable mercy, a mercy denied to angels, and given but to a few of mankind compared to those that are passed by. I have shown it is a mercy, the very possibility of which would make the damned to rejoice, and it is a mercy that is the end of all ordinances.

And now, having come to some period of the explication, I think that notable Scripture comes presently into my mind, Romans 8:31. If these things are so, if God thus gloriously appears in the riches of His grace for the pardon of sin, what shall we then say to these things? After the apostle had spent some time opening the doctrine of free justification for the working of it upon the heart of the Romans, and his own heart too, he says, "What shall we say to these things?" The holy apostle stood amazed at the wonderful richness of the

grace of God in pardoning sin. In the verse before he said, "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He called; and whom He called, them He justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

And having spoken much to the point of justification in this chapter, he concludes at verse 31, "Now what shall we say to those things?" It is as if he had said, "Lord, how does Thy glory appear in the justification of a sinner and pardoning his sin through Jesus Christ? We cannot but stand amazed at the greatness of Thy glory appearing herein! We know not what to say. So much of Thy glorious grace appears that our mouths are stopped. What shall we say to these things?"

So now we have heard of the glorious revelation of the grace of God in and through His Son, working in such a glorious and mysterious way of godliness for the justifying of a sinner and pardoning of His sin. If we could now sit down as men and women amazed and astonished, having our hearts so filled with the glory of these things that we are not able to express ourselves but even sit down amazed at the brightness of the glory of them, it would be an excellent fruit of our attendance in hearing those things. We would sanctify the name of God in it; and it would be very happy for us. But if not while we are here together, then get into your closets and look into this mystery of godliness and recollect what you can of that which you have heard. Let this consideration lie warm upon your hearts and thoughts: "O Lord! What shall we say to these things, that God should have such thoughts of such mercy and grace in the pardon of sin as we have heard? What shall we say to it?"

And though for the present your hearts are not able to express more, yet by meditation surely the fire will kindle and bring forth some admirable expressions in glorifying the

name of God, or in singing some psalm to His praise, or in doubling and tripling that blessed acclamation with the heavenly host. Luke 2:14: "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men." O here is the good will of God towards poor, wretched, vile men! "Glory be to God in the highest." "Lord, what is man that Thou shouldst be so mindful of Him? Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels" (Psalm 8:4–5). Nay, as you have heard this day, God has set him above those angels who sinned against Him. Christ would not show mercy to them. They could not be pardoned. This is for poor sinners in the world, a generation of those who seek Him, who have this great mercy of pardon and forgiveness of sin revealed to them.

What shall we say to these things? The apostle's expression may help us to make way to the application, and, as I have told you, we should sanctify the name of God in standing amazed at the wonderful grace of God that gloriously appears in the justification of a sinner, as we have opened in many particulars. And now we have many things to say in the application of these things for the answer to that question, "What shall we say to these things?" Attend in the fear of God and you shall hear in the application what shall be said to those things you have heard in the former doctrine.

## CHAPTER 14

# *Dishonor Is Done by Men to the Pardoning Grace of God by Slighting It*

*F*irst, we have to say this to these things: surely if the pardon of sin is so great a mercy as you have heard, and there is such a wonderful work of God in it, then it must be a horrible and vile thing to sin against this grace that the heart of God is so much in. To dishonor this great work of God must be a very vile and horrible thing. And this has been my intention, my very plot, to set forth the greatness of the grace of God in the mercy of forgiveness so as to keep you from sinning against this grace. If he is blessed upon whom such a great and glorious work of God is wrought in forgiveness of sin, then it must be a most horrible and dreadful thing for any man or woman to sin against this grace of God, and horrible to dishonor such a great work of God as this is.

QUESTION. But who are they that dishonor this great work of God? How many ways may we be guilty in sinning against this great mercy of God in forgiveness of sin?

ANSWER. I shall show first who they are who cast dishonor on this great work of God, and, second, show the greatness of your sin, what a dangerous thing it is to sin against this great work of God in pardoning sin.

*Who casts dishonor on the pardoning grace of God?*

1. *They dishonor God's pardoning grace who are careless persons.* They sin against this great work of God in pardoning sin who are altogether careless, who little or not at all mind it, or scarcely spend any time about it. There is a generation of men and women in the world who have sin and guilt enough upon their spirits, yet they scarcely ever call to mind or question what the terms are between God and their own souls, how things stand between God and themselves; what God has to charge them with all; whether God has anything against them or not. How few of you this morning who have come into the presence of God have had your thoughts working thus? Oh, my soul, how is it with you? How do matters stand between God and you? What guilt is it you have upon your spirit? What has Divine Justice to charge you with?

Conscience, speak freely and fully: what is there in heaven against me? Is there anything upon record I am charged with? How is it between God and me? Oh, what strangers are most men unto such thoughts as these! But they go on in a sleepy, sure, and dead-hearted way. Either they believe there is no guilt at all upon their spirits, or no great evil in that guilt, or else think 'tis no great matter for God to pardon.

You are very solicitous for the flesh, what you shall eat and drink and what you shall put on, and for your estates, how to get and increase in the world. But to make up the records between God and your souls, to get them discharged, and the records

of heaven canceled that are against you? Oh, how seldom these things take up your thoughts! Know this, you who are of such careless spirits about this great matter of pardon of sin, it is a great aggravation of your sin that you are so careless about that great work of God in pardoning sin. You are careless and spend but a few thoughts about that which has (if I may so speak with holy reverence) taken up the heart of the infinite God from all eternity. Certainly none of the works of God towards His creatures have taken up the thoughts and heart of God as much as this one work of the pardon of sin. And yet your thoughts are not taken up with it; you little mind it. Certainly there is a great disproportion between your thoughts and God's, whereas those who are godly should labor to work as God works. And those things that have taken up the heart of God should take up your hearts. Instead, those things that are even unworthy of an immortal soul take up your thoughts, and those objects that take up the thoughts and heart of God about pardoning sin, your own consciences can tell you, is very little in your thoughts and hearts.

Certainly, my brethren, were the thoughts of men and women taken up about this serious and great business of getting pardon for their sin, it would prevent and cure them of thousands of other vain, slight, foolish, and wicked thoughts. There are, I suppose, many of you beginning to be sensible of sin and of the base, wandering, filthy, unclean, and wicked thoughts of your hearts. And you say, "Oh, that we could but help ourselves against these wandering, vile, and wicked thoughts!" Surely this would be a great help. If you would get your thoughts possessed with serious subjects, it would have a great deal of weight in it to help you against those light and vain things your thoughts work about. Now of all subjects in the world this is the most serious: about the grace of God, and how His infinite wisdom has

wrought to reconcile Himself to your souls in bringing about the pardon of sin and making peace between Himself and the children of men.

Now, if you would take up your thoughts about the great business of getting pardon of your sins, it would take off your thoughts from other things. Suppose a man has a vain, slight, wandering, foolish heart. Yet, if he were condemned to die some dreadful, tormenting death, his thoughts would quickly be taken off from other things and taken up about using means, if there were any possibility, to deliver himself from death. Jerome, in one of his epistles, tells of one who was troubled with vile thoughts. And the one to whom he complained had this device (I name it not to approve it, but he had this device): he brought the man to have a charge of a crime laid against him, and caused him to be brought before a judge and put into prison. Afterward he came to him and asked, "How is it now with you? Do your vain thoughts still abide with you as they were wont to do?" He gave him this answer: "I cannot live, and what shall I now think of uncleanness and fornication? I am in danger of my life, and I have now no time to think of such things." And that helped cure his thoughts.

From this we may see that if your soul was possessed of the evil of sin and the danger of condemnation, and the necessity and great consequence of a pardon, what a mighty means would it be to take off your thoughts from other things and turn them upon this. And certainly, those of you whose thoughts are not mightily taken up about this great subject of the pardon of your sins, you take the name of God in vain, and do not sanctify Him in this great work of His. And know this, you who spend your days sleeping in security, your damnation sleeps and slumbers not; and until your sin is pardoned, the infinite justice of God is working your doom for the full satisfaction of it. That is the

first thing they dishonor God in who go on in secure courses without finding such a great thing as the pardon of sin is.

2. *They dishonor God's pardoning grace who labor to increase guilt.* Others dishonor God who, instead of making it their great business in this world to get their sin pardoned, make it their great work to increase the guilt of sin by heaping up more and more guilt, and so make the flame greater and add to it continually. Suppose the following: a man was condemned to some grievous and dreadful death, yet, there being a pardon propounded and some possibility of it, a friend for this very end got a reprieve from the king for two or three days so that this man might have time to sue out his pardon. Now, then, if this man, during this time of reprieve given for this very end, to seek a pardon, should call for good cheer and music, merriment and sporting, and not only so, but fall into railing against the prince, increase his guilt, and provoke the prince more and more against him, you would think it a very unreasonable and desperate thing. Would not every man say, "This man is worthy of the most extreme, the most tormenting death that could be devised"? Nay, I suppose, should you hear of such a one condemned to die, and who had his life given him for this very end, you would think, "Surely this man will spend these days in another manner than ever he spent his time before."

You who would think so of such a man, it may be that some of you, before the Lord this day, are guilty of the same evil; for this is a certain truth, that all the men in the world have been condemned to eternal death, and all the time of your life is given you for this very end. God gives you a few days for this very purpose, merely that you might have a little liberty to sue out your pardon and make your peace with God. Oh, that men and women would understand this, what they live for, that all the

time of their lives is given them to make their peace with God! You are to know it is given for this end, merely as a malefactor has a reprieve to get his pardon; this is your very condition. You stand before the Lord guilty of eternal death, but God, in His patience and long-suffering, gives you a few days to live to sue out your pardon. And if you let this time slip and these days are gone, I profess to you this day before the Lord that mercy itself shall never save you. I would but know of many of you, how do you spend these days? You are not certain of one day, it may be not an hour. Do you spend these days in making it the great business and work of your souls to sue out a pardon?

Let me speak to you, and, oh, that you would speak it in secret between God and your own soul, and that you would answer in the name of God, every soul present, to this question. Soul, have you made it the great work and business of your life, above all things in the world, to sue out your pardon and seek for reconciliation with your God and a discharge of your sins? I verily fear that many of you who hear me this day, if we could but hear conscience speak, would answer, "What? Am I to make it the great work and business of my life to sue out a pardon. God knows it has been the great work and business of my life to increase my guilt. There is not a day goes over my head but I have brought more guilt upon myself by wicked oaths, taking God's name in vain, neglecting His worship, abusing His creatures, perhaps by drunkenness or uncleanness."

I think your consciences make you apprehensive when you are so far from making it the great business of your lives to sue for pardon that you make it your great work to increase your guilt. Do you think ever to get pardon of your sin so long as you go on increasing your guilt and making yourself more vile? The lives of many people are in such a course of wickedness that it shows either they are resolved to perish eternally in

their sin or else to be as great a burden to the mercy of God as possible in the pardoning of their sin. If it is so mighty a work of God to pardon sin, observe what I say; it follows from the point wherein I opened the wonderful work of God in pardoning any one sin. Think thus: "Is it so great a work of God to pardon one sin? Shall I go on then to add sin unto sin to make the work greater?"

Friend, if God pardons but one sin in thought that you have been guilty of in all your life, it would be a work that should yield you matter of praise to all eternity. And will you be so desperate then as to add sin unto sin? Suppose a man had some grievous disease, and it would be the strangest work to cure him that ever was wrought since the earth and heavens were made. If this man should go on by intemperate courses to increase the malignity and venom of it day by day, more and more, what a desperate thing would this be esteemed in him, especially if there were a possibility of cure. Yea, and perhaps he could tell others that there is some possibility and yet he goes on to increase the malignity more and more. How would everyone think this man's courses unreasonable! Oh, that we would consider the unreasonableness of the dealings of men with God! Men are ashamed to be unreasonable in their dealings with men, but in their dealings with God they are as unreasonable as can be imagined!

You are guilty of many sins. Have you hope to be forgiven? Yes, you will say, you have hope. Have you hope? If God delivers you from any of your sins, He must do such a work as is greater than the making of heaven and earth. Why do you then increase your sin when it is so great a work to pardon your sin? Oh! the horrible wickedness of men and women to increase their sin. I may allude to an argument of great force in Joshua 22:17: "Is the iniquity of Peor too little, from which we are not

cleansed to this day?” So I may say to sinners going on in their sins, “Is the iniquity of Peor too little, from which you are not cleansed to this day?” What, is the iniquity of your youth that you committed too little, and misspending your time when you were an apprentice, or lived in such and such a family? Is that sin too little to magnify the grace of God in pardoning it but that you must add more and more unto it, as if you would tempt God to try and see whether God would extend His mercy further and further?

We tell you in the name of God, the sins you have committed already are so grievous that it must be a wonderful work of God to forgive them. And what, must you add more and more, and tempt God to extend His mercy further? Take heed of tempting God to extend His mercy further, for though God may be pleased to extend His mercy thus far, who shall prescribe to God how far He shall go? Who can tell but that the thoughts of God towards you are that He will go thus far to pardon you, but, if you go on in sin, who can tell whether He will go on to pardon further? 'Tis true, when God comes to pardon He will do them all away; but know, you who go on to increase the guilt of your sin, you may find it, as many thousands have found it, a mighty hard thing which has cost them much anguish and distress of spirit to get the pardon of their sin sealed in the court of conscience, though it was sealed before in heaven. Oh, the anguish of spirit it has cost them! And do you still go on to heap up more and more sin, as if the pardon of your sin was nothing? There is a great deal of reason in this to cry to sinners to stop in the course of sin, for you have gone on enough already; go no further. That's a second abuse of the mercy of God in pardoning sin.

3. *They dishonor God's pardoning grace who have slight thoughts of the pardon of sin.* They abuse the mercy of God who have extreme slight thoughts of pardon of sin, who think to have it

any time they will: "Tis but repenting." It was said of Louis II, king of France, that he wore a crucifix in his hat, and when he committed a sin he took it down and kissed it and all was well again. So many idolatrous papists have as slight thoughts of pardon of sin as can be. If they commit a sin, they make no more of it but go to a priest to absolve them, or kneel before a crucifix and knock their breast, which is a thing soon done and all's well again. Certainly 'tis a great dishonor to God for any man to have slight thoughts of the pardon of sin. It is such a work that if ever anything put God to it (as I may say) to pardon sin and yet to salve His justice, it was this work. And, certainly, if ever God has love for you, you will change your thoughts about this. And certainly, the slight thoughts men have about this are the cause many times why they are held so long under the spirit of bondage. When God begins to work upon them, and stirs the conscience and lays the guilt of sin home upon it, how long before they can have any assurance of pardon? And in just judgment it is so because they had slight thoughts before of the pardon of sin.

I remember a story of Pompey. When one of his captains came to him and told him he wanted men, he said, "I can but stamp my foot upon the ground and bring forth so many men presently." But when the enemy came, this captain came to him again and said, "Where are your men now?" But he could not get them when he was in distress and had great need of them. Many think they can do great things by speaking a word, as if all must be at their beck presently, but when they come to it, they fail and find it otherwise. So many make it a small matter to get pardon of sin. They think to do it with a "Lord, have mercy upon us" at their deathbed, or the like; but when they come to it, indeed, God makes them to know that it is the greatest business that ever they had to do in all their lives.

There's nothing that God is so jealous of as His honor, and especially about this great work. And certainly, were it not that God is very jealous of His honor and would cure the slight thoughts that men have of this great work, there would never need be so much humiliation and workings of the spirit of bondage. And certainly, did we but know the greatness of this work, how would sinners snatch at any opportunity or hint of God's favor appearing to them? They would do as the servants of Ben-hadad (1 Kings 20:33), and diligently observe if anything would come from him and hastily catch at it. They watched to see if anything came from him that was what they sought after, and hastily caught at it.

So, if a soul understood the pardon of sin, and what a great work it is, he would be so far from having slight thoughts of it that he would come clothed in sackcloth. And every sermon he would be watching and inquiring, "Has God spoken any work to my soul or not?" And if any word falls from a minister concerning this great business, such a soul would catch greedily at it and lose no opportunity to embrace it. Psalm 32 is very remarkable to this purpose. David found it a very hard thing to get pardon of his own sin, verse 4, and he acknowledged it and God forgave him (verse 5). What follows? Verse 6: "For this shall every man that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found." As if David spoke thus: "Oh, all you poor sinners who sin against God, and think it an easy matter to get pardon of sin, know that I have found it otherwise! It cost me dearly before I could get assurance of pardon. And therefore for this cause, let everyone who is acquainted with the ways of God seek God in due time and do not put it off from time to time, for the business is not so slight to put it off."

Many abuse the example of David and think, because he sinned, they may take liberty to sin. But they do not consider

what abundance of sorrow it cost him to get his pardon. It cost him so much that he told them, "For this cause everyone shall seek God in due time." Many think they may put it off till any time, but mark what David says: "For this cause every man that is godly shall seek Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found." He does not say, "I have found mercy in the pardoning of my great sins, and for this cause men shall be bold to put it off to any time." No, but "For this cause those that are godly and have any acquaintance in the ways of God will seek God in a time that He may be found."

And if those who are godly, who have sin pardoned in the court of heaven, find it so hard a matter to get it pardoned in their own consciences, how does it concern you who perhaps have your sin neither pardoned in the court of heaven nor in your own conscience, but are in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity? How does it concern you to look to it? That is a third sort who abuse the mercy of God in having slight thoughts of the pardon of sin.

4. *They dishonor God's pardoning grace who seek pardon, but are insensible of the greatness of the work.* They abuse the mercy of God who seek for pardon but are insensible of the greatness of the work of God in pardoning. They do not put it off, but seek it for the present—but how? With extreme insensibility. They do not come before God with brokenness, trouble, and contrition of spirit in seeking after pardon of sin. Many repeat their sins before God and have a gift of prayer. It would make a man's heart tremble to consider how many have a great gift in prayer, and will be praying half an hour, and will repeat abundance of their sins, make catalogues, and tell large stories of their sins, bring in all the aggravations against them for their sins, judge themselves and speak mighty words against themselves for their sins, and yet all the while, God

knows, it is with a desperate, dull, dead, and senseless heart for their sins.

It may be that others join with them whose hearts are broken with their expressions, and yet, in the meantime, your conscience may tell you that your heart is desperately hard before God, and you are not sensible at all of what you speak. You were putting up petitions to God, and yet with as dull and senseless a spirit as if you were speaking of a matter of no consequence at all. This is a high degree of taking the blessed name of God in vain, for we are to know that the name of God in forgiveness of sin is a most glorious name. And we need to take heed how we speak to God in this business, that we take not His name in vain, for He will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

We need to look to the sanctifying of God's name in this thing. Many a man will think that to swear and blaspheme is taking the name of God in vain, and why is it so? Because it is a sin against the third commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of thy God in vain" (Exodus 20:7 and Deuteronomy 5:11). For my part, I cannot but think that to make large confessions of sin, and yet with a senseless dead heart, is a high degree of taking the name of God in vain. Do not mistake me. If your heart is sensible of your insensibleness, you are not of those who take the name of God in vain. God accepts this: it is the rational part of the soul that is taken with this, and this is pleasing to Him, though you cannot bring the sensitive part of the soul up to this thing. But I speak it of those who have a formality in crying and confessing their sins and yet are insensible of them. Yea, it may be, they glory that they can, in the church, thus speak of their sins and have such expressions before the Lord.

Take heed of this. If you would show your parts and abilities, let it be in something else, and do not come before the

holy God and before others in a holy duty to vent your parts and abilities there. It is a dangerous thing for any to meddle so in this kind. He says in Hebrews 9:22 that without shedding of blood there is no remission. So I say, without the blood of your heart, without the bleeding of your heart, there is no remission, not without at least a manner of being sensible of your insensibleness. If you cannot mourn, then mourn that you cannot mourn. Be sensible of your insensibleness, and then God may accept you; but otherwise, without this kind of blood, there is no remission.

Consider this note; it may be of use in many ways. This is to sanctify the name of God, when there comes to be in my heart a disposition suitable to the work of God I have to deal with, suitable to the manifestation of God in that thing I have to deal with God in.

If any ask, "What is it to sanctify God's name?" I would answer, to sanctify God's name in anything is to labor to get an answerable disposition to that thing that I have to deal with God in. When I am to deal with God in any work, according to that work I must have disposition in my heart suitable to it.

For instance, I sanctify God's name in prayer when I speak of God's glorious attributes and titles, when there is an answerable disposition in my heart to those glorious titles that I speak of. So I sanctify God's name when I confess my sin before God the Judge of all the world, in having an answerable disposition in my heart suitable to this Judge. And then I sanctify God's name in seeking pardon of sin when I have an answerable disposition in my heart to the greatness of the work of God in pardoning sin. Therefore, all of you must be careful when you entreat God to pardon sin to entreat men also to sanctify His name. How is that? Entreat God to manifest that glorious work to your souls, and then labor to get

your hearts into an answerable disposition suitable to that great work.

You who go to God every day in seeking pardon of sin, have you been apprehensive of the greatness of it? Has God shown you the greatness of His work in it? Or further, since the time that you heard of the greatness of the work, have you been casting in your souls how to get an answerable disposition suitable to the great work of God in it? If one who comes to seek you, to petition you to remove some evil one who has offended you, if he comes slightly you will say, "You must come after another manner." Shall a poor man or a woman expect such a kind of coming from a child, servant, or inferior? And yet shall he or she go in a senseless way to God in seeking pardon of sin and think to obtain it thus?

You go about it insensibly and your hearts are not stirred, but when Christ came He was sensible of it in seeking God about this business. Hebrews 5:7: "In the days of His flesh...." Observe, Christ in the days of His flesh offered up prayers and supplications. How? With strong cryings and tears. What? Shall Christ be so sensible of the weight and burden of sin when He was to suffer that He should seek the Father with such prayers? If He had said but one word, it would have been a prayer; but He sought Him with prayers, and prayers with cries and supplications. And not only so, but with strong cries and tears. Let your heart be rebuked this day for the senselessness of it, in going to God in such a slight manner in seeking pardon of your sins.

5. *They dishonor God's pardoning grace who dally with God.* Those are to be rebuked who, in seeking pardon of sin, do indeed but dally with God and trifle with Him. They are not at all serious in it, whereas if there is any business in the world wherein we need to be serious, 'tis in this.

But you will say, "Who are they?" There are four or five sorts who dally with God in seeking pardon of sin.

(1) Those dally with God who cry and seem to be very earnest with God in crying to Him for pardon, and yet still continue in love of their sins and abide in the practice of them in an ordinary course and way. I do not speak of those who seek truly for the pardon of their sins and yet may sometimes be overtaken with them again, but I speak of the common course of people. They come to God and entreat Him to forgive them, and yet continue still in their sins. I speak not of those who are senseless in the acts of confession of their sins, but of those who cry mightily unto God for pardon and yet live in the practice of those sins of which they cry to God for pardon. For instance, consider, everyone of you, what sins have been in your course of life. I put this to you, either you have prayed to God to forgive them or you have not prayed. If you have not prayed, then you are most horrible atheists.

But you say, "I thank God, I pray every day."

Well, you pray to God for forgiveness of sin, and yet live in it daily. Oh, how do people thus dally with God—pray against sin and yet commit sin and fall to it again, pray again and commit it again. This is the very way that many people take. They draw out the thread of their lives and spend out their day of salvation in trifling with God. They pray that God would be merciful to them in forgiving their sin and yet go on to commit sin. They do not think what a strong engagement against sin praying is.

I beseech you, note it, every one of you who prays against any sin: Every prayer you make for pardon of sin is a mighty strong engagement from God to you to take heed of sin afterwards. It may be you have not thought of this. You say you pray every morning. Consider what you do. If you have any care of your souls, you will not rest merely in such a form as your

fathers and mothers have taught you, but if you have any care of your souls, you will consider in prayer to God and say, "Lord, I am guilty of such and such sins. Such sins my nature is most prone unto, and such sins I have lately committed. Well, I will humble my soul before God in prayer and entreat God to forgive me." 'Tis not prayer to mumble over a few words. This is to prate and not to pray.

But when you solemnly set yourselves to examine in your own hearts what you are guilty of, and protest against your sins solemnly in the presence of God and say, "Lord, this and this particular sin I am guilty of. Lord, I was drawn to such and such sins the day before in such and such company. O Lord, forgive my sin and forgive me these and these particular sins"—this is the way to seek pardon of sin aright. Do you do so? This will be a mighty bond upon your hearts, to think thus within yourselves; "Lord, have I been setting myself solemnly in the presence of the Almighty to confess my sins, and prayed Him to forgive them? What care do I need to take that I fall not into the same sin again?"

You who have come this day and confessed and prayed against your sin, do not fall into it again. You who are apt to break out into passion, when you find yourselves begin to wax hot, if you would but take so much liberty as to think to yourselves that you have been praying to God this morning to forgive such a passion, it would be of mighty concernment to keep you from going on in passion or any other sin, to consider that you have been praying to God for pardon and forgiveness of it. You who do not consider this, but confess your sins in the morning and then go on again to commit sin, you make more work for the next time. In solemn days of humiliation, men will rip up all their sins; but before another day comes they have made work for another and another day. And this is the reason, when

men come to confess their sins before God, for their trifling with Him. Were it not that God is a God of infinite patience He could not bear it. Might not He say to you, "You came seven years ago and told Me of your pride, passion, earthly-mindedness, and the like. And do you now come and tell Me the same again?" Were not God infinitely patient, He could never bear this dallying with Him; for the truth is, it is nothing else but infinite dallying with God. Jeremiah 3:4: "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?" They seemed to cry to God, "Oh, Thou art my Father and the guide of my youth." There are but these words named, but it is as if they opened their sins before God and cried for mercy.

"Oh," says God unto them, "you have spoken, and cried out of the anger of Mine that is gone out against you for your sins, and yet you have spoken and done as evil as you could," verse 5. This is an evil thing, and heavy to be laid to the charge of any man, to confess sin and pray for pardon and yet commit it again. Know this day, you who have been confessing sin and yet go on in sin, know this thing: I tell you it is but dallying with God. Many men and women unravel out their prayers this way. They make excellent prayers, and when they are done they unravel all again by falling into the same sin.

(2) A second sort is those who seek earnestly the pardon of some sins and still keep the love of some other sin, yet think to obtain pardon of it too. This is but dallying and trifling with God about this business. You never set yourselves yet seriously about it. You cry against some sins that are against the light of nature, and it may be your consciences fly in your faces and the Word of God has stricken you for them, but there is some other secret haunt of villainies. Your hearts close with all, and yet you think to obtain from God forgiveness of the other and go on there. Oh, you vain soul, you vain man, know that though you

should cry your heart out for the forgiveness of one or more sins, yet if your heart secretly closes with some other sin that you have secret haunts after, the bonds of the guilt of that sin will hold your soul in chains eternally. Unless your soul is rent from that sin as well as from any other, you do not understand the way of God in the dispensing of His grace to the soul, if you think God will pardon some sins and give you liberty in others. You sottish soul, know that when you go to God for pardon of sin, you must go with a heart resigned up from every sin or else you lose all your labor and are held in the chains of them all.

(3) Those who never look after their prayers call into question what answer they have had. "I have prayed to God, but have I got any answer in my own heart, or has God come in, in any ordinance, and sealed to me my pardon?" Thus the soul should look after pardon in prayer, and all other means. Many pray but never look after their prayers whether God hears or not. Psalm 85:8: "I will hear and hearken what the Lord God will speak." Thus it was with the psalmist, and thus it would be with you, if you did not dally with God. After you have cried for pardon, you would be listening at heaven's gates and looking towards God. "What answer does God give? I have prayed and there comes no answer." The soul that sets itself in a solid and serious way to seek for pardon will be often looking out and will remain greatly troubled till an answer comes. Many cry for pardon, but are not troubled till God gives answer. They deal with God as Pilate did with Christ, asking him, "What is truth?" Pilate never stayed to have an answer but went his way. So we do but dally with God in our prayers and petitions when we ask for forgiveness of sin and neglect to look after an answer.

(4) As those who look not after the answer of their prayers dally with God, so do those that follow not their prayers with answerable endeavors. You petition that God would be merciful

unto you, but what are the endeavors of your souls after your petitioning? If there are not endeavors to attend upon the means of grace that God uses to speak peace to souls, all your prayers are nothing. But of this I shall speak afterwards. You are to search into the covenant and inquire after what course the saints have taken, and what means they have used to obtain pardon.

(5) There are those who pray for pardon, yet are satisfied with other things. For example, they pray for pardon, but if the world comes in they are satisfied and quieted with that. A child who has a piece of gold and an apple given to him will be stilled with the apple. So many men sue to God for this great work of pardon of sin, but let God give them health and accommodations in the world and they are satisfied and contented with them and little or never seek after the pardon of their sin. That is a fifth sort who are charged this day before the Lord, who do but dally with God about seeking pardon for their sins.

(6.) *They dishonor God's pardoning grace who are quiet upon weak and slight evidences.* Those who are quiet upon weak and slight evidences dishonor God. Certainly they have not those high thoughts of the mercy of God in pardoning sin who content themselves with poor evidences about it as most do.

Come to many people and ask them, "What? You hope that God will pardon your sin?"

"Yes, we do hope, but upon the poorest evidences imaginable." Those evidences which they lay the weight of the pardon of their sins upon are such broken reeds that it would make a man amazed who understands what the worth of a poor soul is, that they should venture so great a thing on so slight a reed. What is the reason? Because they have but slight thoughts of the forgiveness of sin. What a man puts a high valuation on he will make sure, but that which he slights he is not so intense in. For instance, if one gives you in payment silver, gold, and

farthings, you take the farthings and do not count them, but you count the silver, and the gold you not only count but weigh it too. What is the reason? Because you little esteem the brass and so will not count it. You more esteem the silver and, therefore, count that; but the gold you not only count but weigh because you have a greater esteem of that than the other. This is an argument that may convince the men of the world that their esteem of earthly things is more than of heaven and their souls—because they labor to make earthly things more sure than the things of heaven.

A worldly man, to make sure his estate, will have bond upon bond and seal upon seal and carry his evidences to counselors and say, “I beseech you, sirs, see whether there are not some flaws in them. I shall lose all my money if there is but a crack in my evidences.” He is mighty careful of this because he has such a high esteem of his worldly concerns. But how does it appear that men have but poor, low thoughts about the pardon of their sins? Because they content themselves with such poor, mean evidences; for had they a high esteem of it they would labor to make pardon of sin surer than anything in the world. To wind up all, those who know what pardon of sin is, how do they spend their time and lay out themselves to get assurance? Take this one note: because God sees that those who are His own people understand what forgiveness is, have a high esteem of it, and are very solicitous about it, so He condescends in His kindness to assure them by all sorts of ways and means. I think God deals with them in this manner: the poor soul stands shaking and trembling, crying out, “Oh, that I might have my sins forgiven and have assurance of it!”

“Why,” says God, “what way do you take to make things sure from one to another?”

“Our word,” you say, “first we give our word one to another.”

God says, "You shall have that. I give you My Word. What else do you have?"

"Writing. We cause it to be written."

"Well," says God, "you shall have it written. (And this is a great mercy, the covenant of grace is written. We do not have it from hand to hand as our forefathers had.) What do you else require?"

"Witnesses," you say, "to have witnesses."

"Well," says God, "you shall have witnesses."

In things between man and man, in the mouth of two or three witnesses everything is established, Matthew 18:16. Now God, in reconciling a soul to Himself, brings no less than six witnesses to confirm a believer in assurance of His grace and favor to him. 1 John 5:7-8: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, water, and blood." Three in heaven and three on earth to assure you of forgiveness of sin, that is a third way.

"Is there any other way?"

"Yea, Lord, an oath. We not only have a word, and this word put in writing, and witnesses affixed to it, but we take an oath."

"Well," says God, "I will swear and take an oath to make My covenant of grace sure to your souls." (In Hebrews 6:13, when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by none greater, He swore by Himself.) And this is verse 18, an admirable text of Scripture: "That we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." There is hope of God's grace through the reconciliation of Christ Jesus, and this hope the soul runs to as to a city of refuge, when his guilt, like the pursuer of blood, follows him.

"Well," says God, "this poor soul, notwithstanding, will have

doubts of My grace. Now, that it might have strong consolation, I have sworn that I might make My mercy sure to such a soul. That's a fourth way, but is there anything else you use to make things sure between one another?"

"A seal. Yea, Lord, we put our seals to it. An oath taken may soon pass over, but a seal abides."

God says, "I will do that too. I will give you seals."

There are divers sorts of seals. There's first the broad seal of heaven. What is that? That is nothing else but the very printing of the image of God on the soul; that is the broad seal of heaven. And as the broad seal of England has the picture or image of the king stamped upon it, so the broad seal of heaven is nothing else but the image of God stamped or imprinted on the soul.

There is the privy seal of the Holy Spirit of God, which is the persuading and assuring of the soul of the interest it has in Christ and God the Father. In 2 Timothy 2:19, you have God's privy seal. The Lord knows those who are His, and they, having His privy seal, know themselves to be the Lord's. Song of Solomon 6:3: "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." So Paul, Galatians 2:20, being sealed with this seal, said of Christ, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." He was persuaded and assured of salvation (2 Timothy 1:12 and Romans 8:38–39). This privy sealing is like the new name of Revelation 2:17, which no man knows save he who receives it.

And to this you shall have added a third seal—baptism and the Supper of the Lord—to assure you that the end of the sacrament is to seal up pardon of sin. God saw that His people would be very solicitous and, therefore, added all these ways of assurance to them. When you therefore come to the sacrament, you should come with a sense upon your souls of the great need you have of the grace of God in pardoning

sin, and come to it as to a sealing day. You have many fears and doubts. Come so that you may have the grace of pardon sealed to your souls. Take heed of coming so as to have your condemnation sealed; for, certainly, all ordinances, if they work not for the end that they are appointed, turn to another and quite contrary end. If the Word is not the savor of life, it is the savor of death. And so the sacraments, if they seal not the pardon of your sins up unto you, seal up the sentence of death and condemnation.

Therefore, look to it as often as you come unworthily to the sacrament. You have so many seals of death and condemnation set upon your souls; take heed you do not come to take another seal of death. 'Tis much to be feared that many in this place come to take the seal of eternal death upon their souls. But those who come worthily, though administrations are not in that due order as they should, yet God may be present with His own ordinance to give them comfort from it, and help their evidences by it.

I must conclude thus: those who content themselves with slight evidences about this great work dishonor the grace of God. You would have us preach of mercy; and, indeed, it is a blessed argument which our souls delight much to be preaching because we find so much sweetness in it, and for which our souls shall expatiate themselves in glorifying God to all eternity. But we are, with all that, jealous of your dishonoring of God in this mercy. And therefore it is that we labor so with you, after the laying open of this mercy, that you may not abuse it. For certainly, my brethren, there is nothing in the world God takes to heart more than the dishonor that is done to His pardoning mercy; and nothing more aggravates the sin of people than to have slight thoughts of this great work.

First, those men seek pardon of sin when sin is leaving

them, or they must leave sin whether they will or not. When you have served your own turn of sin, after you have had as much supposed pleasure as you can, then you think to be delivered from the guilt and punishment of sin. What is that but a mere selfish spirit in seeking God now, and God sees it to be so. It is not seeking after pardon of sin that you may honor God in His infinite grace, for then you would seek after it now and the honor of God would be dear to you now, but you seek it at such a time merely out of respect to yourselves. This is a great dishonor to God. It is the firstborn of God's glory to pardon sin; and if God sees that men and women have no higher ends in seeking pardoning grace but merely to save their own skins, how may God look upon them with disdain? "What, shall I magnify the riches of My grace so wonderfully in this work of My pardoning mercy? And shall my creatures seek after it for no other end, no higher aims, but merely to save their own skins?" You bring down the grace of God, that is the top of His infinite majesty and glory. You put it to a low and base end. Therefore, do not put off seeking it to the last; 'tis a great dishonor to His grace.

Second, it is the worst time because you come to seek after pardoning grace when it is the time of God's wrath (Proverbs 11:4). The time of affliction, trouble, sickness, and death is called the day of wrath. Riches avail not in the day of God's wrath. Riches avail for comfort at present, but in the day of wrath they will not. God has His day of affliction and His day of wrath. He has His time to come to visit men for their sins. Now, then, for people to come to seek to have the pardon of their sins when God's time is to visit for sin must be the worst time that possibly can be. I reason thus: if God denies His mercy in the day of mercy, is it likely that He will grant mercy in the day of wrath?

While you are alive and have liberty, health, and

opportunity to come to hear the doctrine of the justification of a sinner and forgiveness of sin opened, you are to know it is the day of God's grace. Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation and grace. When God gives liberty and opportunity thus to have the mysteries of the gospel opened unto you, this is the day of God's grace. Now if God denies you grace in this day of mercy—that you are not so much as enlightened, your souls melted, and your hearts stirred—do you think that now you are upon your sick beds or deathbeds (which is a day of wrath unto you, for so it is to those who do not have their sins pardoned before it is a day of wrath) and God's time of visiting for sin, is it likely that God will now show you mercy?

I beseech you to consider, the usual way of God's working on men is according to His ordinance. Now the ordinary way of God's conveying grace is by the ministry of the Word. Did God ever appoint any other way to convey Christ and grace to your soul? Give me a text for it. Where do you find a text in Scripture of any other way as an ordinance appointed by God for the conveying of His pardoning grace in Christ to any soul? No, it is in the ministry of the gospel, and by faith that lays hold of the pardoning grace of God, by coming to hear the Word preached. Now if God comes not in that time to work upon you, and to bestow mercy in His own appointed way, it is not likely He will come any other way.

I remember in a treatise of Mr. Bolton's that he has this expression: "Let anyone give me an example that ever anyone who lived under a powerful ministry, and was not savingly wrought upon that way, was ever wrought upon in any other way." Many, he said, may be stirred, but for his part he knew none who was so stirred by affliction to the conversion of their souls, if God had not before in the ordinances of grace wrought

upon them. Then it must be the worst time that can be to seek pardon of sin in a day of trouble or affliction, because that is usually a time of God's wrath visiting for sin.

Third, the work of the soul in seeking after God's pardoning mercy, and applying it to himself, as it is the most excellent work that ever a creature performed, so it requires the most exquisite work of the Spirit that ever was required, or that ever any creature was set about. It is the most intensive work of the spirit of man, applying the grace of God in Christ and closing with it for justification. It is the highest, most exquisite, most glorious, and most admirable work of the spirit of man that ever was in the world, and it requires the greatest intensity and strength of a man's spirit that ever any work did. Now, then, to put this off till such a time as a man's strength is gone, and he, through diseases, is unfit for anything, and when all the strength he has will be little enough to help him to bear his pain, this must be the worst time.

You are mistaken if you think applying God's mercy in Christ is but saying, "Lord, have mercy upon me." No, it is God putting the heart of man to do the most glorious work that has the greatest operation in it that ever he did. I remember a story of one who lived wickedly, and several sought to reclaim him. Said he, "Come when I am upon my sick bed, that is time enough." And afterwards he, being sick, was put in mind of it. "You said you would do it then." But then he swore a great oath saying, "What, is this a time to repent in?" Because then so much trouble and anguish took up his thoughts that he was stirred with indignation so as to be put upon repenting in a time when he felt so much dolor of spirit by the pains that were upon him. Is this a time to repent in? If it is not, then do it quickly.

Fourth, it is the worst time because God shall lose a great

part of His end in pardoning sin. For when God pardons sin it is to this end, that His poor creatures might honor and worship Him in this world and do Him service. But if you seek for God's pardoning grace when you can do Him no more service in this world, how can you think that He will accept you then? He came to redeem us that we might serve Him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives. And He knows there is no better way to engage the heart of man to serve Him than pardoning grace, for once a soul sees itself delivered from those enemies of sin and the Law that would destroy him, his heart will be mightily set to honor God and serve Him in holiness and righteousness all his days. Therefore, to seek for pardon when you can do God no more service in this world must be the worst time; for how do you know that He will accept you then?

I beseech you to observe one text of Scripture that is abused by many people. I suppose I am speaking to a great many who are very ignorant in the ways of God, and therefore I desire to speak plainly to you. There is one place, though misapprehended and mistaken, that is the main prop of many carnal hearts, as it is read in some books, "At whatever time a sinner repents..." I know of no such text of Scripture. It is true, there are Scriptures tending that way that do not limit the time; but no Scripture expresses it so. Many people run away with that expression as if it were so.

There is no text of Scripture that has those words. There is one text of Scripture this is taken out of, but that is spoken to another end; and therefore you need to examine what is spoken. 'Tis Ezekiel 18:21 that comes nearest to those words. Mark this Scripture and see what you can have from thence to defer the seeking of God's pardoning mercy and grace till sickness and death. "But if the wicked shall turn from all his sins that he

hath committed, and keep all My statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die.” This Scripture does not limit a time, though it does not say, “At what time soever.” It says, “If he turn from all his sins, and keep all My statutes, and do that which is lawful and right.” So that this Scripture promises mercy to one who turns from all his sins and will keep all God’s statutes, and so do all that is lawful and right. But now, if you put it off till the time of sickness and death, how can you do all this? Turn from all sin and keep all God’s statutes now, or how can you do what is lawful and right then? It must be at a time when you can keep all God’s statutes as well as turn from all your sins.

So, then, if you take all together, there is not so much encouragement to that which is so frequent in your mouths: “At what time soever a sinner repents.” It must be at such a time that you must keep all God’s statutes. But further, God speaks here to the Jews according to the condition of the covenant of works, because they made account to be justified by the Law. God says, “You will put it off and think at last to turn from your wicked ways and that I will have mercy on you. Aye, but look to it; if you will repent it must be such a repentance as must be joined with keeping all My statutes.” Therefore those who do not understand the way of the gospel, but depend upon a repentance on their deathbeds, God will hold you to this Scripture, that you must repent at such a time that you must keep all God’s statutes. Then, you see, this is the worst time of all, to defer repentance till your sick beds or deathbeds; for how can you keep all God’s statutes then, and do all that is lawful and right then?

Fifth, it is the worst time because all the rag-tag, all the basest and vilest wretches in the world, will come in then. And what, have you no other spirit but to defer coming in till then?

Have you no more care of your soul, no more love for God and His ways but to put it off till such a time as all the abominable wretches in the world will come in? That is the seventh way of dishonoring the pardoning grace of God, by seeking it in the worst time possible.

7. *They dishonor the pardoning grace of God, and most considerably of all, by seeking and expecting it any other way than through the mediation of the Son of God.* I told you, in the opening of the glorious mysteries of pardoning grace, that it must be done by a mediator. Now, not only gross, ignorant people but many others dishonor the pardoning grace of God. They are not sensible that it is such grace that only comes through the mediation of the Son of God. We have too low thoughts of the pardoning grace of God if we think there is a possibility of attaining it any other way than by the mediation of Him who is God-man. If we think our crying to God at any time will do it, or our roaring out in anguish of spirit, forty, fifty, or sixty years is enough to do it, or that there is any way to attain it other than the mediation of the Son of God, we have too low thoughts of the pardoning grace of God. We do not give God that honor that is due unto Him.

Luther had a notable expression to this purpose: "It is a horrible blasphemy if you presume to pacify God by any works." 'Tis an excellent speech. So I say, 'tis horrible blasphemy and intolerable to think to have anything in the least of your own to presume upon that God will be pacified with it. God cannot be pacified by any other means than by the infinite price of the death and blood of His own Son, one drop of which is more precious than all the creatures of heaven and earth.

God will say, "Have I revealed such a way of being reconciled with My creatures, and that at such a rate and infinite price as the death of my own Son? Shall His life and blood go

to procure pardon (one drop of which is more worth than ten thousand worlds), and, when all this is done, shall My creature think to put Me off by a poor work of their own prayers, tears, good meaning, or the like; or with the most glorious work that they can perform?"

For the greatest and most glorious work that you can perform is not nearly worth so much as one drop of the blood of Christ. And if you have not such high thoughts of God's pardoning mercy—that it must be procured by that which has more worth in it than all the creation besides—you dishonor it by having such low thoughts of it, when you think to obtain it by any duty that you can do. You think God is a merciful God, and you hope upon your reforming and performing duties of obedience that God will be pacified towards you for all that is amiss. Certainly when you have these thoughts of God's pardoning grace, you make it to be but as common and ordinary pity towards one in misery. But the grace of God is a higher thing than common pity and compassion; and it is a mighty dishonor to God to have no higher thoughts of it than to think of it as common pity and compassion that one creature has for another.

Or, if you think it differs from the pity one creature has for another, it is but a difference in degrees. You think it is a little higher in degree, but you must look upon it in another way, and as another kind of pity than one creature bears to another. It is true, God's pardoning His poor creatures is in pity and compassion, but it is through the death and satisfaction of His own Son. And if you think to procure it any other way than by the mediation of the Son of God, you look upon it only in a natural way, as nature will dictate unto you that the beholding of one crying out in misery will move pity and compassion, and you go no farther.

But you are to know, the pardoning grace of God is the

most supernatural and mysterious thing in all the Book of God. Therefore, when God works in us, we must act faith upon it in a mystical way, or act faith upon it as a great mystery. And therefore, you who have been made sensible of sin, it may be you have thought of God's grace for the pardon and forgiveness of your sins and to quiet the trouble of your spirits. Have you done that? There is, I suppose, many a poor soul saying, "I have been often with God when no eye saw me but God's, seeking the pardon of my sin in trouble of spirit." You have done so, but has your eye at that time been fastened on the Son of God as the great Mediator between God and man to intercede to God the Father for obtaining this mercy by making satisfaction to infinite justice? Together with your cries for pardon, have your eyes been upon the Son of God at the right hand of the Father, pleading for man? Have your hearts been taken with the great mysteries of godliness, and wrought upon by the infinite grace of God? Have you put forth a mighty power of the spirit of faith to tender up to God the Father the atonement that His Son has made by His blood and death for your sins? Have you seen that the pardoning grace of God is so high that it is impossible to be reached by anything you can do but the mediation of the Son of God?

If it has been thus with your spirits, then you have something of the sense of the great work of God in this thing. But otherwise, though you have been never so much wrought on, and have had floods of sorrow and have cried never so earnestly for the pardon of your sins, unless you have had some such kind of thoughts of God's grace as these are upon your hearts, working after God this way, you were never thoroughly acquainted with the way of God's pardoning grace. And so you have dishonored Him by having too low thoughts of it unless your hearts have been raised to this height. In that time when David was repenting, Psalm 51:7,

he called unto God to purge him with hyssop. David desired the renewing of the assurance of God's mercy in Christ in the pardoning of that horrible offense he had committed. And therefore he prayed that he may be purged with hyssop.

What is the meaning of that? There is a great mystery in it. In the time of the Law, when the blood was sprinkled it was done with a bunch of hyssop. And it was a type of the blood of Christ that was to make an atonement, Leviticus 14. They were to take a bunch of hyssop to sprinkle with all. "Now," says David, "purge me with hyssop, that is, apply to me the blood of Christ for I have need of fresh applications of the blood of Christ. I have sinned against Him and have done what in me lay to bring myself under God's wrath. I have brought new guilt upon my soul. Now, for the assurance of Thy love to me, let there be fresh applications of the blood of Thy Son. Let there be a new sprinkling of the blood of Thy Son upon me."

I suppose many of you, in reading this place, did not think of the meaning of the Spirit of God in it. It may be a great help to you when at any time you are seeking the pardon of your sins to cry to God to be purged with hyssop. "Oh, Lord, sprinkle the blood of Christ afresh upon me, for I know that all my prayers and tears and all that I can do cannot purge me from the guilt of that sin I have committed against Thee unless Thou purge me with hyssop, that is, by applying the blood of Thy Son unto me."

And this is the eighth way of dishonoring the grace of God, in seeking for it any other way than through the blood of His Son. And remember when you are seeking it that it may be the last time. And therefore remember to look up to God for it in, by, and through the death of His Son; for otherwise, though you are never so earnest in prayer, you dishonor this grace. It is an easy matter to convince men and women that they are guilty

of dishonoring the grace of God if they seek for pardon in a negligent and sluggish way. But now, though you are never so sensible, and put forth never so much strength in seeking for it, yet you dishonor God unless you look upon it as such a high thing that can never be reached unto but through the mediation of the Son of God.

8. *They dishonor the grace of God who venture on sin in hopes they shall be pardoned.* I spoke before to those who did nothing else but increase their sins instead of seeking pardon of sin, and of the miserable, sad condition of such. But those we now speak of are not such as are come to this height of sinning, to do nothing else but increase their sins. It is now to such men and women we turn who, being convinced of sin (and if they were persuaded that God would never pardon that sin, they would find knots enough to stop them from the commission of it; but because they have some hopes that God will pardon, therefore on that very ground), venture on sin. 'Tis true, they think it is an offense, but God is a merciful God. He will forgive, though it is an evil. There is more evil and mischief in this than you can imagine.

What, are you convinced of sin, and will you venture on sin merely on this ground, because you hope that God will pardon you? I may say unto you, as Peter said unto Simon Magus in Acts 8:22, "Pray, oh, pray to God, that if it be possible this thought of your heart may be forgiven you; for this thought of your heart has so much malignity in it, and is so great a provocation against God as possibly can be imagined (except the sin against the Holy Ghost), for any man or woman to venture on any sin in hopes of pardon."

Some will say, "What need do we have to be so strict and trouble ourselves so much? God is merciful."

And therefore they think upon that ground that they need

not be so strict. This is a horrible degree of turning the grace of God into wantonness, Jude 4. The apostle speaks of such there who professed they believed in Christ. Mark what he says of them: "There are certain men crept in unawares, ungodly men turning the grace of God into wantonness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." 'Tis a most dreadful place.

If there is anyone in the congregation who has ever had the glorious light of the Gospel revealed to them, who can reason thus? "I do such and such things, yet God is merciful." Oh, that God would convince you of this evil! Give me leave to open it unto you how men creep in.

First, they were Christians and had come into the church, but how? They crept in cunningly. The saints of God were not aware of them, so they crept in among them. Here, by the way, we may take notice that in a church there ought to be none admitted members but such as may give some testimony of godliness in them; for if any are ungodly they are such as creep in unawares. The church of God should keep them out; such as creep in unawares should be kept out.

Many cry out that they will not have communion with any church because there are some wicked men in it. Others say that while there is a church on earth the tares will be among the corn and chaff will be among the wheat. Be not deceived. I know none in the world who thinks there is any congregation so pure but that some ungodly one may creep into it. But consider, to have some evil ones in the church is one thing, and for the church to have power to cast them out is another thing. 'Tis true, they will creep into the church, but when they are crept in and appear to be ungodly ones we must do our duty. Tell them of their faults, and, if they will not hear us, we must tell it to the church. And if the church has power

and will not deal with them, it need not at all hinder our communicating with them. But here lies the case: whether we should withdraw because evil ones are among them, or whether we can join with that church wherein there is no power to keep them out. And after they are crept in, should we cast them out? They will creep into the church; they came in unawares. But the state of the church should be such that it should suffer no evil men to come in; and, if they do come in, it is without the church's knowledge, for they have made a profession of religion. For the church can go no further than what outwardly appears to them. If men make a profession of religion and have a conversation agreeable to it, the church can go no further. But for a church to admit all who are not swearers, adulterers, or gross livers in any other sin, although they make no profession, this it cannot do. Nay, if they do but rent a house in the parish, it is enough to make them members of the church. And once they are in there is no power to cast them out; and if a power heretofore, the remedy was worse than the disease. It was such a power as was never ordained of God.

Whether we should join with such a church or not, or whether we should withdraw because there are some evil ones among them, is questionable. Surely none can imagine there should be such a pure church in the world that there should be no tares among them. But if there is a power in every church to admit none but such as have an appearance of godliness, and if after having crept in they proving otherwise, then there is a power to cast them out; let these things be granted. And then, though many ungodly ones will unawares creep in, yet it is no hindrance at all to join with them in all the ordinances of God. That is the first thing said of them: they creep in.

Second, he says they were such as were ordained of old to

condemnation: “those that turn the grace of God into wantonness.” That is, they abuse the pardoning grace of God by taking liberty to sin. Surely they should be kept out of the church, and, if they creep in, they should not be accounted members but should be cast out when they appear to be such as were of old ordained to condemnation. Then those who abuse the grace of God to wantonness, and think they may take liberty to sin because God is merciful to forgive sin, the Scripture says they are of old ordained to condemnation.

Third, they are ungodly men, such as have no godliness at all in them but are mere carnal and worldly men. It is a terrible thing for a minister to say to any of you out of the Word of God, “You are an ungodly man or woman. Have you not turned the grace of God into wantonness and abused it when you heard that God was merciful? Have you taken liberty to sin? You are an ungodly man, for you turn the grace of God into wantonness. The blessed grace of God that should be the chief means to keep men from sin, you make into an advantage to further sin.”

And mark further, fourth, you deny our Lord Jesus Christ. You talk of God’s mercy in Christ, but you deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. What a heap of expressions is here to set forth the condition of such men who turn the grace of God into wantonness:

They creep in.

They were of old ordained to condemnation.

They are ungodly.

They deny the Lord Jesus Christ.

I think this one text should daunt the heart of everyone who is before the Lord this day: never presume upon acting with such a horrible wickedness, to sin because of God’s pardoning grace, for there is so much evil in this; to presume

on sin because God is willing to forgive sin, that the hearts of those who understand the glory of God's grace cannot but stand amazed and rise with indignation against it. Romans 6:1: "What shall we say then, shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" There were some who abused the grace of God to sin. How does the apostle rise with indignation against that abominable wickedness? He does not grant it, but rejects it with a horrible indignation: "God forbid! What? To sin that grace may abound? God forbid! What? To make use of the grace of God to further sin?"

Shall we stand to answer these men in the horrible reasoning of their hearts? No, they are to be cast off with detestation and rejection, with a "God forbid that there should be any of such vile and wicked hearts thus to abuse the pardoning grace of God." Suppose the master forgives one servant a fault, and you, another servant, should say; "Well, my master has forgiven him, so I will do too." Upon that ground, if you commit the same offense, he will not forgive you because you offend presumptuously, which is a most horrid thing. Let me a little further reason the case:

(1) It is an argument of an abominable heart that has no way to keep it from sin but guilt and fear of wrath and hell. You do not make the grace of God an argument to keep you from sin, nor the evil of sin in itself, which is a great dishonor and wrong to God. There is more evil in sin itself, setting aside the consideration of the guilt and punishment of it—there is ten thousand times more evil in sin itself than all the punishment in hell will countervail. And you have no way to keep you from sin but the fear of guilt and punishment? It is an argument of a wicked heart.

(2) Suppose there were no evil of guilt or punishment, yet an ingenuous gracious spirit would never do it. What, shall I

sin because God will pardon? Shall I venture upon it? No, I will never do it. Grace reasons to quite a contrary end. That is an excellent Scripture in Titus 2:11–13. The grace of God that brings salvation is this grace that reveals the pardon of sin. This precious grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. But to what end? Teaching us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts. The grace of God that brings salvation teaches us these lessons: not such a wicked lesson that we should presume to sin on hopes that God may pardon it, no, but to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly. We are not to take liberty to sin, to lie, steal, be filthy, and the like, because God will pardon; no, it teaches other manner of lessons than these. And then it follows, “looking for that blessed hope and appearance of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” But otherwise you can never look for that blessed hope.

Let me speak to those who reason thus, that they may venture on sin because of God’s pardoning grace. Does the revelation of the grace of God teach you to live ungodly and in worldly lusts? Can you look for that blessed hope with comfort and expect the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ? ’Tis impossible; you cannot. ’Tis not a blessed hope that you have but a cursed hope, that all shall be well at last though you live ungodly and wickedly. And as for the appearing of the great God, certainly it will be a terrible appearing to you who made Christ, who came to dissolve the works of the devil, to be a man’s work, to uphold the works of the devil.

(3) Did ever any child of God make use of Scripture to reason for sin in such a wicked way, to presume to sin because God is willing to pardon? You cannot give me one example in all the Scripture of any of those whom God has shown

examples to the contrary. No, the saints have reasoned otherwise. In Psalm 130:4 mark the reasoning of a gracious heart: "But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared." He reasons from the pardoning grace of God to draw up his heart to the fear of God. It is as if he should say, "Lord, I have heard much of the doctrine of the pardon of sin, and the great workings of Thy grace to effect it, and of Thy readiness to forgive. This is the end of it, that Thou mightiest be feared."

This is the effect this doctrine works in a gracious soul, and 'tis a good sign if you reason after this manner: "But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared." If those sermons you have heard of this doctrine are a means to implant the fear of God in your hearts, it is a blessed sign they have had a good effect upon you when you reason thus: "Because, Lord, I have had so much of Thy grace and mercy in forgiving my sin, through Thy grace my soul shall fear Thee more than ever before, and fear to sin more than ever before." Those who have hearts answering this text, 'tis a good sign that the Word has had a powerful efficacy upon them.

Take Psalm 103:1-3: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." Why? "Who forgiveth all thy iniquities." Mark, it is a psalm that David made of God's mercy in forgiving sin, the consideration of which makes him call upon his soul, and all that is within him, to bless the Lord. Does God show so much grace as to forgive sin? Then "bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy Name." 'Tis not reasoning thus: "God forgives iniquity, and therefore, oh, my soul, take liberty! You need not be so strict." But it is: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy Name." Those who have strength to do anything for God, this is an argument that will stir up all within them to bless God, when

they see God appearing so infinitely gracious to them in the forgiveness of their sins. They so reason that all they have or can do should be given unto Him.

(4) You who think you may take liberty to sin because God is gracious, and venture on it because you think that God will never punish, think of the example of the damned in hell. They are flying in the face of God because they know that God will never pardon; and you sin because you hope God will pardon, which is the worse of the two. The devils and the damned are in such a condition that they know that God will never pardon them. And therefore they always curse God because they know He will not pardon. But God offers pardon and tenders grace to you, holds forth Jesus Christ to you, and His blood and sufferings for the pardoning of you, and you blaspheme because you think He will pardon. Of the two, I think you should judge the second sort worse. You blaspheme because you hope God will pardon, and the others blaspheme God because they know He will not pardon. 'Tis something worse to take liberty to sin because you hope God will pardon than they who sin because they are out of all hopes of pardon.

You who take liberty on this ground to blaspheme the name of God, what do you think will become of you another day? Now, you blaspheme because you hope that God will pardon you. Ere long you may come to that condition to blaspheme God eternally because He will not pardon you. I make no question but many swearers, drunkards, unclean persons, and the like, who have gone on in sin because they hoped that God would pardon them, are now gone to their own place, and blaspheme because they find that God will never pardon. So you who blaspheme now, it may be you shall blaspheme eternally, but it will be otherwise. You do it now in hopes that God will

pardon. You shall there do it because you shall have no hopes that He will ever pardon.

(5) You who sin now in hopes that God will pardon, if God enlightens your mind these things will be an intolerable burden to you. And if there is anything that will risk the sinking of your soul unto the bottomless gulf of despair, it is likely to be this: you now give way to the reasonings of your own hearts to further sin from the consideration of God's pardoning mercy. The same reason that furthers sin in you now from the consideration of pardon will make you have further thoughts of despairing of God's mercy. Suppose you go on a great while and heap up sin on this presumption. Let me put this unto you, either God will enlighten your conscience or He will not do it. If He never does it, you are eternally lost. But if He does it, if He comes at length and awakens conscience, then what a load of anguish and trouble will lie upon your soul that will make thee cry out, "Oh, Lord, I have not only sinned, but now I come to seek for mercy! My mouth is stopped with the thoughts of that mercy that I have abused. Now nothing but free grace can do me good. My conscience tells me how I have abused this grace. I have presumed on sin because of this. I have made the thoughts I had of this grace a means to further me in sin, and now with what face can I go to seek this grace and mercy?"

These will be stinging thoughts to you another day. When a minister shall come to apply the grace of God to your soul you will say, "There is mercy with God to pardon sinners, but not for those that have abused the grace of God as I have done." Manasseh and Paul, 'tis true, committed many great sins, but did they ever commit any sin upon this ground in hope of pardon? Oh, look unto it! Let none go out from the presence of the Lord this day with thoughts to venture on sin because you

hope it may be pardoned; to venture to sin on that ground is the most horrible cursed thing that can be.

9. *They dishonor the grace of God's pardoning mercy who sin after pardon.* To sin after God has revealed this grace unto you is a great dishonor to this grace. Many have been in trouble for their sins, and in their trouble have cried to God for mercy. And God has spoken peace to their souls and has told them that their sins are pardoned and that He will cleanse their souls from the guilt of sin by the blood of His own Son. And yet, after all this, they have again fallen to their former sins. I have spoken before of this degree of dishonoring God's pardoning grace, but now I am speaking of a further degree—not only to fall into that sin you have sought for pardon of, but to fall into that sin that you have some comfortable assurance of pardon of. In 1 Kings 11:9, the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned from the Lord, who had appeared to him twice. Remember, has not God appeared to some of you twice, and given you assurance of His love and pardoning grace? God came with sweet comforts and rejoiced your souls, and what, do you turn from the Lord after He has appeared twice to you and said unto you, "Your sins are pardoned"? This is a grievous thing. Ezra 9:14: "Should we again break Thy commandments? Wouldst not Thou be angry with us should we again sin, wouldst Thou not consume us?"

So after God has delivered us from condemnation, the guilt of sin, and the spirit of bondage, what, to trespass again? It is just with God to be angry with us. Psalm 85:8: "The Lord will speak peace...but let them not return again to folly." If God speaks peace, oh, return not again to folly! I appeal unto you, has God ever spoken peace to your souls? Have you heard the voice of gladness speaking in your hearts, saying, "Son or

daughter, be of good cheer; go in peace, your sins are pardoned”? Have you not heard this? If you have not, you need to; if you have, then return not again to the same sin that God has graciously pardoned. Return not to the same sin. Return not to any other sin.

Return not to the same sin; it is a question, and a great case of conscience, whether it is possible for a child of God, after God has dealt him the pardon of sin, to commit that sin again. Some have denied it. I remember some ancient divines, Origen and Tertullian, upon those words in Hebrews 6:4–6, “For it is impossible for those that were once enlightened, if they shall fall away, to renew them by repentance.” These two men apply it to the sin of uncleanness and say, “A second repentance is not promised in the name of Christ to adulterers and fornicators.” Thus I may boldly say, we do not find any certain express example in all the Book of God of any child of God who fell into the same gross outward sins after an actual repentance and making up his peace with God for sin. We find no express Scripture. I do not say we find no example of the children of God who have not committed the same sin again, as Peter and Lot, but we find no example of any gross sin that they have fallen into. Mark it, after their repentance and reconciliation, what was done amiss was done before they came to have it laid home unto their consciences, and applied unto their hearts for the humbling of their souls in making their peace with God.

True, David committed adultery, but never the second time. After he had his bones broken, he fell not again; and so after Peter went out and wept bitterly, he never denied his Master again. And so Abraham equivocated, but we read not that after any actual renewal of faith and repentance he committed that sin again. While a wound is open, and not

fully closed, it may bleed again; but when it is fully closed, to bleed again is dangerous. And so it is with any of the people of God. After the actual renewal of their faith and repentance, you cannot give me an example that any of them have fallen into the same sin again. I do not absolutely deny it, but I say it is a dangerous thing. God has not left an example. He has left examples that His children have fallen, but after they have renewed their faith and repentance they have not fallen into the same sins again. I speak not of inward thoughts—I know that after repentance these will return again; but for any outward, gross, actual sin, after the renewal of faith and repentance, they have not returned again to commit the same sin.

Once a joint is out, or a leg broken and set, usually that joint or bone is stronger than before. And so I might show you after they have sinned and been set again, they have been stronger than before. A child of God falling into sin is just like the breaking of a bone. Galatians 6:1: “And you that are spiritual must restore such a one.” The word in the original is “put him in joint again.” Any godly man or member of a church that falls into sin is as a bone out of joint, and you that are spiritual must set it again. Once you have a bone out of joint, the longer you let it go the more painful it is. So if you fall into any sin, the longer you let it go the more unwieldly you will be. No wonder you cannot go about your business handsomely when you have a bone out of joint; but has God been so merciful as to put you into joint again? Go your way, you are made whole; take heed of sinning again lest a worse thing befall you.

A second sort of persons who dishonor the grace of God is those who, though they fall not into the same gross sins again after pardoning mercy, are negligent in the ways of God. They

are loose, slight, vain, sensual, carnal, dead-hearted in their conversation, and do not answer the grace of God revealed to them, but are more drossy in their spirits than before. It may be that for the time wherein they were seeking this grace of God they were strict in their conversation and conscientious in their ways. In everything they walked close with God and dared not for their lives omit a known duty. They attended on the Word with a great deal of patience; their hearts closed with it, and it was as meat and drink to them. In their conversation they were very fruitful in the places where they lived. But now, having had some comfortable assurance of God's mercy pardoning them, they are grown slight, vain, loose, and dead-hearted. This is a very grievous evil wherever it may be charged. It is a very great evil for any to abuse God's general bounty, patience, long-suffering, and the good we receive from God in the use of the creature. But it is far worse to abuse the grace of God in Christ manifested in pardoning mercy. I shall show this to be a great evil, and shall labor to convince you of it.

Consider and call to remembrance what the days of old were, how in former times it was with you when you were seeking the pardoning grace of God. Then you thought, "If ever God comes into my soul and gives me any assurance of pardon of sin, how infinitely should my soul be engaged to bless God, and how shall I forever be bound to give up myself, soul and body, what I am and what I can do, to live to the praise of the grace of God. If only God comes into my soul and pardons this sin of mine, the guilt whereof lies so heavy upon my spirit." I appeal unto your own consciences, did you not think in your own thoughts that it was impossible that ever you should come to live as you do? Certainly if the thoughts of many people might this day appear, they cannot but say, "Time

was (when I was seeking after the mercy of God, to pardon my sin that lay upon my conscience) I thought with myself, 'He is a blessed man indeed who has assurance of this,' and if ever I had peace spoken to my soul, I thought my life would have been such that (in my apprehension) it was impossible I would have grown to this dullness, deadness, slightness, and vanity that now I see I am."

Where is the blessedness you spoke of? Time was you said the pardoning mercy of God was a blessed thing. Where is that blessedness you spoke of, that after you have received it you should grow wanton, loose, and slight? What, have you not a mightier argument to draw your hearts to God after He has spoken peace than ever you had before? The apprehension of guilt, danger, and trouble of spirit for sin was an argument to keep you from sin before. But if God has spoken peace in applying this pardoning grace, do you not have arguments of another nature than these which are far more powerful? Certainly, those who know the grace of God in Christ know that there is no such powerful argument as the grace of God in Christ in pardoning sin to keep up the heart with God, and to keep from sin there is no such argument in the world like this.

The eyeing of God's grace is a special thing to quench and keep down lust, whereas those who sin after this mercy, whose lusts and corruptions overcome the power of this pardoning mercy, are deprived of the best and most special spiritual helps that can be to keep from sin. Philippians 4:7: "The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." The word in the original is very significant: "Shall *guard* your hearts." This is the emphasis of the phrase, as if the apostle had said, "The sweet peace of God is such as passes understanding, and shall guard your hearts.

Indeed, the peace of God that comes to flow out from the sweetness of the pardoning grace of God is such as passes understanding; but yet, after all this, there will be many dangers, and you are to be involved with many temptations. But this peace of God will be a guard to your souls to keep you from sin and temptation.”

The soul of a believer who has peace spoken to it is there compared to a captain in war, or a prince who apprehends himself in some danger and then sets a strong guard about his person to keep him from danger. Now what is the guard that keeps the soul of a believer from temptation and danger? It is the peace of God; that is the greatest and strongest guard in the world. If you complain of sin and temptations, and that you are afraid that sin will surprise you, what guard would you have to keep you? The peace of God is the best guard that can be! Now, after this has been a guard unto you, if your sin breaks in upon you as fully and as freely as if there were no guard at all, your condition is very sad.

Let me further speak to those who sin after the pardoning grace of God and do not walk answerable to the grace that was set forth in witnessing the pardon of sin; 'tis a thousand to one you will lose your evidence. 'Tis true, it is irrevocable in God's heart, yet thou mayest carry it so that by your loose walking you may lose the evidence of it in your own soul. It may be as sad with you as if you were not at all pardoned. We are to know that when an evidence is given concerning pardon of sin, every renewed act of sin is a blot to that evidence. A man who has evidences of lands or an estate will keep them fair. But if he should suffer them to be blotted, one blot after another, perhaps so blotted as neither he nor any one else is able to read them, it may cost him a great deal of trouble before he get them renewed again. So it is with a poor

creature who has gotten some comfortable evidence of the pardon of sin, but, giving way to temptation, commits a sin, and there he gets a blot. Then proceeds the next temptation, coming possibly to worldly-mindedness, passion, unbelief, slightness of spirit, vanity, sensuality, and abuse of the creature. By often yielding to these, he gets more and renewed blots so that, if his evidences are looked into, they will be found so full of blots that it is no wonder that, in a time of temptation, he cannot read them.

Possibly some who are skillful in the way of God and the nature of the covenant of grace may pick out something of the meaning of them, but you have fallen so foully from God that your evidences are so blotted and blurred that in your own apprehension you can see nothing but that your condition is as dangerous and as uncomfortable as ever it was. Your evidences are so blotted that you cannot read them yourself, and so have no comfort by them. And it is to you as if you had none at all. This is the duty, and would be the comfort of every Christian, that when they have gotten their evidences they would keep them so clear that they might read them every morning, and run and read them, and not stand pouring and beating their brains and hearts and fret themselves because they cannot find such and such a thing that was to them an evidence of the pardon of their sins. This is through their neglect; and if they had been careful to have kept their evidences clear and plain, oh, the comfort they might have had to have read them every morning!

If the pollution of sin recoils back again, it is no marvel the sense of guilt of sin upon your conscience recoils back again. If God has committed such a jewel to you as the evidence of pardon of sin, and you make no better use of it, 'tis just with God to take it out of your hands and keep it in His

own. And though He shows mercy at last unto you, yet you may not know it while you are in this world. It is a very hard thing to recover it again. Those who have had the pardon of sin sealed unto them have, by their falling into sin afterwards, so darkened and lost their evidences that they could never recover them again.

See how David cries out, "Create in me a clean heart, and restore to me the joy of Thy salvation," Psalm 51:10. David saw all was gone, and that there must be a new creation and restoration. "Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation. Oh, the joy that once I had and now have lost! Oh, Lord, that I may have it once again!" David had a little sensual pleasure for a while, but he paid dearly for it. He lost the joy of God's salvation. What do you think David would have given to have gotten it again? For all we know, he never had it as fully as before. Those who have had some comfortable evidence of pardoning grace, and afterwards, through their negligence, looseness, and vanity, have lost it, may never come to enjoy the comfort of it again as formerly they did.

And therefore, after Peter had sinned against his Master, Christ came to him and said, "Lovest thou Me?"

Peter answered, "Lord, Thou knowest I love Thee."

Christ put it to him again, "Lovest thou Me?" He would not take his first answer but put it to him the second and third time, "Lovest thou Me?" It is as if Christ had said to Peter, "Look to yourself. It is not any present sudden work that can recover your evidences again." You who have sinned and darkened your evidences need to put this question to your own hearts again and again to get it sure that you love Christ and that Christ loves you.

Third, let me speak to such as sin after pardon. It may justly provoke God to deal with you. Though He does not

take away His everlasting love, yet He may deal with you as a slave rather than a child. I mean, He may follow you with sore and heavy chastisement. Though He may save your souls at last, yet it may cause God to meet you with such sore and evil things in this world that, for that sloth and sluggishness of your hearts, you may pay dearly for it before you die. Truly, so may be the dealings of God with His own children whom He pardons.

In Jeremiah 2:14, God is speaking to His own people: "Is Israel a servant? Is he a home-born slave?" And He asks in verse 18, "What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt?" So it is with you whom God has heretofore received to mercy and pardon, but who have walked so that God's ways to you seem to be such as it may be said, "Is this man or woman a servant? Is he a home-born slave?" God speaks it with pity, "Israel is My dear son. How comes it to pass that he is as a home-born slave? What, is he a servant and brought into such a condition as a servant or a slave? What is the matter? Why, he is in the way of Egypt." So it may be said to you who walk in the sensual drossiness of your spirit, "Have you not been in the way of Egypt? Are your ways such that God's dealings with you are as if you were a servant and a home-born slave? Where is that final ingenuous spirit of yours that God is inclined to deal with you as now He does?"

Again, you who sin after pardon, you come to aggravate your sins more than the sins of the wicked in some regards. Those who are wicked and go on in their vile ways against God, you cry out about them as wretched creatures, base, filthy, drunkards, swearers, liars, false men and women in their dealings, such as are not to be dealt with in all the world. You think these are wicked, but you who sin after mercy, your sins have an aggravation upon them beyond theirs; for they

never knew what God's sweet pardoning mercy meant. They never heard God speak peace to their souls as you have to yours. They never had the secret visitations of God's Spirit, nor the warm beams of God's mercy shining into their hearts. They were never acquainted with such things, and therefore, though they go on in sin after which they have been accustomed, 'tis not so much to be wondered at. But you who have had a taste of the sweetness of God's love in Christ in pardoning mercy, for you to sin after this is a greater aggravation than the sins of the other. And as it is a greater aggravation than the sins of the wicked, so your sin goes nearer to the heart of Christ than the sins of the wicked and ungodly do. The sins of the most profane wretch in all the town do not go as near to the heart of Christ as those who are committed after receipt of mercy from Christ. "What, do you, my sons, do thus and so against Me?"

I remember a report of Caesar. When many came about him with their daggers and stabbed him in the Senate-House, at length came Brutus, for whom he had done much good. Brutus came and gave him a blow, and Caesar looked upon him and cried out, "What, thou my son Brutus, wilt thou give me a blow and stab?" It went nearer to the heart of Caesar to have Brutus come and give him a wound and stab than for all the others who came round about and stabbed him. So Christ may look upon you—for whom He has purchased pardon, shed His blood, and laid down His life—and say, "What, you My son? Will you sin against Me?" For wicked wretches that are strangers to Him, it is no marvel if they sin against Him; but for you who are His sons, His redeemed ones, who have received such pardoning grace and mercy, for you to sin goes to the heart of Christ more than the sins of the ungodliest wretch in all the parish. And would you not be loath to do

more against Christ than the vilest wretch in the parish, you who have received so much mercy from Christ?

Further, other men's sins anger God, but no men's sins grieve the spirit of God as the sins of those who have received pardon. They go to the heart of God, and grieve the Spirit by which they are sealed. The Spirit of God that has sealed the pardon of your sins to your souls, let not that Spirit be grieved. It is a greater sin to grieve the blessed Spirit of God than you are aware of.

Further, you bring a disgrace upon the doctrine of assurance of pardon. We preach that a man may not only have some good hopes that his sins are pardoned; but we say God has revealed such a fullness of riches of grace in the gospel that a man may have certain and full assurance of the pardon of his sin. It is as if he heard a voice from heaven speaking to him by name, "Your sins are pardoned." Or as if, when Christ, in the days of His flesh, said to anyone, "Son, go in peace; your sins are pardoned." Certainly, there may be as full assurance of pardon of sin by the witness of the Spirit of God as if such a voice came from heaven.

But our adversaries say, "Just open that gap, and 'tis an open way for men to take liberty to commit any sin. What need is there for men to care what sins they commit, when they know they are pardoned?"

That has been objected against us, but now we say there is such a virtue in the grace of God going along with pardoning of sin that heals the soul as well as comforts the soul. We answer it thus, but you take away our answer and disgrace that blessed doctrine of pardon of sin. For wherein does it appear there is such a healing power in the assurance of the pardon of sin? If it is so, then you would walk more strictly than any man in the world can do in the time of the greatest horror of conscience that possibly can be. And this would bring an

honor to the doctrine of assurance. But you, by sinning after pardon, how you disgrace this blessed doctrine, and take away the answer out of our mouths! So much for the present, to be spoken to those who dishonor the pardoning mercy of God by sinning after pardon.

## CHAPTER 15

# *Dishonor Is Done to the Grace of God by Not Resting on It*

*T*he second sort of men who greatly dishonor the pardoning grace of God is those who *think* they honor Him and yet dishonor Him exceedingly. These are such as, being apprehensive of the greatness of their sins, the vileness of them, and their own misery by reason thereof, lie down in a sullen, desperate, discouraging mood under the weight and burden of them and are ready to turn against themselves, saying, “Certainly my condition is such as I must expect nothing other but to lie forever under the burden of my sins and bear forever the punishment of them. I have heard much indeed of the riches of the pardoning grace of God, but, for my part, my condition is such that I have little expectation of being made partaker of it.”

Certainly this kind of sullen discouragement in lying under our sins is a mighty aggravation of our sin, and exceedingly dishonorable to the pardoning grace of God. Many who are thus, let them hear never so much opened of the riches of the gospel and the infiniteness of the grace of God, all is nothing to them. It does not raise them from the fullness of their hearts and the discouragement of spirit that hangs upon them. They

are like those in Exodus 6:9 to whom Moses spoke, but who hearkened not for anguish of spirit and cruel bondage. God sent Moses to show them the grace of God, to deliver them from their bondage, but, says the text, “they hearkened not to Moses, only for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.”

So many people, when God comes to awaken their consciences, have so much anguish in the sense of their sin that they hearken not to what is said. Let them hear never so much in private or in public, they are just where they were—the same complaints, sullenness, and objections as before. You may answer all their objections against the grace of God so that they know not what to say, but go away for half an hour and they will have the same objections as if nothing had been said unto them. Certainly there is more evil in this than you are aware of, this limiting and determining of God’s grace.

’Tis true, there is reason to judge yourselves unworthy, and that God *may* deny you, but that God *will* deny you is another thing. There is a great deal of difference in these. When some are put upon the use of means, they will confess they ought to attend upon them, and that they will do it. But when I have done all, I have little hope that God will deliver me but I shall die and perish in my sins, as that woman in 1 Kings 17:12. She said, “I am a poor woman. I have but a handful of meal in the barrel, and a little oil in a cruse, and am gathering two sticks that I may eat it and die; so much as I have I am preparing, and when I have eaten this I must die. It is but little that I can make of prayer. When I have spoken two or three words, I am presently distracted with wandering thoughts. Two or three sticks I may lay together, but when I have done that I must die.” Now know and consider this day what from God shall be said unto you: You greatly dishonor the pardoning grace of God.

First, know it is very low thoughts you have of the pardoning mercy of God, what Christ has purchased, and what God has intended from everlasting in the covenant of grace to those souls for whom He intends good. And though for His intentions He keeps them to Himself (and would not have you meddle with that) till He manifests them in the work of grace, yet in the meantime, having revealed no further but that you may have it as well as any other, He expects that you should venture yourself upon His grace through His Son Jesus Christ.

And though you say you are vile, unworthy, and— even after the use of means—insist that you are unprofitable, vain, full of wandering thoughts and deadness, and therefore cannot expect grace, know that you have but mean thoughts of the grace of God, you who set such things as these against it. These are poor, low, unworthy things to set against the grace of God, and they lower the grace of God too much who set such things as these against it. A scholar would think it a dishonor to him for one to come to reason with him and bring nothing but poor, low, weak objections that are not worth answering. He would think it a disgrace to him. Certainly it is a dishonor to the grace of God to set such things as these against it. You look upon it in a natural way and do not consider that it is the great design of God above all things in the world to magnify His grace in pardoning sin. Certainly, were this understood, these things would be counted too low and unworthy to be set against such a design, when it is the greatest God has to magnify His name in.

Second, you judge God according to your own thoughts, and this God will take exceeding ill, as in Psalm 50:21: “Because I kept silence thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself.” ’Tis a great evil to measure God by our own thoughts, and there are two ways of dishonoring God by it.

1. There is the way of the carnal, secure sinner. He measures God by his own thoughts; he thinks God is not so strict as to be angry forever. And if you offend, he thinks that if we go and cry to Him for mercy, He will be pleased again. We think it an easy matter to please God, and, because God is silent, we think He does not hate sin, and He does. That's one way of dishonoring God.

2. A second way is when a man comes to be troubled for sin and has his conscience enlightened. Then we think slightly of God another way. It may be you have a hard heart and would not pardon one who provokes you again and again. You would not pass by such and such offenses and you think God is so too. You think God to be like yourself, and that He cannot bear with you in such and such things, because you cannot bear with others. This is to judge God by our own line, but know that the thoughts of God's pardoning grace are as far above ours as the heavens are above the earth; and therefore we must not measure God by our own thoughts.

Third, you dishonor the pardoning grace of God by having low thoughts of it, because it is contrary to the Scriptures. The main scope of all the Scriptures is to magnify the pardoning grace of God and set it out in its greatness to your soul; and you make it your main work to undervalue it. Luther says, "The scope of the whole Scriptures is but this, that we might know and acknowledge God to be a gracious and merciful God." And a greater than Luther said this. It is a notable text in the Acts of the Apostles 10:42-43: "And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify, it is He that was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." Mark, "to Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." So that it is the scope

and intention of all the prophets to witness this to a poor soul, that whosoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sin.

You will say, “whosoever believes on Him, but there is all the question”; but you hinder yourself of believing, you would have assurance before you believe. You must believe in order that you may have it, that is, you must venture and cast your soul upon this grace of God. All the prophets witness that whoever believes on Him shall receive remission of sins. Therefore, by your sitting down in these sullen, discouraging thoughts of your heart, you give a lie to all the prophets of God. You do not give a lie only to our preaching, though certainly so it is. God sees it so, but also to all the prophets of God it is a lie. Now when God makes it the work of all the prophets to witness forgiveness of sins by Christ, will you make it your work to object against it?

Again, know that your reasonings are quite contrary to the Scriptures, for you reason that pardoning mercy will not be yours because your sins are so great. In Psalm 25:11, David cries to God to pardon his iniquities for they are great. He makes the greatness of his sins an argument to drive him *to* God, not *from* God, and this is God’s own argument in Genesis 8:21, “I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake.” Why? “For the imaginations of man’s heart are evil from his youth.” One would have thought it should have been thus: “the imaginations of man’s heart are evil, and therefore I will do nothing less than curse the ground.”

“No,” says God, “I will not, because the imaginations of man’s heart are evil from his youth.” It is as if He should say, “If I should never leave cursing till man leaves sinning, I should always be cursing. So,” says God, “if I should never pardon sin till man’s sins are less, I should never pardon at all.”

So in Hosea 2:13–14, you have God reasoning there as here: “She went after her lovers, and forgot me. Therefore will I allure

her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. For she had forgotten Me, and went after her lovers." See how the Scripture makes that an argument of God's mercy.

Take another text in Isaiah 57:17–18: "For the iniquity of his covetousness, I was wroth and smote him. I hid Me and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." Mark what follows: "I have seen his ways, and will heal him, and will restore comfort to him and to his mourners." He went on frowardly in the perverseness of his spirit, says God. I have seen his ways and will heal him. Thus God expresses Himself to the end of the chapter to encourage the hearts of those who are sensible of their sins, and would be sensible of the evil of sin and account it a great misery that they cannot be sensible of it. The Lord would encourage them; therefore the greatness of sin is no discouragement at all.

Further, the way you take is the way to perish. There can be no good in that way. You may pine away in your iniquity, but it is to get any counsel, help, comfort, or mercy. Be assured you cannot. Therefore, reason as the lepers, 2 Kings 7:3–4: "If we sit here we shall certainly die; if we go to the camp of the Syrians they can but kill us; let us arise and go." And it was a good going to them, for they met with that which helped and relieved them. So do you. Say, "If I sit down thus, there is no way but I must die; but, however, though I should never get any comfort or help, yet it is better I venture that way than the other."

You know not what you may meet with. It may be you think it humility to sit down in this way, but know that most desperate pride may be under it and stand with such discouragements. We know the most proud spirits may be the most discouraged spirits, like the devil. The Scripture sets him forth to be as proud as Lucifer, yet none so proud as spirits under such discouragements. There may be much pride in discouragements; therefore,

take heed lest there be any secret pleasing of yourselves this way. Though you are in some trouble, yet if you feel there is a secret pleasure in that smart that falls upon you, and some kind of contentedness in going your own way, as many men, though they meet with an abundance of crosses, yet if they go their own way it pleases them much—if you feel this way take heed, there may be desperate pride at the bottom of all this.

**OBJECTION.** If this is to dishonor the pardoning grace of God, what would you have us to do? (We would not speak it were it not so.) To what end is it for us to study, and pray to God for light and help to open the grace of God, if a little discouragement of heart and sullenness of spirit shall turn all aside and make all that we say to be of none effect? (Therefore, there is great reason that we should tell you this is a great dishonoring of the pardoning grace of God.) But what, would you have us to doubt no more, but go on and persuade our hearts our sins are pardoned and there's an end?

**ANSWER.** No, if I should say you could do this, it would be in vain for me to say all this; for it is not in your power to cast off all fears of God's anger and presently persuade yourselves your sins are pardoned. This is not in your power to do; and therefore this is not the thing I put you upon. It must be the mighty work of God. In Ezekiel 2, when the prophet had finished chapter 1, in the first verse of the second chapter God said, "Son of Man, stand upon thy feet." But that was not enough to raise the prophet, no, not for God Himself to say, "Son of Man, stand upon thy feet." But together with the voice of God, verse 2, there enters into him the Spirit of God and sets him on his feet. So it is with the ministers of the Word. We speak to souls who are cast down under the burden of their sins, to stir them up so that they may not always lie down drooping but stand upon

their feet. But together with our speaking, God must speak and convey His Spirit to the soul before it is able to stand up.

QUESTION. Well, but what would you have us to do?

ANSWER. These are the things I would have you do.

First, I would have you turn your fears of presuming into fears of dishonoring the grace of God. I would have you be as fearful that God's grace should be dishonored by unbelief as you are fearful lest you should presume upon God's grace. Those who are secure fear not lest they should presume, but those whose consciences are awakened, their great fear is lest they should presume upon God's grace and dishonor it by presumption. If you fear you should dishonor the grace of God by presumption, why should you not fear lest you should dishonor it by unbelief as well as by presumption? Certainly the strength of this temptation is from the devil. Those who have their consciences troubled for sin, he labors to keep them from venturing on the grace of God lest they should presume. But the way to cut the sinews of this temptation is to fear lest you should dishonor the grace of God by unbelief. Many look not at unbelief as a great sin, but God is displeased at your unbelief as much as by those who presume.

Second, the thing I would have you to do—you who are under the checkings of conscience for sin, and full of doubts that God will not pardon, and you cannot be persuaded your sins are pardonable—is to labor to set the greatness of the pardoning grace of God in the fullness of it, to the utmost you can, before the eye of your souls so that it may be before you. Though you cannot reach to it, yet set it before you. You do not know what an efficacy the pardoning grace of God has by being presented before your souls and kept there. No marvel you do not find the power of it when you set it not before your eyes.

The efficacy of God's grace lies much in presenting it before your souls. The brazen serpent would never heal if they did not look to it. So, though the pardoning grace of God is in books and sermons, yet unless it is before your eyes, and you fix and fasten the eye of your souls upon it, it will never heal you. Therefore, keep it before your eyes.

In Psalm 5:3, there is an excellent expression: "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up." I suppose many of you in the morning will not neglect prayer to God, but mark the expression, "I will direct my prayer." It is not "I will say my prayer," but "direct my prayer." There's a great emphasis in it. I will level my prayer aright; I will dart my soul aright to heaven and observe the way that God would have me, and so direct my heart in prayer to Him. It may be some of you go so far as not to content yourselves with a dead-hearted, sluggish prayer. But what do you look to all the day after? What, shall wandering and discouraging thoughts bring you to look down all the day? If you would look up to your morning prayers and what you prayed for, there would come a great deal of efficacy upon your souls.

Third, be careful to keep your hearts stirred and active. Be afraid of deadness and dullness. Take heed of such thoughts as, "Why should I pray and dread when I have no heart to perform any duty?" Up and be doing, and the Lord be with you. If ever your hearts were active at anything in the world, it ought to be in this. Once you give yourselves liberty to lie down, and the activity of your spirits is gone, you are in a sad condition. It will be very difficult to get them up again. Take heed of a sullen heart. You may be very active and yet calm, quiet, and patient. There's a great conjunction between these two: when I am active and yet calm, stilling my heart under God and yet stirring of my heart unto God, these two are joined together in those whom God directs unto Himself.

Fourth, renew your resolutions that whatever becomes of you, whether God will ever speak peace or not to you, yet as long as you live, you will do what you can to honor His name and keep from sin. Keep your heart under the power of this resolution.

Fifth, keep your heart in a waiting frame; use the means; lie at the pool. As the man who lay many years waiting for the stirring of the waters met with help at last, you keep your heart in a waiting frame, and think with yourself. If mercy comes at last, it will recompense you for all your waitings and pains.

Sixth, be willing to catch hold of any beginnings of God's discoverings of Himself. If it is but a little glimpse, make much *of* it and bless God *for* it. Many seek God for pardon in their trouble, but they are always complaining, either to their neighbors or themselves; they seldom express themselves in thanksgivings. Now, you should observe what God has granted, what beginnings and glimpses of His grace appear. Look and see if there is not a little cloud, the size of a man's hand. It may breed a shower; a shower of grace may come after it. But take notice of it when it is but the size of a man's hand.

It is a great evil in such as are under trouble of conscience. Because they find not full assurance immediately, they think they receive nothing at all. Well, wait upon God under these directions and you shall not be so guilty of dishonoring the pardoning mercy of God. So it will be a means to bring great good unto your souls. We have now done with the several ways of dishonoring the pardoning grace of God. Because God is very jealous of this and takes it exceedingly ill, I have been the larger in it. Now I am to show the evil of it.

*Of the evil of dishonoring the pardoning grace of God*

First, there is this evil in it, because it is a sinning against mercy which God accounts His glory. A man takes it exceedingly ill if he is wronged in his goods, his good name, or in anything he apprehends any excellency in. And, mark it, the greater excellency a man apprehends in anything, the greater evil he accounts the wrong that is done to him in that thing. If you wrong a covetous man in his estate, he presently as a madman cannot bear it, because you wrong him of that which he counts his greatest excellency. So it is with a scholar. A man of parts will rather you wrong him in anything than account him as a dunce, because he accounts his parts and learning his greatest excellency. Therefore, he would not be wronged in that.

So you who are mariners, and have skill in sailing and in the art of navigation, if one vilifies your work and finds fault with you there, it is as if one touched your freehold; you cannot bear it. Why? Because you account it your excellency.

So it is between us and God. If we wrong God in that which He accounts His excellency, He cannot bear it. Now the pardoning mercy of God is that which God counts His excellency and glory. In Exodus 34, when God descended to show Moses His glory, His pardoning mercy was one of the great masterpieces wherein God accounted His glory to consist, more than in the making of heaven and earth. Now for God to be condemned in that wherein His glory consists must be a great dishonor to Him. The mercy of God comes from the bowels of His compassions. If you strike one on the arm or shoulder, it is not so much as if you strike him on his bowels. When you dishonor the pardoning grace of God, you do, as it were, spurn at the bowels of God and Christ, and He accounts it so. Certainly you who can hear this and neglect it, and prize and prefer every base lust before it, you do, as it were, go up and down kicking

and spurning at the bowels of God. That child who spurns at his mother's bowels is not so much to be blamed as you are who go on in sin after you have heard the pardoning grace of God opened to you. Your going on in sin is a spurning at the very bowels of God.

Second, this aggravates the sin of such men above the sins of the heathen. Their sins are nothing in comparison to those who live under the gospel and have the grace of God opened unto them. At the Day of Judgment, when you hear them condemned for sins against the light of nature, they may say, "Lord, what shall become of these? We never heard of such grace and pardoning mercy in Christ as you heard of who have lived in such and such a place, and have had the pardoning mercy of God opened to you." If they do not plead against you, yet it will be made known before all men and angels what you have heard, what has been preached unto you, and what God has done for you. And for you to continue in sin, your sins will thereby be aggravated and your condemnation heightened.

Third, your sin is above the sin of the devils. The sin of the devils is not so great as yours is who live under the light of the gospel and have the pardoning grace of God preached to you. For though the devils blaspheme God continually, yet their sins have not this aggravation upon them that yours have. God never came and told them He was willing to pardon their sins. Nor did Christ make any purchase for them by His blood. But to you is the gospel preached and pardon offered daily to you. Are not your sins greater then than the sins of the devils? Would not you account it a great aggravation of anyone's offense who has wronged and injured you, and *should* seek for pardon but does not, and yet you rather seek him, offer him pardon, sue to him to accept it, and he goes away and condemns you? Would

not you account this a great aggravation?

Know that your sinning against this grace makes you to be in a worse condition than Beelzebub himself, who is the chief of all the devils. He never had this aggravation, which is a dreadful one, to sin against the pardoning mercy of God; so that the very devils may complain against you and say, "Oh, Lord, we sinned against Thee, but Thou tookest advantage against us presently for one sin! But how have these sinned against Thy pardoning mercy that has been offered to them again and again, which was never offered us?"

Fourth, I might show you the evil the Scripture says of it. Take two or three texts. John 3:18–19: "He that believeth not, is condemned already," and "He that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him." It sticks fast upon such a one. Then there is Hebrews 10:29: "If they that sinned under Moses' Law died without mercy, who had but little of this grace revealed unto them, how much sorer punishment shall they have who sin under the gospel, under the full revelation of this grace?"

But to conclude all, nothing will be such an aggravation of your torments in hell as these sermons of God's pardoning mercy if you go on in sin. When we speak of the pardoning grace of God, we cannot do it without trembling hearts. Why? Because we know God will be exceedingly quick with those who have the grace of the gospel preached unto them. And therefore, when we come upon this argument, we cannot but do as a physician who is giving his patient a potion that is of mighty operation, that will either cure him or dispatch him suddenly, if it cures not. A physician cannot but come with a trembling hand with such a potion when he knows it must work one way or other.

We know God is exceedingly quick with those to whom He reveals His pardoning mercy in the preaching of the gospel, and those truths we preach will have a quick operation either

to bring you out of your sins to salvation or to quickly dispatch you for condemnation. In Mark 16:15–16, Christ says, “Go and preach the gospel to every creature; and he that believes shall be saved; and he that believes not shall be damned.” As if Christ had said, “Go open the doctrine of the gospel, and the justification of a sinner by the freeness of the grace of God through Jesus Christ, and whosoever will come in and believe and close with it shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned. There is no trifling in the business. He that believes and comes in shall be saved; but he that believes not shall perish. He shall be damned. Let people know when they have the gospel preached unto them, there is no trifling, no dallying with it. It is not to be put off. He who comes in shall be saved, but he who stands off shall perish, shall be damned, and shall know that I will fetch up My glory from him another day, in another way.” As if Christ had said, “Go, preach, make quick work of it. Either come in and be saved or stand out and perish.”

And so when John came to preach the doctrine of forgiveness of sin, Matthew 3:10, he said, “Now the axe is laid to the root of the tree; every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.” Now also the axe is laid to the root. If he bears no good fruit now, he is hewn down and cast into the fire. Now, when you hear of pardon of sin and grace revealed in the gospel, either you bring forth fruit or you do not. If you do not, God is peremptory. If you come in and embrace the gospel, you shall be saved; but if you do not, the axe is laid unto your root to cut you down.

The gospel makes quick work of you, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 2:14. It is so strong that it kills with the very savor of it. It has such a savor that it can kill with the very smell of it. To him who believes it is the savor of life unto life; but to him that believes not it is the savor of death unto death. Acts 17:30 tells

us that in the times of ignorance God winked when men understood not what the evil of sin was; but now He commands all men to repent. Before you heard the dreadful evil and malignity that is in sin, God might have winked at you; but now He commands you all, having heard so many sermons on the evil nature of sin, to repent or else God will be very quick with you.

Hebrews 4:12 is an excellent place: "The Word of God is quick and powerful," but what word is it? Mark, in the second verse of this chapter, "Unto us was the gospel preached." It was the word of the gospel, and verse 8: "If Jesus had given them rest." It is that rest spoken of in the gospel. Mark what he says in verse 1: "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left of entering into rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Let us therefore fear, for the Word of God is swift, and will make quick dispatch. No sermons make such quick dispatch as sermons of the gospel; fear let any seem to come short.

Let us fear lest any of us should go on in any way that makes it seem to appear we reject the gospel. It is very observable what we find in God's dealings with Israel of old. We never find God swearing against them till they rejected the land of Canaan, and preferred Egypt, when the spies were sent forth to search the land and brought some of the grapes of it, Numbers 13 and 14. They told them what an excellent, fruitful land it was, but because of some difficulty in getting it, they fell to murmuring. Only then did God take up a solemn oath that they should not enter into it, though they had provoked Him ten times. Yea, forty years in the wilderness, yet God never swore against them till that time. That soul is in a sad condition that God shall swear in His wrath shall not enter into His rest.

Listen, you who walk in the wilderness of your sins and have your heart hardened against all the truths of God. If God has come in to you and opened Canaan, and brought you any

clusters of those grapes, has revealed the mysteries of the gospel and pardoning grace through Christ; if you now hang off and are longing after the onions and garlic of Egypt, fear and tremble lest God should swear you should never enter into rest. Listen, you who are wicked, unclean persons, who went on in sin though you had some light of nature that caused conscience to check you, yet God was patient, and your condition was not so dangerous then. But now, after hearing of this grace of the Gospel and pardoning mercy, a drunkard, an unclean person, or a vile liver now is in a thousand times more danger lest God should swear against him than before. Take heed in every act of the renewal of your sin. You are in danger lest God in His wrath swear against you that you shall never enter into rest.

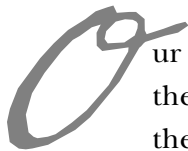
QUESTION. Well, if the case is so, then you may say, "What shall we do that we might not dishonor this sweet and precious grace, but that we might honor God in it?"

ANSWER. Is this the frame of your heart, to be careful above all things in the world that you might not dishonor this precious grace? Does your heart work thus? "Lord, whatever I have been heretofore, though I have been a negligent, vile wretch; yet for time to come, it shall be the work of my soul to give up myself unto whatever God shall speak unto me so that I may not dishonor God." Is this the frame of your spirit? The Lord keep it so.

Now, that I might direct you in this great point, I shall, first, show who they are who are pardoned, for that will be a foundation for direction, and then, second, show you what you ought to do to get it, what we are to put you upon if you find no evidence of it. And then, third, I shall show what is to be done for the honoring of the grace of God by those who have some comfortable evidence of it.

## CHAPTER 16

# *Men Make Several Mistakes about the Pardon of Their Sins*

ur work now is to show who they are that have their sins pardoned, for there is nothing in all the world that so much concerns us as to know how things stand with us in relation to God and our souls, whether we are pardoned or not. A mistake in this is a wonderful mistake, and yet how many thousands are there who venture the weight of this great business upon poor, weak, and slight grounds, yea, rather, on mere suggestions of their own heart. And therefore we must first labor to convince men of their mistakes about pardon of sin and then lay down some sound evidences of pardon in which there may be true and solid peace. People are exceedingly apt to mistake in point of pardon of sin, hoping that God has pardoned them and that they shall not be laid to their charge. But they do so upon very slight grounds that will deceive them. And therefore I desire this day that you would look upon yourselves as arraigned before the great God, as one day you must be. And let your hearts so hear and attend to what we deliver as if God should speak to you and say, "You sinner, such and such things you are privy to and have been guilty of. What can you

say as to why the sentence of everlasting death should not be passed upon you?"

Why God should not declare against you according to His Law? I suppose there are scarcely any of you who do not have some hope that God will never proceed against you according to His Law; for indeed, if He does, you are undone forever. But what are the grounds of your hopes? Why do you think God will not proceed against you for your sins, but will pass them by and forgive you? Let us a little examine the grounds of it, for it is of very great consequence. And certainly many people are now sunk down into the bottomless pit of hell by resting upon false grounds. I shall labor to discover the weakness of their standing who rest on false grounds.

MISTAKE 1. Many think that God has pardoned their sin because it is but little they have been guilty of, and for that they think there is a pardon in course. "Were I guilty of such horrible wickedness and notorious sins as many others are, then I think it would go hard with me. I would be afraid that things between God and me were very grievous; but the sins I have been guilty of are no such great sins. I hope God will pass them by. God forbid I should think He were so strict as not to pass by such small sins as those that I have been guilty of."

ANSWER 1. Know that you do not understand what the evil and malignity of sin mean. If you think the least sin does not make such a breach between God and you as all created power in heaven and earth can never make up again, if you do not believe that all those sermons preached unto you about the evil of sin are lost unto you, then know that, as a little pen-knife may stab you to death as truly as a gash of the greatest sword, and a little shot out of a pistol may kill you as well as a cannon bullet, so a little sin may prove your eternal ruin as well as a great

one. Therefore it is no argument that God has passed by your sins because they are little ones. And for that consider this one thing I am further speaking of:

ANSWER 2. God's pardoning mercy is His own to do with as He pleases. And therefore, that God may show His prerogative, He will sometimes, to some, pardon their great sins, and others He will damn for little sins. You think your sins are not so great as other men's, and therefore you think that God will forgive you. Do not deceive yourselves with this. God will do with His mercy what He pleases. What if He will pardon the most notorious, gross sins in others and damn you for your sins in thoughts? What if He will pardon the most notorious uncleanness and murder in another and damn you for a wanton thought? He may do it, for His mercy is His own. For this, take the example of David and Saul compared together. David committed many sins, but especially those two of adultery and murder, and yet God pardoned Him. But Saul committed far less sins than those and yet God cast him off forever. The things on which God laid the casting off of Saul were these two sins:

First, he did not stay till Samuel came. When Samuel had appointed a time to come, he deferred it to the last minute and Saul was in a great strait. He tarried for him long, and he thought he must not go to war unless he offered a sacrifice before. He ventured to offer it himself and did not stay out the full time. He stayed so long till he thought that Samuel would not come, and then what he did was but to offer sacrifice to God. And yet God lays this very thing unto his charge as a cause why He would cast him off. In 1 Samuel 13:13, Samuel tells him that God had thought to establish the kingdom forever unto him, but now He will not. Saul, you are gone for this sin.

The second sin in Scripture on which God lays His casting off is this: God sent him against the Amalekites and had him

destroy all, but he spared the fat of the flock and the king. Now the sparing of the fat of the flock was done out of a good intention. He professed it was that the people might have of the fattest to offer in sacrifice to God—a good intention—and yet for this God told him that He would rend the kingdom from him, 1 Samuel 15:28. Though Saul was guilty of other sins, yet if you observe the story you shall find that these were the two sins which God puts the casting away of Saul upon. And yet David committed murder and adultery, and was not cast off. Why? Why, if God will show His prerogative, what has the creature to reason with him for it? If He damns Saul for his sins that were less and pardons David's that were greater, what have you to do with that? His mercy is His own.

You think, it may be, because you could put a man off with this reason: "My sins are small, and therefore I may be forgiven them because they are not as great as others." I grant it may be so, yet know that 'tis not so with God. He may pardon great sins in others, and yet you may perish eternally for the least sins of all. Therefore, take this for a conclusion: if you have no other ground for the pardon of your sins but because they are little ones, I pronounce in the name of God against you this day, your sins are not pardoned but stand upon the file, and you shall eternally perish in them if you have no other ground than that to show for the pardon of them. And therefore never make it an argument that they are pardoned because they are less than others.

**MISTAKE 2.** Others, it may be, will plead, "My sins are not many. We are all sinners, but I have not multiplied and increased my sins as others have done."

**ANSWER.** I shall answer that briefly. Know that one sin is enough to damn you as fully as a million transgressions

reiterated again and again. One chain is enough to hold you in everlasting darkness, and God may damn you for one sin as well as for so many thousands. You have heard how He damned the angels for their first sin, and it was but one sin. And therefore, though your sins are not many, that is no argument at all.

Further, we may observe in the way of God's pardoning mercy that He pardons some who have gone on a long time in their sins, and makes quick work with others who have been but a little time in sin. That we may see in the example of Manasseh and Amon. Compare those two together. In the example of Manasseh you shall find that he reigned some fifty-five years. He was a notorious, vile sinner against God and yet he reigned a long time. His conversion was late, 2 Kings 21:1. He was twelve years old when he began to reign. He reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem, and almost all this time he went on in committing the most notorious abominations and yet God pardoned him. But now his son Amon comes after him, and, perhaps, reasoned thus: "My father lived thus and thus, and for a long time had his lust and desires, and why may not I venture to do as my Father did?" And so he went on in his father's wickedness. But now mark, God came presently upon him and let him live but two years, and there was an end of him. Manasseh continued fifty-five years, and his son came after him and would go on in his father's steps, but God presently cut him off. So, though some may continue in whoredom and other abominations, and perhaps live in outward prosperity many years, forty or fifty years, yet God may pass them by. And then if you sin after their example, He may come upon you for the first or second act, cut you off, and send you down presently to hell. Therefore, do not say, "My sins are but few, and therefore God will pass them by." That is no argument at all.

MISTAKE 3. Others apprehend their sins are pardoned because the guilt of them does not lie upon their consciences. They think they are not guilty of their sins and say they were committed a great while ago. A long time has passed and they have not heard of them, and therefore they think they shall never hear of them again. God has quite passed over them because they were committed a long time ago, and they have not heard of them.

ANSWER. Do not deceive yourselves in this. Though you never heard of the sins that you committed twenty, forty, or sixty years ago, it is no argument that they are pardoned. They may be on the file in heaven, standing there upon record, and lying as a debt against you, though they were committed eighty years ago. It is no argument a malefactor is pardoned because the judgment is not tomorrow or the next day. 'Tis true, God will have His assize for some sooner, but for you He has reserved it till another time. And that is why you do not hear of your sins. Exodus 32:34: "In the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them." God has His day, and perhaps the day has not come for Him to visit. And therefore you think you are discharged because the day of God's visitation has not come to you.

Second, know further that though your sins were committed a great while ago, yet with regard to God's eternity they are to Him as if they were committed this morning before you came to this assembly. Though you committed them forty or fifty years ago, to God they are but as a sin committed yesterday. It may be you think your consciences would fly in your faces if you were drunk last night and should come to the sacrament this morning. And certainly he must be a desperate wretch, a monstrous, notorious villain, who would dare to come to the sacrament this morning who was drunk last night or last week and never made his peace with God. His conscience may fly

in his face if he were not a monster. But your sins that were committed forty or fifty years ago are to God as if they were committed but this morning; for God's eternity consists not in passing and coming. There is no succession with God, no time passed nor time to come. All time to God is as a perpetual now.

And therefore, all the sins that you have committed in time past are in the eye of God as if they were committed this very hour. There's a great need to understand this rightly, for the humbling of men and women, by causing them to look back upon their sins and lay them to heart, for they are thus presented before God as if they were committed this very moment. Job 14:16–17: "Dost Thou not watch over my sin? My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and Thou sewest up mine iniquity." God watches over your sins and will come upon you for them. They are sealed up in a bag.

Sometimes, when I have seen the Clerk of the Assizes draw out his indictments—such a one for murder and such a one for felony—it has put me in mind of this text. Those indictments against men were put up in the Clerk of the Assizes' bag, it may be, a good while before; and now at the Assizes they are drawn out and read openly in the face of the court. So are your sins all put in a bag, and God, in the day of visitation, pulls them out and reads them openly before men and angels.

We have an example in Scripture how God came on men for sins committed a long while before. Joseph's brethren sold him, and after this they went on and never heard of it till a long time after. It does not appear that their consciences were troubled till twenty-two years after they had committed that sin. They came to Egypt and were in affliction, and *then* their consciences began to fly in their faces for the sin they committed against their brother. Joseph was seventeen years old when he was sold. When he stood before Pharaoh he was thirty. There's

thirteen years, and then seven years of plenty and two years of famine before they came to Egypt. There's twenty-two years before their consciences flew in their faces for their sin against their brother. Take heed what you do, for the sins of your youth may be a torment to your old age. It may be *you* seldom think of it, but remember, when you are old God may come and reckon with you for the sins of your youth. It should be a great argument to make people take heed of sin, for those sins you commit now may do you mischief forty or sixty years hence.

In the natural body, many young men feel no distempers in their bodies for the present, and so do not care for their diet nor how to avoid excesses. Yet, after they grow old, then they feel their distempers in their joints and bones, which is no other than the drunkenness and intemperance of their youth. So it is in regard of the soul. Many in their younger years greatly follow after wickedness, and because they do not hear of it, they go away and never are troubled. But afterwards, in their old age, God comes upon them for the sins of their youth. When Joab was young he committed sin, but when his hoary head was on him God came to him in wrath for it. And therefore, do not think all your sins are pardoned because it was a great while ago since they were committed. Rather reckon up your former sins and bewail them. Do not rest on the ground that it has been a long time since they were committed. You must look for other grounds or else you are undone forever, for this will certainly fail you.

**MISTAKE 4.** Others reason that God has pardoned their sins not only because they committed them a great while ago, but because they have had prosperity. It has been well with them and God has done them good. And certainly, if God had not pardoned their sins, God would never have let them thrive.

ANSWER. I shall speak but little to this, for these reasonings are very vain (there are others I shall more insist upon). Know this, you make it an argument of God's pardoning mercy, but it may rather be an argument of God's eternal curse for God to suffer a man to prosper much after great sins committed. It is a sign that God has given that man over to hardness of heart, which is the most dreadful curse in the world. After God had rejected Saul (1 Samuel 14 and 15), you may read how Saul had a great deal of success in his way immediately after God had cast him off. So, though God has cast off a man or woman, yet that man or woman may have much success in their way. You who are mariners, you cannot draw an argument that because you have had a good voyage, and have passed such dangers (though you have committed many sins), God is at peace with you, and that all your faults are passed over. No, you may have many good successes in your voyages and yet perish at length for the sins you have committed in your voyages. And so you may have good success, as Saul had good success in war, yet he was cast off for all that.

MISTAKE 5. Others say, "We are not so vain to make outward prosperity an argument or ground that our sins are pardoned, but we sorrow for sin, repent of them, and turn from them, and rely on God's mercy through Christ that our sins are pardoned." ANSWER. These are arguments of a higher nature than the former, and if there is true sorrow, unfeigned repentance, reformation, and a trusting in God's mercy through Jesus Christ, they will be good arguments indeed. But now I shall show you there may be *all* these and yet sin not pardoned; yea, a relying on Christ, at least so as people may think they rely upon Christ, and yet sin not pardoned. Though these things we mentioned last may seem to be hard, yet the trial of them is a very safe

and wholesome thing because, if you mistake in this, you are undone. You will examine evidences for your houses and lands; do so in the great matters between God and your souls. And, regarding sorrow for sin, I shall make it plain.

1. There may be a great deal of sorrow for sin, and yet sin not pardoned. You know the example of Ahab, 1 Kings 21:27–29: “And it came to pass when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth and went softly.” When God sent the prophet to tell him of his sin, presently upon the prophet’s words he rent his clothes, which was a sign of extreme sorrow in those times, and then he put on sackcloth. He put off his princely robes, his brave apparel, and put on sackcloth, and that not for an outward garment, but upon his flesh. Then he fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went softly as a dejected man. The pride and stoutness of his heart seemed to be so much abated that God took notice of it in the 29th verse, “Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before Me?” And because he did so, the judgment was deferred for a while; yet certainly Ahab’s sin was not, nor ever should be, pardoned, though he put on sackcloth and humbled himself before the Lord.

I appeal to you this morning. Are not many of you hoping for pardon of sin and yet come far short of Ahab? All you do in your repentance is to say, “God be merciful unto me, I am sorry. Lord forgive me.” And there’s an end; all’s done presently. But Ahab went a great deal further, and yet his sin was not pardoned.

Take the example of Esau. You know what the Scripture says of him. He sought the blessing with tears and yet found no place for repentance. And in being rejected of the blessing, it was a type of his rejection of heaven. Some carry it thus to prove there may be tears and yet no true repentance. That is a truth. Esau

was very much troubled, and shed many tears, and yet there was no true repentance. But I rather take the meaning of the text thus: he found no place of repentance in his father, Isaac. His father, Isaac, had given the blessing to Jacob and would not call it back though he sought it with tears. There was no place for Isaac to recall it any more. Though he shed many tears, yet he went without it. So there may be much sorrow, and you may seek the blessing with many tears, yet God may be so turned against you that there will be no place for repentance; that is, God will not call in what is out against you. And it is said of Judas that when he saw Christ was condemned he repented. It is said he repented, yet Judas was not pardoned. So you see plainly that there may be repentance and yet sin never pardoned.

Indeed, true repentance has ever pardon going along with it, but the Scripture speaks of a repentance that may be without pardon. Therefore, when you say you repent, you must not look upon it so as to think that *because* you repent, therefore your sins are pardoned, as if every repentance was true. For you mistake in the work of repentance if you think this to be repentance to salvation, for you to be sorry at the very heart for your sins. Certainly you may be sorry at the heart and yet perish for all that. I make no question but Judas was sorry at his heart and wished it had never been done, and if it were possible to do it again he would never do it. There is as much expressed: he repented and brought the thirty pieces again. He was not only sorrowful but made satisfaction. He brought the money back again that he had gotten in a wicked way. And therefore, if you think this to be true repentance, you are mightily mistaken.

But wherein is it that we fail? It is not for me now to enter on the doctrine of true repentance. I am to speak of it so far as to convince men that it is not a ground for hope of pardon of sin. Mark it when 'tis thus with you: you repent because

you see that sin will bring you into danger. You have had the pleasure or the profit of it, and you see now it will bring you into trouble and danger. You are sorry that ever you did it. Certainly, if God would be satisfied with such kind of sorrow, He might have enough of it in hell, for there is yelling and sorrow because of the troubles that sin has brought upon them. To sorrow because of the trouble that our sins bring on us is merely natural and flows from nature itself. That is far from a saving work of repentance.

Therefore, the repentance many hope to have, what is it? When we tell them of their sins they say they hope to repent. What do they mean? Why, they would take the pleasure of sin, and when the punishment comes they would be sorry for it and repent of it. The ordinary way to put men off from this plea is to ask them, "How do you know you shall live, or that your hearts shall not be hardened? But suppose you do live, and that you have a heart to do as you say, yet your repentance may fail you. If your repentance is no other than that which comes for sorrow of sin because of the punishment, it will fail you."

Certainly that repentance that must go for currency in heaven is of another nature. Possibly I may show afterwards what is true and false sorrow, but for the present I shall show where the mistake lies. Whoever, therefore, builds their belief in the pardon of their sin merely on their sorrow, and such kind of sorrow, is like a man who would erect a great building and lays the foundation of it in a quagmire or on the sand. The Scripture says that when storms come the building falls. I shall speak hereafter to those who build on the sand, but these build on a quagmire, on a few tears, sorrow, and trouble of spirit they have upon the apprehension of punishment of sin. This building will fall in time of straits and danger, and this is the reason why people who depend upon sorrow never have peace; for how can I

tell the measure of sorrow I am to have before peace is spoken? And then, if they feel not sorrow, they are questioning again. It is a dangerous thing to lay the hopes of pardon of sin upon our own sorrows.

Where or how, then, shall we lay our hopes? Why, upon the sorrows of Jesus Christ. There you shall find the surest ground (there may be some mistake there too, but for the present I shall not stay on that); we must look ten thousand times more at the sorrows of Christ than at our own sorrows. And therefore, when your hearts are troubled and you look for mercy, depend ten thousand times more on the sorrows of Christ than on all your own sorrows; for your sorrows for sin cannot satisfy God's justice. That must be a ground of hope for the pardon of my sin; it must be something that must satisfy the justice of God, for though there is never so much sorrow, yet it will not satisfy God's justice. And, consider further, true sorrow rather follows the work of justification than precedes it. For example, I am not therefore pardoned because I mourn, but because I am pardoned, therefore I come to mourn. So stands the truth in divinity in point of justification and repentance.

You pervert the order if you think that because you mourn and are a little sorrowful you shall be pardoned. The truth is, if your mourning and sorrow are works of true saving grace, you mourn and sorrow because you are justified. Sorrow of true repentance rather flows from pardon than pardon from it. When God pardons sin, He lets out the graces of His Spirit, and then comes sorrow as a fruit or evidence of God's pardoning love and reconciliation; for though God may give outward favors to a man who is not pardoned, yet God never gives His Spirit to work any saving grace in the heart till He is reconciled. 'Tis a fruit of His pardoning grace and favor, and because He has justified you, He sends His Spirit to work sorrow. But you

must come to sorrow and repentance another way. Know that all true sorrow flows from justification. All that sorrow before justification is but legal sorrow and reveals something that may hinder the soul from Christ, such as sin, the terrors of the Law, and the wrath of God. But it does not interest the soul in Christ.

This I affirm as most certain divinity—there is no sorrow whereby any soul is interested and planted in Christ. The sorrow that is wrought in them before justification, in order of nature, may be a means to bring them to God and make them inquire after Christ, and stir up their hearts to take away those things that do hinder from Christ, but it does not interest the soul in Christ. You do not understand the way of the gospel if you think that sorrow interests the soul in Christ. No, that must be by faith laying hold on Him for justification, and *then* comes sorrow of repentance afterwards. You may see yourself as an undone wretch for sin, lost forever, and nothing in the world can quiet you. All this may be by the work of the Law, but then God comes and shows you His grace in Christ, and enables you to close with it for justification, and then comes in evangelical sorrow, mourning and melting sorrow more than ever before.

But now it comes in another way from the Spirit of God, melting the soul because it has sinned against Jesus Christ, who has so graciously appeared in His pardoning mercy to that soul. So that now you sorrow because you are pardoned, for it comes as a fruit of faith laying hold of the pardoning grace of God. And then there is no such argument in the world to melt the heart with sorrow as when faith tells the soul that sin is pardoned. Though your sorrow was little before and now is greater, you need not be troubled if God makes your humiliations greater for sin after the knowledge of your pardon; for the revelation of God's grace in the pardon of your sin is the most excellent means to humble the soul in the world. As the sorrows of God's

children after pardon work on their own hearts, so they work on God's heart too. God is mightily taken with it. Once your sins are pardoned, then God makes your heart melt to Him as His does to you; but the sorrow of one who is an enemy to God does not soften God's heart.

There is a great deal of difference between the sorrow of God's children and the sorrow of others. They make sorrow the ground of pardon. This God accepts not. It is true, you may sorrow for sin because it may be a means to bring you to Christ, but what justifies the soul is union with Christ by faith; and all the sorrow that works repentance to salvation flows from God's grace in Christ, having justified you. Justification is the first thing that places you in blessedness; sorrow does not first put you in a blessed condition, but is merely a fruit of that blessedness you are put into. Certainly these things are the truths of God. So when you look for blessedness any other way, you look for it merely in a natural way, or as a heathen may do. A heathen knows he ought not to offend God, and he knows he needs to have mercy from God, and that he ought to be sorrowful for his sins. I might give you many examples for it, but I must hasten. Those, then, who seek after pardon of sin this way seek for it merely in a natural way.

2. Others say, "I am not only sorry for my sins but I reform; and is not this a ground of pardon?"

Know likewise, there may be a leaving of sin and yet sin not pardoned. For that take the example of Herod. He heard John the Baptist gladly and reformed in many things. He was a great deal the better for John's ministry, and yet Herod was not pardoned. This is a notable example for you who come to hear sermons and seem to be much affected. Let me ask you in the name of God and let conscience answer: what is it you reformed since you heard all those sermons on the evil of sin, and now on

the pardon of sin? What evils have you reformed in your families and in your own hearts? I cannot but hope that many of you may say, "Through grace, these and these evils were in my family before but now I have reformed them. And these evils I did before but now I have left them." I hope many can say so, and blessed be God for this fruit of our ministry if anything is reformed, if Sabbaths are better kept and duties in family set up, and private exercises of religion performed, that you are not so proud, passionate, and froward as before. Oh, that it may be said so! It is worth our labor to restrain sin that God may not be so much dishonored if there were not more done, but we preach for further and higher ends that souls would not stay in reforming. Herod heard John the Baptist and did many things. Judas cast away the money; he repented and would not keep the money. There was a kind of reformation in both Herod and Judas, but this is no ground to build upon for pardon of sin.

As those who depended on their sorrow for pardon built on the quagmire, so those who depend on their reformation build upon the sand. The one by his sorrow and trouble for sin seems, as it were, to be in the work of humiliation. He is like a man who digs deep for a foundation but does not cast out the old mold but builds upon it. The other seems like one who not only digs deep but casts out the old rubbish and brings in new mold, new earth. He lays by and casts away his former sins and does the contrary good. But now, though they go further than the former in casting out the old rubbish and bringing in new earth, yet, after all this is done, they build upon it and do not build upon the Rock, Christ. They bring in the new earth of their own performances and duties. This they build upon and do not build upon the Rock, Christ, for the pardon of their sins and the justification of their souls before God.

Here they fail, and this is their undoing, their mistake in

this; and yet it is most sure that every one of us would mistake in this if God did not reveal in the gospel another way to receive pardon and justification in His Son. We should certainly all of us rest here and go no further. No man or woman in the world who never heard the gospel went further than this, and so far one may go without the gospel. We may dig deep, cast out the old rubbish, and bring in new earth; this we may do and not hear of the gospel. And therefore, we have a great deal of cause to bless God that we may hear the mysteries of the gospel opened unto us; for certainly we would go no further, otherwise, and if we go no further we should certainly perish. Therefore, if we go but thus far, it is not building on the Rock, Christ. Hence, the ground and bottom of faith for justification cannot be in reformation, or in anything in the creature; it must be in something above and without us, and yet by faith (wrought in us), though without us. I mean it is the Rock, Christ, and the foundation that is laid for the forgiveness of our sin in Christ; that must be the foundation of our faith and not what we do ourselves.

First, know that all the reformation in the world will not satisfy for the evil that you have done for the time past. This I would convince you of, and if you are willing to hear it, it may be of great use to you. When we preach Christ and free grace it is to bring you to Christ. Our preaching down of works is not to keep you from doing them but from *resting* in them. That which I aim at is to bring you into an inquiring frame of spirit, a restless condition, that we may bring you to that which is the true rest, and not to bring you into restlessness. Know that all reformations for time to come will not satisfy God for time past; they will not. Among men, if you have run into arrears with your landlord for rent, and you bring him a quarter's rent when you are three or four quarters behind, or maybe two or three years, if you should think to pay the rent of two or three

years with bringing the last quarter it would be accounted a foolish conceit. So would it be with God if you should think the duties you do at present should satisfy for all the arrears you have run into for time past. You do not understand God's way if you think that God will be satisfied for all that is past by what you do at the present.

Suppose what you do now were perfect, and for all time to come you never committed one sin against God any more; yet all this would not satisfy for time past. This looks but at time to come and does not at all take off anything for the time past. Besides, you may see matter enough in your best reformation for God to condemn you not only for your former sins, but sins in your reforming. But if there were no sin in that, it would be no satisfaction for that which is past. Mark this, that which must be the ground of the pardon of your sin must be such that it must satisfy for your sin past and all your sins to come. That was opened unto you in opening the mysteries of godliness in the pardon and justification of a sinner.

Second, know that God accepts duties, not for the duties themselves but because He accepts the person who performs them. God does not accept the duties and then the person—that is not God's way—but He accepts first the person and then the actions; God never accepts what we do till He accepts our persons. God had regard to Abel's person first, and then to his offerings. So God has first regard to the person of any man and then to his offerings.

You think you are a poor, wretched creature, and then you think, it may be, "If I had such and such parts, and could do thus and thus, then God would accept me." I tell you, all your parts and performances are cast away till God accepts your person. Paul was blameless according to the Law, and yet he accounted all loss for Christ. He knew when God revealed the gospel to

him that he could not be accepted for his righteousness; but his person must first be accepted, and *then* his righteousness. So that the way of new obedience and the work of sanctification are the qualifications of the man who is justified, but not the conditions required for the justification of his person. 'Tis not that it justifies the soul. The justification of the soul comes not through these, but these flow from justification. And until a soul understands this, he never rightly performs duties.

Therefore, to conclude this, though good works and new obedience are good nurses unto faith, yet, if you make these the mother of your faith, your faith is but a bastard faith. These are not the right mother of faith. If your faith is begotten out of your duties and performances, and your faith has no other mother than these, then your faith is illegitimate and not true-born. It does not have the right mother. The right mother of faith is the manifestation of the freeness of God's grace in the covenant of the gospel, shown unto the soul through the mediation of the Son of God. This laid open to the eye of the soul by the mighty work of the Spirit of God raises and creates faith in the soul. This is the generation of true saving faith, the faith of God's elect, as Scripture calls it. It is of a higher birth than that birth which arises out of parts, duties, or performances. Your faith will not inherit if it is base-born. Through faith we come to inherit the promises, and if your faith has no other foundation than your sorrows and reformation, your faith is illegitimate and not that which shall inherit.

3. Others may say, "We trust in the mercy of God."

In this I am to speak to two sorts. First, those who are most grossly ignorant, who have no other ground to hope for pardon of sin but because they hear that God is a merciful God. Know this much: notwithstanding what you hear of God, that He is merciful and not willing that men should perish, yet the

Scripture reveals clearly to us that, notwithstanding God is gracious and merciful, the greatest part of the world perish in their sins. There is nothing more clear than this, that most people in the world perish. And therefore, to say God is merciful is not enough. You may be sorry for sin, reform, and say God is merciful and yet perish. If these three were enough, what need was there for the Son of God to come and take our nature upon Him and be made a curse for man's sin, lay down His life, and shed His precious blood? Why might not these three have been joined together and so Christ never have come? For though Christ had never come, I might have been sorrowful. I might have reformed and said God is merciful though Christ had never come. Those who never knew Christ, nor heard of Him yet, may be sorrowful, reform, and say God is merciful. I beseech you to consider this note: I can never be pardoned and saved in such a way as it might be done though Christ had never come. I can then never be pardoned and saved by all the means I take for pardon and salvation, if those things might be done though Christ had never come. And if you have nothing else but them to rest upon, then you can never be saved.

Put this to your hearts: What have I wrought in my heart that I might not have had if Christ had not come into the world? Certainly the things that most people have to rest upon for pardon and salvation they might have had though Christ had never come into the world.

Further, you say God is merciful. True, the mercy of God is sweet and a blessed argument, and our souls much delight to open the grace and mercy of God. I have endeavored to open to you what is revealed in the gospel. God's mercy is free, though He delights to glorify His mercy. And He has thousands and thousands of subjects to glorify His mercy in though you perish eternally. Though you perish eternally, yet God may be glorious

in the blessedness of His mercy. God has others to magnify His mercy besides you.

If a beggar comes and asks an alms of a man, and he gives him none, that is not an argument the man is not merciful, for he has other objects that are more suitable and fit. Though he does not give to everyone, 'tis no dishonor to his compassion. So it is with God. He has thousands of objects to bestow His mercy on, though you perish. Further, you say God is merciful, and therefore you hope for pardon. Why? God is and has been merciful to you beyond all that you can conceive. God has shown His mercy to you already. You say God is merciful, true, or else you would not have been alive at this moment. That you should hear and see, have all your members whole, and the use of all your senses, and that you should stand here this day under the means of grace, and that you should hear God call on you to repent and believe in His Son, while you walk on in your sin and are dead in sins and trespasses—He sends His Son and Spirit to tell you that He would rescue you and give life unto you—is not this rich mercy? Perhaps you have had the portion of mercy already that God intends for you, yea, so much mercy that all the angels and saints will give acclamations to God for the mercy you have had, though you perish. God has shown mercy to you in many ways, insomuch that the very devils themselves will acknowledge that God was very good to His poor creatures.

You speak of mercy; have you not abused and turned mercy into wantonness? Perhaps the mercy you spoke of is at this very moment pleading to God against you, saying, "How have I been abused by this wretched man? The more my beauty and excellency have been displayed, the more wicked he has grown." What if mercy is now pleading against you, even those mercies that you have abused? And therefore, you need to look for

something else to settle your soul upon than to say that God is merciful. This is the first sort, those who are grossly ignorant.

Second, there are others who mourn, pray, and reform, and then have some kind of reliance on God to pardon them for His mercy's sake. To them I shall say this: know that the mercy of God must be received after God's own way. He has appointed the communication of it, and so it must be received; otherwise it can never attain to such an effect as the pardon of your sin. Note that all the mercy in God considered, as He is Creator of heaven and earth, and not let out through the Mediator, Christ Jesus God-man, never wrought to the pardon of any one sin. And therefore, if you look upon the mercy of God and do not look to the right way of the conveyance of it, you may most dangerously mistake.

The ground and bottom of faith that justifies is not merely to cast oneself on the mercy of God (for there is none but in a natural way know that God is a merciful God), but the main ground of justification, or of justifying faith, is the free grace of God through Jesus Christ. God is merciful through a Mediator, otherwise the ground of your faith is but on a mere confused notion of the mercy of God, which will certainly fail you. A heathen may have as much to be the ground of his faith: "The great Creator of heaven and earth pities those who are in misery, and I am a poor creature in misery. I'll cry to Him. I'll reform my life, and I'll rely on Him." Thus far a heathen may go, but the ground and bottom of faith is not the mercy of God in general, but the mercy of God in and through a Mediator.

Observe a little further: the ground of justifying faith is not that God for Christ's sake will forgive me because of what Christ has done to purchase my pardon; but there is another work of faith in the souls of believers though the soul apprehends it not. It is not the work of faith in justification to believe that

Christ has paid so much as my debt comes to, but the work of faith is to bring the soul unto Christ, and to pitch it upon the person of Christ, to be made mine first, and then the righteousness of Christ to be mine. 'Tis not him saying, "I believe this is my debt, and there is so much money to pay it." But it is the work of faith to bring you to be married to such a person.

And so the debt is transacted on Him to whom you are married, and He will discharge the debt because you are married to Him. So the ground of faith is not to look unto God merely through His Son that I may have pardon, but I must come to have Christ to be mine. I must be married with Christ, and so, through my union with the person of Christ, I come to have all that Christ has done and suffered to be made over to me. Therefore, when I come to look upon the riches of the grace of God in the mediation of His Son, I must come with an eye of faith to be married unto Christ, and Christ with me.

The riches of God's grace in Christ were opened before. We now make use of them as a trial to show the danger of false grounds in relying upon God for pardon.

Further, though it is through the mercy of God to pardon sin, yet it does not work thus: "You have sinned, and My law requires such and such obedience, to be performed on such terms, or else you must perish. But I, through My mercy, will remit something of the rigor and strictness of the Law." Most people confess that by the strictness of the Law they are condemned, but they hope the mercy of God will grant some remission of the Law. It is this way with men: if all penal statutes should be executed it would be very hard, but there is a chancery to abate something of the rigor and strictness of penal statutes. And thus men think to come to have pardon and deal with God after the manner of men. You think the crying to God for mercy will abate something of the strictness and severity of

the Law, but you mistake in taking this way to get peace and reconciliation with God—to look upon God’s mercy as lying in remitting something of the strictness and severity of the Law. No, but the work of God’s mercy lies in finding out a Surety for you and transacting the debt upon Him.

Further, consider the work of God’s mercy in the justification of a sinner when faith lays hold upon it. Faith must not lay hold upon it as a mere single act, but must look at all the concomitants of the work of God’s grace in making way for the justification of a sinner. The mercy of God works many ways, and faith must exercise itself on God’s grace according to the multiplicity of the work of it in bringing about the justification of a sinner. For example, you have sinned and you cry to God for pardon, but the mercy of God does not work thus to pardon you as if it were a single act. But the mercy of God works thus to mankind:

First, He is pleased to enter into a second covenant with mankind after he had broken the first.

A second work of God’s mercy is to set His wisdom to work to find a way how mankind should be reconciled unto Him and his sin pardoned, and yet that God should be no loser. This was the work of His infinite wisdom.

Third, when this is found out, this can be done no other way but only through the Son of God taking man’s nature upon Him and suffering for him. Then here’s the mercy of God: to be willing to send His Son to mediate for poor creatures, and then a further mercy in giving your soul to His Son. He sent not His Son that all might be pardoned, but a certain number that God the Father had given to His Son from all eternity. Now there’s a great work of God’s mercy in passing by others and giving you to His Son. Further, it is a work of God’s mercy in the powerful ministry of the gospel to reveal this.

And then, further, it is a work of God’s mercy to draw you

to close with His Son, and thereby to unite and marry you to His Son.

Further, it is a work of God's mercy to assure you of the pardon and justification of your soul. It is a great deal more for faith to look upon God in this manner than to come in such a way as this: "God is merciful, and I trust in His grace that He will pardon me." We mistake mightily about the mercy of God when we do not look upon it in an evangelical way as it is revealed in the gospel.

Further, know that if God's mercy will work so far for you as to pardon your sin and save your soul, certainly it will work so far as to take away the power of sin and not let you live in the filth of your sin. Many think God's mercy will do great matters hereafter, but that it is nothing now in comparison to what He will do hereafter. They think He will give them outward blessings now but keep spiritual things till hereafter. Certainly this is an infallible truth: if God's mercy works not so powerfully here in this world as to bestow spiritual good things on you, you may be assured that it will never work so powerfully on you as to save your soul in the world to come. Can it be thought a prince pardons a malefactor so that he shall not be hanged, and yet suffers him to lie in the prison and rot in a dungeon? This would be but a poor pardon, a half pardon, to be delivered from the gallows and rot in the prison. Certainly, whatever a prince may do, God never pardons a sinner so. To show him mercy to save him from hell and yet to let him lie rotting all his life long in sin? No, when God pardons He delivers and shakes off the fetters, as we shall see further. Therefore, you who say you hope in God's mercy that He will pardon you, let me ask, what has He done for you? If you think that God's mercy will work so strongly hereafter to save your soul, certainly it will be as strong for you here to sanctify you. If it works not so strongly

on you now as to sanctify you, certainly it will never work so strongly for you hereafter as to save you.

4. Others say, in the last place, "We are not only sorry for sin, and reform and trust in God's mercy, but we rely upon God's mercy through Christ. And therefore we hope we shall be pardoned."

I might speak much to this. We must rest there, but there is a mistake there too. Relying on Christ is not relying on Him by acting on some transient thoughts that pass over, but it is an abiding thing. Men hear there is no way to be saved but by Christ, and they cannot deny it, and because they are loath to think they are such as cannot be saved, they are loath to have such ill thoughts of themselves. And hearing this is the way and no other, therefore they will persuade themselves that they shall find mercy through Christ. Now what great work is this so to rely on Christ? The work of faith is a mighty work; it is not a short, transient work, a few thoughts upon your heart to be saved by Christ. No, wherever faith is right, true reliance on Christ, it is a mighty work of the Spirit of God, working this grace in raising the soul higher than itself, and carrying it through and above all difficulties when it brings the soul to rely upon God.

There may be great mistakes when people say they rely upon Christ; and therefore take this for conviction: Relying on Christ is not merely to think, "My sins are pardoned by Christ," but it is a receiving of Christ, a possessing of Christ, a coming into Christ, a living in Christ, and a bringing Christ to live in me. 'Tis eating the flesh of Christ and drinking His blood, and so finding nourishment and strength from Him as really as the body does by the meat and drink it takes and is strengthened by. So faith does to the soul.

Therefore, faith is not a slight notion, like water running

through a pipe that leaves nothing behind it (for so the thoughts of most people are), but it is such a thing as brings Christ into the soul and the soul into Christ, and so feeds and lives upon Him. This is relying upon Christ for pardon, so as to have the concomitants and comforts of pardon continually going along with it.

Now that you have heard these things, go away and beseech God to settle things aright in your souls. Say to your hearts, "Lord I see that settling of the heart aright upon Christ for justification and pardon of sin is another manner of business than I was aware of; and I am persuaded that if I had died before I would certainly have died under some of these mistakes. Lord, settle my heart aright in this great business."

Do not go away with such thoughts as these. The minister speaks of such mistakes, but I hope it is far otherwise. Do not venture to put off what we say with such slight thoughts. When we speak unto you we speak in the name of God. And it is a horrible taking of the name of God in vain if we examine not what we say unto you by the Word. And therefore, know you are charged this day in the name of God to look to it, and to examine your hearts as to what grounds you go upon for the pardon of your sin, that you may not mistake. In this we shall give you some further help in laying down some positive grounds that you may rest upon for the pardon of your sin.

## *The True Evidences of Forgiveness of Sin*

**B**ut if it is asked, “Who are they that have their sins pardoned?” Surely they are not many. This test puts it in the singular number: “Blessed is he who has his sin pardoned,” and by that which has been delivered about the mistakes it appears there are not very many. Yet there are some, and this is the work of this day in the name of the Lord to declare to some poor souls this day that their sins are pardoned. This is the message from the Lord I am to speak to them (I hope divers in this place) as from Christ: Son and daughter, be of good comfort, your sins are pardoned. And blessed is that man or woman who this day shall hear that joyful sound in their hearts, and who shall have the Spirit of God witness unto their spirit. What I have heard, so I have felt this day: that signs of forgiveness of sin have been delivered, I have felt them in my own soul. Well then, what are they? To insist upon them:

EVIDENCE 1. The first is what the apostle gives in Romans 8:30: “Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified.” Justification consists especially in the remission and pardon of sin.

Now the Holy Ghost says that whom He has called He has justified. Would you know that you are justified and that your sins are pardoned? The Spirit of God shows you. It is not a note of mine, but it is that which comes from the Holy Ghost: whom He has called, those He has justified.

Vocation is a certain evidence of justification. This vocation or calling is the second link that unites those two links of that golden chain together mentioned in that place. The first link is the foreknowledge of God, God's predestination; and then there is vocation next, after that justification, and then glorification. The first chain in the link is that God from all eternity predestinates some persons to have their sins pardoned; but vocation comes in between predestination and justification, and after that glorification. So while I am giving evidences of justification here in this text, I shall give evidences of predestination and glorification too; for these are all linked together.

Many people look only after justification; they hope their sins are pardoned, but they look not to any other link of the chain, such as calling and vocation. Whom He has called, those He has justified. But the question then is, what is this calling? What do you mean by that? How shall we know whether we are called or not? In 2 Peter 1:10, he bids them there to give diligence to make their calling and election sure. Mark, as here predestination and calling are put together, so there calling and election. Says he, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." Election is first sure with respect to God, but vocation is first with regard to ourselves. Make that sure, and then you make election sure, justification sure, and glorification sure too.

Then what is vocation? For answer to the question, know there is an outward call and an inward call. When God sends the ministers of the Word to reveal the gospel and the way of

salvation, that is none other but God's calling men's souls from the ways of sin and death to come into the ways of life. All who come to hear the sound of the gospel preached unto them, let them know that is God's call to sinners to come in and repent. God calls to the drunkard, the unclean person, and all others who live in sin to repent. When you come to hear the Word, God calls you. And God requires of you, if you would have God hear your cry when you are calling for mercy in the day of your distress, "Hear My call. Now I call and cry in the ministry of the Word. Would you have Me to hear you when you cry to Me? Do you hear Me now that I am calling to you?"

Oh, that people would understand the ministry of the Word, that it is the call of God for sinners to return and repent of their sins; that they would look beyond man and know that it is the voice of God by them! And therefore, it is a dangerous thing for people to neglect, resist, or rebel against the ministry of the Word. And there is some good hope that God has some souls in such a place that He intends everlasting good will unto where He sends the ministry of the Word. God does not usually send the call of the gospel to a place but there are some souls to be called.

Second, besides the outward call, there is an inward call, and that is what the apostle speaks of. Many have the outward call of the Word to faith and repentance, and yet they perish eternally. But those whom God intends to save and has love for indeed, He comes to them with an inward call. This inward call of God is as follows: God beholds the poor, wretched sinner going on in the ways of sin, death, and perdition, and He comes to him by a secret and powerful voice, speaking to his very heart, "Oh, sinner, consider where you are! What are you doing? Where are you going? What is the end of your way likely to be? You are going from God, from happiness and life, to

woeful misery and blackness of darkness, to the infinite gulf of eternal perdition. Turn, turn, O sinner, out of these vile, abominable, dangerous ways, or else you are undone forever! Behold, here is the way of life set before you. Behold My Son sent into the world for the propitiation of your sin, and to bring you into the ways of godliness, which is the way to eternal life. Oh, turn, sinner, into these ways!”

Now this voice of God calling to the soul of a man or woman comes with power. It has an over-powering strength in it to prevail upon the heart. It is much like that secret voice mentioned in Isaiah 30:21, “And thy ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk in it, when you turn to the right hand, or to the left.” ’Tis a promise of God’s mercy unto His people to convert them unto Himself. Those who were only in an outward profession, says God, shall hear a voice behind them, saying, “This is the way, turn in unto it.” And so it is when God calls a sinner from the ways of death and destruction.

Such a sinner hears a voice behind him. It may be he has come many times to sermons, and heard a voice many times without him and before him, but never before a voice within him and behind him, an inward, secret voice speaking to the soul, “Oh, sinner, turn out of your sinful ways! Why will you die and perish eternally?” God comes thus secretly and reasons with the soul by a voice behind it. And ’tis not bare reasoning, but a voice that has a power and efficacy from God going along with it that carries on this work in the soul and causes the heart to listen and to yield unto God.

When God calls to the soul to come into the ways of life, the soul answers, “Lord, I come,” and with a trembling frame of heart cries out with Saul at his conversion, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? No more now is it what sin will have me to do and what this and that and the other lust will have me to do.

No, now I see the ways of life and salvation are the only blessed ways. Now, Lord, what would Thou have me to do?" *Now* salvation is come to that soul, and reconciliation with Jesus Christ. For whom He has called, those He has justified. Observe the efficacy of that call spoken of in Isaiah 30:21: "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee," and then follow the fruits of it, "and ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images with silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold; thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence" (verse 22).

The sin they lived in before was idolatry, and their hearts were much taken with their brave images overlaid with silver and gold. But when they heard the voice behind them, they looked upon those things they so much delighted in, that were so brave in their eyes before, as but a menstruous cloth, which are the filthiest things that can be. They cast them away as filthy rags with indignation, saying, "Get thee hence." One who takes a rag in his hand, and looks on it and sees it all filthy and defiled, presently throws it away with abomination and says, "Get thee hence." So this is the call of God, when the soul hears behind it a secret voice that many hear not. It may be that many thousands hear the outward voice of the minister telling them of the evil of sin and their abominations, and a poor servant or youth who stands in the midst of the crowd hears a voice behind him that others do not, a secret voice (besides the general voice) which is a prevailing voice, so that the soul falls down and yields presently before he goes out of the church, and says, "Lord, this day Thou hast convinced me of the evil of sin, and Thou hast this day shown me the way of life and salvation. Lord, I come unto Thee."

Though he saw nothing, and though nobody else heard that voice, yet there was a secret voice of God unto the soul.

Though he stood in the midst of the crowd and nobody else heard it, yet at that instant pardon of sin came to that soul, and reconciliation by Jesus Christ. Now when this comes into the soul, he will not let such and such sins be there any longer but says, "Get thee hence, I will have no more to do with such and such beloved lusts and idols that I set my heart upon. Get thee hence!" And those men whom God calls to Himself, certainly, when they hear this voice behind them, though they now plead for idolatry and superstition, and cry, "Why should not we do as our forefathers did?," yet once they come to hear this secret voice of God, and God shows them the way of His worship in the purity and beauty of it, they will say "Get thee hence" to those things as vile things. "Get thee hence, I will have no more to do with you."

This is the way in the ordinary call of God, and though God sanctifies some from the womb, yet afterwards, by a mighty work of the Spirit, He reveals unto them what the soul is by nature. There is something like this even in those who are sanctified from the womb. Though God in an extraordinary way draws the soul out from sin into the ways of life, generally there are, in the ordinary way of God's working, these three or four voices calling to the soul. Says God to the soul:

1. "O soul, you are made for God and eternity."
2. "O soul, you are now in the ways of hell and eternal perdition and must of necessity perish in it."
3. "O soul, behold, here are the ways of life and salvation revealed unto you and set before you in the gospel of My Son."
4. "O soul, come in and you shall have favor and acceptance in My Son."

These are the four voices in God's call. I do not say everyone hears them plainly and distinctly, yet they do hear the substance of them in the ordinary way of the dispensation of God's grace. Every soul that God justifies is thus called of God, and 'tis a prevailing call that brings them in to submit unto it.

Concerning this call of God, because the Scripture speaks much of it, I shall show a little further. Mark it, the soul that once hears the call of God to bring it into the ways of life will evermore depend upon God's call in all other things. If God has called me out of the ways of death into the ways of life, in obedience to that call that my soul has yielded to, I shall evermore be under the power of God's call in all other things. Let God call me to what He will, to what service He pleases, to whatever difficulties and sufferings He shall think meet, my soul is content and says, "Here I am, Lord. Speak, Thy servant hears."

Now for a soul to be so under God as to wait upon the call of God to any duty, service, and employment, and that it dares not go about anything but according to the call of God, this is good evidence that such a soul has been acquainted with that great call of God, that powerful call of God, to bring him off from the ways of sin into the ways of life and salvation. Further, for those who have been acquainted with this call of God there is an answerable frame and disposition in their hearts to call upon the name of God for assistance, direction, and a blessing on all they undertake. They delight now to repair unto God and call upon Him. As God calls unto them, so they call unto Him; for that is the way of God according to His work in the soul. He puts a gracious frame into the soul answerable to it. In election, those whom He elects, when God calls them home, He puts a gracious disposition in their hearts to elect Him. As God chooses the soul from the world, so the soul chooses God above all things in the world. The soul answers God.

God sets His heart on the soul and says, "I will choose you for Me." The soul again sets its heart upon God and says, "I will choose Thee for my God."

As God calls the soul to come and live for Him in the ways of grace while he lives in this world, so the soul calls on God for His assistance, that He would give His help unto him on all occasions. And therefore the Scripture gives us this expression for the whole worship of God in Romans 10:13: "Whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." The soul that is acquainted with God's call calls on God again. And, by the way, those who are thus called are most fit for church communion. I mention this because the word translated "church" comes from a Greek word that signifies to call out. That which in Scripture is usually called a church signifies nothing else but a company of people called out of the ways of sin to embracing the ways of godliness. So the church should consist of people called out of the ways of sin by the powerful and efficacious voice of the Spirit of God. And those who are thus called have their sins pardoned.

You say you hope God has justified you. You read what God says, and what has been presented unto you. Since they who are called are justified, then calling, in order of nature, goes before justification. This you will find in your own hearts, and if not, this you must do—whenever you come before God to hear the outward call, you must come with a waiting frame of heart to hear the inward call, and call upon God with such a disposition. Say, "Lord, I have been taught that there is an outward call of Thine in the Word and an inward call, and I am going this day to hear Thy Word calling me out of the ways of sin. Oh, that I might have together with that the inward call of Thy Spirit when I shall hear that secret voice! This is the reason, though I have been convinced many times at the hearing of the Word,

that my sin has prevailed against me, because that inward, secret, powerful voice has not come to my soul.” That is the first evidence: whom He has justified He has called.

**EVIDENCE 2.** Whomever God pardons He receives into covenant with Himself. All pardoned sinners are covenanters with God. God pardons no soul but such a one as He brings into the bond of the covenant with Himself. That is the way of the conveyance of the grace of God for the pardon of sin, to bring the soul into the bonds of the covenant. The Scripture is evident in this, that forgiveness of sin is made a special fruit of the New Covenant. That is clear enough from Jeremiah 31:33: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a New Covenant with the House of Israel.” What is the special end of that covenant? “I will forgive their iniquities, and remember their sins no more.” But how does that come in? It comes in by way of covenant: “I will make a new covenant. I will first receive them into covenant, and then they shall have the fruit of this New Covenant—their sins shall be forgiven and their iniquities remembered no more.”

The New Covenant is a mystery to most people, and yet it is a certain truth. The pardon of your sin and your eternal good depend upon it. You are one whom God has brought into covenant with Himself if you are or ever shall be pardoned. God will manifest to your soul that He has, through His Son, tied and bound Himself to you to be your God. Whereas before you were departed from Him, and an enemy to Him, yet now He is pleased to call you to enter into a second covenant after you had broken the first and were cast off by reason of that breach. God is content to enter into a second covenant with you, to be your God in and through His Son. You are to come in and join in this covenant, for to a full covenant there must be assent on both sides; there must be a mutual engagement of either party.

God reveals this to your soul: “Though you are by nature an enemy to Me and have broken the first covenant that I made with the children of men, and are cast off, yet be it known unto you, oh, you wretched soul, that I am content to enter into another covenant with you. There is a second covenant for life and salvation that I have made with poor man through My Son. And I require that you should come in and give up yourself in an everlasting covenant to make Me to be your God, and to close with Me and My Son in whatever I call you to, in whatever you have or can do, to give up yourself to the power of Me and My Son. This you must engage and tie yourself to in the strongest bonds that can be.”

This is the nature of the covenant. We know there were two covenants, and all the good of mankind in the first covenant depended on his closing with the terms of it. Now the term of the first covenant was “Do this and live,” but that is broken and we have lost our ability. Now the second covenant is “Believe and live.” And the soul that God pardons, He brings into the bond of the second covenant. It is brought to come and give itself up to the Lord, and to be content to bind itself with all bonds unto God, that He and He only shall be my God. As I desire Him to be mine, and His grace and mercy to be mine, so all that I have or can do shall be His. I surrender myself, and engage my soul to be His forever—my estate, abilities, whatever I have, or can do, shall be His.

Now, put this to your own souls: you hope your sins are pardoned, but has God brought you into the bonds of the covenant? Has God engaged Himself to you by His Word to be your God? And, on the other side, are your hearts engaged to Him by the strongest bonds that can be? And if there are any other bonds that are stronger to tie your souls to God, can your souls say, “The Lord knows I am content and willing to be engaged,”

and that you will account it your happiness to be tied in the strongest bonds that can be? If it is so with you, now peace be to your soul. Your sins are pardoned. On the one side, God has made a covenant with you; so on the other side He has brought you to be in covenant with Him. Then be of good comfort, your sins are pardoned.

EVIDENCE 3. Those whose sins God has pardoned, He has translated into the kingdom of His Son. The Scriptures express these things in divers ways, and they have a diverse consideration in them. I ground this one out of Colossians 1:13–14: “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.” Mark what follows: “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Forgiveness of sin is the end of God’s translating of us into the kingdom of His dear Son, in giving redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sin. So whomever God has given redemption to through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sin—that is, forgiveness of sin being the special part of the redemption we have by the blood of Christ—such a one is translated into the kingdom of the dear Son of God.

QUESTION. What is that? you will say.

ANSWER 1. This notes a great change that there must be upon those who are pardoned, because the Scripture expresses it thus: they are translated into another kingdom, a kingdom of the Son of God, the dear Son of God. It is the dear mercy of God that translates a soul into the kingdom of His dear Son. It seems naturally we are in another kingdom and have another king besides the Son of God; we have another sovereign. It is certain we are so naturally; we are under the power of Satan and in his kingdom. But when God comes to redeem a soul and

grants forgiveness of sin, He translates it out of that kingdom; and such a soul refuses to be a subject to Satan any longer, a servant to his lust any longer. Now it is: "Christ shall be my King, the Son of God by whom I expect reconciliation shall be my King, and His laws shall rule in my heart. His scepter shall hold sway in my soul. No more shall my own thoughts, counsels, opinions, will, and affections rule me, but Jesus Christ shall be set up upon the throne of my soul and *He* shall be my King. Before I was led (a poor, vile, ignorant wretch) by the customs and example of others, and what they required of me by their laws in the matters of His worship; but now Christ shall be my King. I will expect my law from Him, and all obedience I do to man shall be in order to this Christ my King."

This is a translation into the kingdom of God: when the soul feels the power of Christ ruling in him and over-swearing him, and the soul looks up to Christ for its protection and provision and desires above all things in the world to set up Jesus Christ as His King in all the ways of His government, both in his own heart and the world too. He longs to hear that voice, when it shall be said, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever." Thus those who have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins, are translated into the kingdom of His dear Son; and as the Scripture speaks, "They have the kingdom of God within them." That is an expression of the Holy Ghost in the gospel.

Now, examine your hearts upon this: what of the kingdom of Christ do you have within you? Do you live and walk as one who has the kingdom of Christ within you? Is Christ as a King and Sovereign over your thoughts, words, and actions? And do you look to Him for the law of your thoughts, words, and actions, and walk before Him as your sovereign Lord, depending

on Him to know His will continually? Do you fear and honor Him as a King? If the kingdom of Christ is in you, the gospel has had an effectual work upon you; for the gospel, in the power of it, is ordinarily expressed by the kingdom of heaven. When the Word comes to any place, the kingdom of heaven is said to come. It would take a great deal of time to show wherein the Holy Ghost calls the gospel the kingdom of heaven, but it is called the kingdom of heaven, because it is the kingdom of Christ who is Lord from heaven, and Christ rules in it by the preaching of the gospel.

But now, though it is the kingdom of heaven, and the kingly power of Christ is in the preaching of the gospel, yet this does not prevail upon all sorts. It is like a net that is cast into the sea. The meaning of it seems to be nothing else but that the preaching of the gospel among a multitude of people is like a net cast into the sea wherein some are caught and others remain worldly, filthy, and good for nothing. That is the meaning of the text. This is no warrant at all for mixed communions, but only this: where the preaching of the gospel is, there are some fishes good and worthy to be received and others that are to be cast out.

Now, as there is an external kingdom, so there is an internal kingdom of Christ within our hearts. Jesus Christ Himself sets up His throne in the hearts of every man and woman whose sins are pardoned. That is a certain truth, and this day, in the name of God, I pronounce to you that if your sin is pardoned, Jesus Christ has set up His throne in your heart. And if you find any other throne and Lord but Christ to rule you, know from God that your souls are yet in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity; your sins are not pardoned. But that soul who in the preaching of the gospel can say, "Blessed be God, I have felt Christ come into my heart and prevail upon me. And now

Christ's laws are the laws I desire to be ruled by. God knows I know but little of them, but I will labor to understand them better. Therefore, I come this day that I might know more of the Law of God, and that Jesus Christ might rule more powerfully in me than ever He has done"—that soul has been pardoned.

If this is wrought in you, I say unto you, in the name of Christ, be of good comfort, your sins are pardoned. God will show good unto you when this world is ended. You are one whom Jesus Christ has brought into His kingdom and set up His throne in your heart. And therefore, you may be assured that He will take you at last into His everlasting kingdom.

EVIDENCE 4. Where God forgives, He gives much. Giving follows forgiving. God never forgives any but He gives much to that soul whom He forgives. When the apostles preached the doctrine of forgiveness and pardon of sin, the Holy Ghost fell upon them. So certainly, where the preaching of pardon of sin has power through the ministry of the gospel over a soul, God gives much to that soul. And there are three things especially that God gives presently unto the soul whom He pardons, which have all been mentioned before in opening the blessedness of pardon of sin. Therefore I will but mention them now to strengthen this note of trial:

1. Has God forgiven you? Then He has given His Spirit to enlighten you in the great mysteries of salvation. You plead you are ignorant and are not book-learned. If God has so great a favor for you as to pardon your sin, He will give you understanding in the mysteries of the gospel, Jeremiah 33:3. Where God pardons sin, they shall have this mercy—to be taught of Him.

2. God will give this unto you: He will write His law in your heart; that is, He will work in your heart a suitable frame and

disposition to His Law. Your heart and the Law of God shall be like two copies that have the same things in them and vary not one tittle from one another. There shall be a suitableness between your heart and the Law of God, not only to do that which God requires because "I must do it," but because "I find it suitable to the new nature bestowed on me." He will write His Law in the heart, and therefore I pronounce before the Lord this day again that whoever has his sin pardoned and his iniquities forgiven, God has written His Law in the heart of that man or woman by the finger of His own Spirit. That heart of yours that was as a heart of stone, God will write His own Law thereon as He did on the tables that Moses broke. Though you do not always have a real sight of it, yet such a thing is there and is a comfortable assurance of the pardon of your sin.

3. God gives healing mercies to cleanse you from your sin. Jeremiah 33:8: "I will cleanse them from their iniquities and pardon all their sins." Cleansing from sin and pardon of sin ever go together. If God pardons your sin, He cleanses you from sin. Do not look, therefore, only after pardoning mercy, but likewise after cleansing mercy. Those whom God has joined together let no man put asunder. Pardoning and cleansing God has put together. God may bestow other mercies, such as health, strength, and success in outward things without pardon; but never cleansing from sin without pardon of it. Therefore, if you find your heart cleansed, peace be to your soul; your sins are forgiven.

EVIDENCE 5. Besides these, God puts a glory upon those whom He pardons. There is a glory put upon all pardoned sinners. They are indeed glorious creatures in the eyes of God and angels, yea, and there is a glory put upon them that the saints of God are able to see. Perhaps that glory is not seen by the pure,

blind eyes of the world that are in darkness, but those who have their eyes in their heads may see a glory put upon every soul that is pardoned. That text is clear in Romans 8:30: "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." It is not spoken only of that glory the saints shall have in the highest heavens when they shall be in glory with Christ, but of that glory God puts upon the soul in this world. It is not said, "them He will glorify," but "them He hath also glorified." There is no justified soul but is a glorified soul. This is a certain truth in divinity that at that instant any soul is justified, at that instant he is glorified. In Jeremiah 33:9, there is an expression something like to that, and it follows upon pardon of sin: "And it shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise, and an honor before all the nations upon earth." That is, I will put glory upon them, and so they shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise, and an honor before all the nations in the world.

QUESTION. You will say, "How is that? What is the glory of a justified soul?"

ANSWER. Certainly the soul that is justified is glorious. God puts a glory on it by those glorious graces of His Holy Spirit that He endows the soul with. There is no justified soul but has the glorious graces of the Holy Spirit put presently upon it, and so it is beautiful and glorious; yea, the only glorious object in which the Lord Jesus Christ delights in all the world. Take the poorest soul in the world, if God puts His image upon it, there is a greater glory and luster on that soul than on all the heavens and the earth besides. Take all other creatures in their greatest glory, and God sees not so much glory on them as on any one soul whom He has justified; for so it is, holiness and the graces of God's Spirit are called the glory of God Himself. "For all have

sinned and come short of the glory of God,” Romans 3:23–24. What is it to be deprived of the glory of God but the loss of that image of God that man was made in? But when a man is justified, that glory of God is put afresh upon his heart, his understanding, his will, and affections, and that makes the Lord to delight to dwell with you, converse and have communion with you, because of the glory that He has put upon you.

So there is a glory also in the life and conversation, for on every soul that God justifies there comes presently a new luster upon their life and conversation. All those who have lived in horrible wickedness and base courses, now when they are changed and manifest the graces of the Spirit of God shining in their conversation through the whole course of their lives in meekness, patience, humility, heavenly mindedness, and the like, there is a luster on their conversations. Those who are able to judge it see it, and the world many times is dazzled with it. They see a glory on them and are convinced that certainly there is a work of God upon these men. In their good moods they are wishing that their lives and their ends might be like these men’s. The poorest servant or child in a family who was vile before, yet, being justified, has a luster in their conversations that convinces parents and governors, and makes them see an apparent difference between what they are now and what they were before. Though they condemn it, yet they know that God will own that difference that He has made to be His own glory, and will declare one day that this was the thing that was glorious in His eyes.

And therefore, now, would you know whether you are justified? Are you glorified? What glory of God has come into your hearts and appears in your lives and conversations? Can you say, “My life is so. Though I have many weaknesses, yet I hope something of the glory of God appears in me”? For so it must be. There is no soul God justifies but God enables him to live

so as the glory of God shines in his conversation. Now, if these things are so, what cause have you to fear you are not a justified person? But for the present, many times it does not appear, for most of you darken the glory of God in your lives. You who are justified should show it forth more in your conversation among all with whom you have to do, and then what a beauty and evidence of your justification would it be unto you.

EVIDENCE 6. Those whom God pardons He makes to know what pardon means. You hope your sins are pardoned. Do you understand and know what has been said about it? Certainly those whom God pardons He causes to have in the soul admiring thoughts of the excellency of this blessedness of the pardon of sin. The soul is taken with the admiration of three things:

First, it admires the freeness and the riches of God's grace.

Second, it admires the price that was paid for pardon.

Third, it admires the wonderful good it is brought into, and that which the soul receives by this blessedness of the pardon of sin. Other things God may bestow on men and women, and they know not the worth of them and do not mind God in them; but when God bestows pardon of sin, He makes the soul have admiring thoughts of it and to know what it is. Jeremiah 33:9: "And it shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise, and honor, and they shall fear and tremble, for all the goodness and prosperity that I procure unto it." Certainly, if others shall do it, much more themselves. Those whom God pardons, He bestows such mercies upon that the soul shall ever stand amazed with a trembling heart and an amazed spirit to behold all the goodness that the Lord shows it.

Now, have your hearts been taken with it? You may know much of your evidences if your hearts have been taken with admiring thoughts of it; for certainly, when God pardons sin,

He does it to magnify His grace and set out to men and angels in the infiniteness of it what His grace can do to poor souls. If this is God's end, as certainly it is, then it must be that to those whom God pardons He gives such grace as shall cause the soul to have admiring thoughts of it. Has your soul seen so much of the grace of God that it admires the greatness and goodness of it? Be of good comfort, your sins are pardoned.

EVIDENCE 7. The more assurance God gives of pardon, the more the heart melts before God in mourning for the sins that God has pardoned. According to the manifestation of God's mercy in pardoning, so does the soul by the work of God's grace melt in holy mourning, even for those sins that God has pardoned. Many think they must mourn for sin to get pardon, but, when they are pardoned, why should they mourn then? I have spoken to that before, that many mourn to get pardon, but, I say, those who are pardoned mourn because they are pardoned. I manifest it in the evidence I give of pardon of sin, that according to the degree of knowledge the soul has of pardon of sin, the heart melts before God for all sins that are pardoned. Psalm 51 is exceedingly remarkable. David laments his sin very bitterly, but mark the title of the psalm: "To the chief Musician, a Psalm of David. When Nathan the Prophet came to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba." Now would you know what Nathan did when he came unto David? You shall find, if you read the story of David's adultery and murder in 2 Samuel 12, that it was to bring the news to David of the pardon of his sin. First Nathan convinced him of his sin, that he should do it before Israel and before the sun, and, having convinced him, he said further, "The Lord hath put away thy sin."

Now a secure heart might go away and say, "All is well. I shall not die, God has pardoned my sin. I need not be troubled

any more about that matter.” But mark how the psalmist cried unto God, “Have mercy, O Lord, upon me, and blot out all my transgressions. Wash me, purge me.” And then he prayed for restoring mercies for his broken bones, and then cried out for further assurance. The very grace of God that Nathan brought to him of the pardon of his sin, that very grace of God melted and broke his heart so much the more. After God had sent him the pardon of his sin, he mourned more than ever before. We never read that David was as much troubled for his sin as in Psalm 51 after Nathan had come unto him.

Now, if you find that at that time when God is pleased to come unto you in the ministry of the Word or in private, to declare unto you the pardon of your sin and give you the comfortable evidence of it, then your hearts are most devoted to mourn for them and melt before God—be of good comfort, your sins are pardoned.

EVIDENCE 8. Another note is this: according to the degree of pardon of sin so all other graces grow. The knowledge and assurance of God’s love in Christ in the pardon of sin cause all other graces to grow proportionately, as you have in Ephesians 3:18–19 about the knowledge of the love of God in Christ. Mark the connection, He desires that they “might comprehend with all saints what is the height, and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fullness of God.” What is the love of Christ? The love of Christ is the procuring cause of the forgiveness of sin before God the Father; and when you know this, it will fill you with all the fullness of God. Mark, first it brings God into the soul. Second, it fills the soul with God. Third, it fills the soul with the fullness of God. And fourth, it fills the soul with all the fullness of God. When you come to know the love of God in Christ, if

anything in the world will fill the soul with all the fullness of God, this will.

Many will say they hope their sins are pardoned. Do you? Then you know the love of God in Christ, for this is a special work of the love of God in Christ, to pardon sin. Now the apostle says, "When you come to know this, you come to be filled with all the fullness of God." What is the fullness of God? As faith increases with the rest of the graces, so you grow fuller and fuller in God's fullness; and so you grow more into a fuller assurance of pardon of sin. Now the soul can say, "As I find more assurance of the love of God in His Son, so I find my soul more filled with this grace of the fullness of God. Alas, when I was under the Law, God and I were strangers. I felt little of God in me; but now that I have begun to know the love of God in the gospel, I have begun to have my soul filled with the fullness of God, not with chaff and dross and filthy things which, heretofore, my thoughts, will, and affections were filled with. But now it is otherwise with me. My soul is now filled with all the fullness of God."

Certainly the soul that can say thus may well go away with that word of Christ spoken to the woman in Luke 7:50, "Go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee." In Romans 5:1-3, the apostle speaks of pardon of sin: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." That is, God's revealing justification by faith in Christ brings peace with it; "and by whom we have access, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but we glory in tribulation, knowing that...." What knowledge is this? It's that we are justified by faith and so come to have peace with God. How does this cause the heart to be enlarged? We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, and not only so, but we are strengthened and can glory in tribulation. Our hearts grow up to that strength that whatever tribulations we meet with, we are able to bear them

with patience; and not only so but to glory in them. We not only grow up to bear that which many cannot, but to rejoice in them, which is more; and then to glory above rejoicing.

Now, do you find that the assurance that you have of the love of God brings strength into your soul to enable you to rejoice in hope of the glory to come? As if the apostle had said, "Let what will become of us for the present, what if the world scorns us, hates us, persecutes us, yet we rejoice in hope of the glory that is to come; and this makes us glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation works patience; patience, experience; and experience, hope." Here's a working of several graces together, and this may help many a poor soul.

QUESTION. "Oh," says the soul at such a time, "I had a great deal of assurance of pardon of sin, and much joy thereupon. But have not hypocrites joy?"

ANSWER. Yes, certainly, a hypocrite may have wonderful ravishments of spirit, and flashes of pardon of sin, yet there is something lacking in other graces. But how shall I know that my assurance of pardon of sin is right? According to the degree you have of assurance of pardon, you have an answerable degree in the growth of other graces such as humility, patience, heavenly-mindedness, self-denial, and the rest. According as your faith grows, so you have proportional growth in all other graces. Faith is as the root, and the more sap there is in the root the more will the branches grow. Some people are so full of assurance and never doubt, as they say; but as for other graces they are empty, such as the fear of God, meekness, patience, self-denial, heavenly-mindedness, and the like. Certainly, if your faith is so high, and your other graces so low, you have much cause to fear your faith is not right. 'Tis not the faith of God's elect, as the Scripture speaks; it is not precious

faith; for according to the degree you have of that, all other graces will grow.

You hope that your sins are pardoned. How do you come by that? The soul that has true pardon of sin has fetched it from heaven in a right way, in God's own way. How is that? The soul that sees itself lost and undone through the guilt of sin, God revealing His infinite riches of grace in the gospel, sees God on His throne, holding out His Son, God-Man as Mediator, to make an atonement. It, by a mighty work of faith, closes with that glorious way of reconciliation by the Son which it sees God the Father offer to him. And so it fetches grace out of the treasury of God's bounty, in the way of the gospel, in an evangelical way that was before opened.

Examine now, have you fetched out your pardon through the way of the gospel? Has your soul, by a mighty act of faith, been willing to venture itself and its eternal station on the Son of God? Have you looked on Christ as a mighty Mediator, as one able to save you? Then you have acted faith in a gospel way and your sins are pardoned. Again, are you pardoned? Then you are sealed. There is the broad seal of heaven that stamps the image of God upon the soul. As the image of the king is on the seal of the kingdom, so the image of God, the broad seal of heaven, is stamped upon the soul, which I mention that you may make use of it in examination.

**EVIDENCE 9.** Whoever God pardons, there will be an answerable work in your soul unto the work of God in justifying you. As in election and vocation, so in justification. How is that? As God, notwithstanding all your sin, accepts you to His grace and love, so, notwithstanding all the trouble and afflictions that are in God's ways, you will accept God and His ways. He accepts your soul notwithstanding your sin, and you will accept Him and His

ways notwithstanding all evils and afflictions that accompany them. There are woeful evils of sin that accompany your soul, yet God will accept you. So there are great evils in the ways of God, afflictions that accompany them, yet you will accept them and think it reasonable: "What, shall God accept my soul, notwithstanding all the evil of sin, and shall I not accept God's ways, notwithstanding all the evil of affliction and trouble?"

Certainly, the soul that is pardoned cannot but answer God so far as this: "Will God justify me notwithstanding my sin? I will justify God notwithstanding any trouble, affliction, difficulty, or sufferings that may befall me in His ways, and I will justify the ways of God." This is both an evidence and a duty. God justifies our souls though they are very sinful, and we have cause to justify God's ways, though they are very troublesome. If you do not do so, you are not God's child; for wisdom is justified of her children. You hope your sins are pardoned and that God will justify you; and will you not justify Him? Does not your sin hinder God's grace to you, and shall trouble and affliction hinder your glorifying God? O man! You have too vile a heart and too base a spirit to be one of those whom God has pardoned. If you were a child of wisdom, and one whom God has pardoned, then as God has justified you so you will justify God.

This note may meet with those who, in company, hear ministers and the ways of God cried out against, and yet have not a word to speak to justify God. Perhaps gentlemen and others speak ill of God's ways, and you stand silently and have not a word to say for God and His ways. Do you think God has justified you, and do you hear God and His people and His Word reproached, and you have no heart to justify God?

EVIDENCE 10. Those whom God pardons and forgives, He puts in them a merciful frame of heart to forgive others, and

that upon divine grounds. There is a kind of natural forgiveness. Many will forgive, but it is as one heathen forgives another. And it is a shame that many who profess themselves Christians do not go so far. But you must forgive in a spiritual way, for that is the way that accompanies pardon of sin, to forgive because I have had more forgiven: "Such a one has offended me, but how much more have I offended the Lord? And if the Lord forgives me, ought not I to forgive him?"

You know that he in the gospel who had so many talents forgiven him, and afterwards went and took his brother by the throat, how ill the Lord took it, that having been forgiven so much he should exact of his brother the utmost farthing? Has God forgiven you your sin, which, had He not, it would have everlastingly chained you in torments, and will you not forgive? As it is an evidence, so it is a duty and a part of prayer in that divine directory called "The Lord's Prayer." Matthew 6:12: "Forgive us as we forgive." And in another place it runs thus: "Forgive, for we forgive."

Therefore, you can have no evidence that God has forgiven your iniquities and pardoned your trespasses unless others are in your thoughts forgiven too. I might have given divers Scriptures, but I mention it as a duty that you who have any knowledge of your sin pardoned would make this as a ground to forgive your brethren. Say, "Alas, poor wretch, has God forgiven me? Was there ever such a distance between my brother and me as there was between God and me? And has God forgiven, and shall not I forgive my brother?"

It is impossible that a soul should be made acquainted with the rich mercy of God in forgiveness of sin and not have a meek spirit to forgive his brother. Nothing can take away the rugged sourness and rigidity of one man towards another but the oil of God's grace in pardoning sin. And that, coming once into

the soul, makes the soul to be of a sweet, mild, gentle, kind, and tender frame. Observe this, you who have rugged natures, do you say it is nature and you cannot help it if anything changes that rugged nature of thine? Certainly there is something that can change it, or else you have little hope that your sin is pardoned. Therefore, if God has pardoned you, you must go and do likewise.

I am persuaded many of you hoped and longed for this sermon, and I desired to be the larger on this because I would lay the evidences fully before you. Here you have had the blessed man and woman described unto you, but there are but few of them. Few can go away and say, "As we have heard, so it is." But I hope divers of you can. It was for you that it was preached; it was sent from heaven that you should feed upon it, and 'tis as needful as the bread you eat. But there is one thing more that is very meet to annex to all that has been said before. Without that, I am afraid there are many to whom the consolation of this text and point belongs but who will go away with little comfort because they know not how to apply them. So I will now give some rules how to make use of these signs, and to be able to apply them. And by the same rules you may come to know any other notes of trial concerning your spiritual estate, and to make use of them in any other particular whatsoever.

*Rules to Apply the Evidences  
of the Pardon of Sin*

*I*t is a matter of great concern to us to determine whether our sins are forgiven; for in times of danger our hearts are ready to sink. But the evidence that our sins are forgiven will hold up our hearts in the midst of the greatest dangers whatsoever, even if heaven and earth should meet together, if I have assurance of this; for so it follows after David had pronounced him blessed whose sins were forgiven. Psalm 32:6: “Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.” There may be floods of great waters, but he who has his sins forgiven, God shall preserve him and compass him about with songs of deliverance. But they who have their sins compass them about shall have horror and terror to compass them about. But, says David in verse 7, having assurance his sins were pardoned, “Thou art my hiding place, and Thou shalt compass me about.” Therefore, if your hearts close with those evidences given, you may have comfort in the great floods. God will be a hiding place to you. It concerns us very much to labor to put this out of doubt, and not to put it off to a sickbed or deathbed time of examination.

But now to those evidences there is another thing which is

of great concern in this point, and that is to give some rules how to make use of those or all other evidences that shall be given at any time for trial of anyone. They are especially for the trial of our states in point of justification or sanctification, but they will be helpful to the use of any other evidences whatsoever.

RULE 1. Though you cannot find them all, yet if you find but any one of them you may receive comfort from that, though you feel not the rest. You may be assured that the rest are there. Many a soul, many times, hears evidences of the happy condition in point of pardon of sin; and it may be there is one, two, or three that they can catch hold of. But there are some others they cannot take hold of. If you find but one of them in your heart, though you cannot feel or see the other, yet God sees the other to be there, though they are not made so sensible to you. And therefore, soul, take hold of one link of a chain and all the others are fastened to it. You may be able to draw the whole chain unto you, for by taking hold of one link you take hold of the whole, though you touch not the others. So in the work of God's graces, they are as a link united to one another, and if you can lay hold of one link you may be assured of the others, although you see them not.

It is with many in this point as it is with an ignorant man. The physician tells him he must take such a thing that must have these and these ingredients in it. And when the pharmacist has mingled all, it may be but one of these things can be seen in the color and outward appearance. Perhaps one syrup may take up all the color in the outward part. And when it is brought to him, he says, "It must have so many ingredients in it, and I see but one." Aye, but though you see but one yet there may be the efficacy of all in it, though but one gives the color. So it is with the graces of God's Spirit. Though at the present one appears, yet there may be the efficacy and power of them

all in the soul, though there appears but one. Perhaps it is in this case as among many ingredients. You can see and taste but one, yet there may be the power of twenty there, though they are neither seen nor tasted. So it is with the work of God in the soul. Sometimes it may be that there is but one grace to be seen, tasted, or felt, and yet where that one is there are all the others. So it is one rule, when you look for evidences and signs, that if you can find but one in your souls, all are there.

This is just as it is in sin—where one sin has dominion over the soul, though the others are not seen, yet we are to know that other sins have dominion over the soul too. Some men live under the slavery of one sin more than another: one man under the power of covetousness, another under the power of ambition, or any other sin. This man may be thought to be under the power of but one sin, but the truth is he is a slave to all sin. Every natural man who is out of Christ is under the power of every sin. He is a slave to the devil in every sin, but by reason of the constitution of his body and for some outward respects, he may refrain from some particular sins that do not so well suit him, whereas if it would serve for his own ends and purposes, he could as well commit any sin as that one. This is a certain truth: whoever makes not conscience of every sin makes conscience of none. Though he refrains from the practice of some others, it is not out of conscience but for by-ends. Therefore, he who is under the power of one sin is under the power of every sin.

Many think all men are sinners, but, for their part, *they* have only a few: “Such a sin I cannot leave, but I am free from all others.” Do you keep from all sins but one? God will find you under the power of every sin, and God will charge you at the tribunal as under the power of all sin.

So now, on the contrary, God’s people are mightily troubled that they cannot find the work of God’s graces in all of

them. Such a one they find, but they lack it in another because it is not so evidently stirring as the other. But as the truth is certain on one side of the wicked, so 'tis true on the other side of the godly. Where there is one sin there is every sin. So where there is one grace there is all grace. There is the power of godliness in every grace where there's one grace. That is the rule to help us in making use of the evidences before first given.

**RULE 2.** Whenever we have found any one evidence upon serious examination in the presence of God—and now it appears not positively to the contrary at the present, but you are merely dubious of those things that heretofore you have felt, because you do not feel them now—in this case we may and should have recourse to what God has wrought heretofore and then build upon the former workings of God's Spirit upon us. True it is, when we come to give evidences in our ministry of those who have grace, we may meet at such a time with them as that they have sense of nothing, and in such a condition as that they are not able to know their own hearts or feel any workings upon them.

Now, if it is merely from want of sense, and that the contrary positive evil appears not but only the want of feeling of what you had and felt heretofore, you are to have recourse to the days of old. David often says that he would remember the days of old. "It may be," you will say, "some hypocrites have thought they have been in this condition. They have had many flashes, and yet they have proved naught. How can we have recourse to what was before God worked upon me? I can indeed remember when God drew my heart, and then I thought I could have closed with any evidence out of the world. I felt such workings in my heart, but I might do all that and yet all is but in hypocrisy."

I answer that certainly the bare want of sense is not ground enough for me to think that all was in hypocrisy for this reason.

Consider if I groan under it as under an affliction, and would fain feel those former manifestations I had formerly, and that I can take little comfort in my present case, and that my soul is continually longing and panting after the workings of God's grace that I heretofore had; if this is so, and there is nothing to the contrary, you fall not off to sin or to the world to satisfy your soul in sinful ways, and your heart is yet panting after God; if it is thus with you, you may take the comfort of what you had before, and feed upon it as provision laid up beforehand for your soul, as if you had it presently.

But hypocrites who fall off from the visitations of God's Spirit do not fall off only to a want of sense of those former movings and workings of the Spirit. Rather their hearts come to be satisfied with something else and they take up with some other contentments. And it is not a want of feeling only, of what they had heretofore, but their hearts run out from God into other ways of sin and wickedness. So it is with hypocrites, but you have this testimony that it is not so with you; that although you lack the present sense of the work of God upon you, yet your heart longs after God, and you are unsatisfied in this condition, and 'tis the greatest affliction that ever befell you, and there is nothing else that you let your heart run out unto, but you are longing to get your heart into that blessed frame that you were in heretofore. Then, certainly, peace be unto you. You are to look back upon what you had heretofore, and wait upon God for His return again, for He will come and your soul shall rejoice again in Him.

A little before that martyr, Mr. Glover, suffered, the Spirit of God seemed to leave him. He was in extreme darkness and had no feeling of any evidence of God's love for him. He was to die the next day, and all his evidences were lost in his own apprehension; yet his friends told him that God would appear

and desired him to give them some sign if God did come unto him. That night he was in darkness, and until the officers came to carry him to the stake, he had yet no sense or evidence of God's love; but when he was tied to the stake he cried out, "He is come, He is come." So you must not argue, because you have no present sense, that therefore you have no evidence of your good condition. But if you have had it heretofore, you may build upon it that your state is good, although you have no present sense.

RULE 3. To help you to make use of signs when you would put yourselves on trial, you must take heed you do not cast your estates (for the trial of yourselves) on times of temptations. Judge not of your estates by what you find and feel in times of temptation, for when temptations are exceedingly strong, and horror and fear come into the soul, these are very unfit times to determine your condition upon a trial then. Perhaps some here may know what I mean when I speak of horror and fear coming in strongly upon them. Then it is a time that you rather need to call upon God and fall down on your knees in prayer than to look to the trial and examination of yourselves at that time. It is with many in this case as it has been with some who have been struck with horror of death before the Judge, and have had the Book given them to read. Though they have been good scholars and able to read before, yet when the horror of death has been so upon them, they have not been able to read one word. And so it is with many of God's children in times of strong temptations. They are not able to read their evidences. When children's eyes are bleary and blinded, you can give them the Book and they cannot read thereon. So when your hearts are under great temptations and afflictions, this is not a time for trial.

By the way, if it is not for a godly man, much less for a wicked man. Many wicked men put it off to the day of death and never so much as put themselves to trial till horror of conscience or fears of death put them upon it. It is an ill time for God's people to try themselves then. Suppose you would weigh gold; you will not do it in a storm or wind. The trial of our estate is like the weighing of gold, for we are to weigh ourselves by the balance of the sanctuary that we may know whether we shall be weighty when God comes to weigh us. Every soul must be weighed, and woe to those to whom God shall say, as He did to Belshazzar when the handwriting appeared upon the wall—it was so terrible to him that his knees smote one against another, but what was it?—"Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found too light" (Daniel 5:27).

Such a hand will many find one day: "Poor soul that thought yourself in a good condition, and that your sins were pardoned, you are weighed in the balance and are found too light." Therefore, it concerns you now to weigh yourselves in the balance of the sanctuary. When you weigh gold, you must not hold the scales in the midst of wind, storm, and tempest that hurry the balance up and down, but it must be in such a place that you may hold them steadily so that nothing may stir them. In the wind the lighter may be blown down and the heaviest uppermost, but if you hold them in a still place, you may try to weigh a single grain. So the soul of man is like the scales in the wind. In a time of temptation you will have enough to come in to turn the balance, lift it up, and make you seem too light. And therefore, when you would weigh your condition, do it when your hearts are composed and you are yourselves. When your hearts are quiet, then lay your souls to the balance.

Many weigh their hearts in a time when trouble and affliction are upon their spirits, but they cannot do it. All they do

then is nothing. There are but two things then to be done: either to open your condition to someone who may help you, or else fall down upon your knees in prayer to God to get help from Him to support you and deliver you from the temptations that are upon you. But it is no time for a man or woman to try themselves in times of strong temptations, when it may be said that a man or woman is scarcely themselves.

RULE 4. When you find the Word on your side in anything, never let go your hold of the Word. When you are persuaded the Word speaks well of your side in such or such a thing, never do anything against it. As we must not receive any comfort but by the Word, so we must not reject any comforts but by the Word.

Some may say, "I find something in the Word that makes for me, but I am afraid I am not thus and thus qualified." But do you find anything in the Word that gives you ground to think so? We must rest upon the Word both ways. As we must not receive anything to build our comforts on but it must be from the Word, so we must not receive anything to trouble us but it must be from the Word. It must be the Word that must wound men, for the consciences of men and women are under the power of no creature but the Word.

Now, as there is no power in any creature in the world to raise a dejected soul and comfort a troubled conscience truly but the Word, so the people of God are to know that they are so above the power of all other things that nothing in the world should trouble them but the Word. As they should account it a weak, vain thing to rest in the opinion of others for the comfort of their souls, who are in a good condition by what they find out of the Word, so they should account it a vain thing to rest on their own conceits during times of trouble, or in the saying of others besides what they have out of the Word. The soul says,

“I am afraid my state is not good.” But, oh, soul, is there anything in the Word that says that they who are thus and thus are not pardoned? As I must not conclude I am pardoned unless I bring something out of the Word that says it, so I must not conclude my state is bad without the Word saying so too.

“But I find many distempers and wanderings in my soul.”

Give me leave to ask you this: where does God’s Word say that such a man who has a great many wandering thoughts is not justified? Where does the Word of God say that a heart that is under the remainder of some corruptions, and where the soul labors under them as much as under any burden in the world, where does the Word say that this soul is not justified? Many people in the case of trouble of conscience, although they have some evidences and good ground out of the Word for them, yet will have many fears and doubts because of the remainder of such and such corruptions in them. But now the ground of their doubts is their own fears and nothing out of the Word. And so when anyone speaks and applies the Word unto them, they cannot say but it is suitable to their condition and that God has shown mercy unto them. But as soon as you are gone, the fears and suggestions of their own hearts prevail against them to take away all their comforts more than all the applications of the Word prevailed to uphold and continue their comforts.

It is just with many who are gracious, in the case of fears and doubts, as it is with the wicked with regard to their hopes. A wicked man has the Word against him so that he is not in a good condition, but his own self-love and conceit encourage him to presume that he is in a good estate. Now he regards his own opinion and conceit, and presumes upon that that his estate is good, more than on whatever is said unto him out of the Word to the contrary. So the people of God, although they are in a good estate, yet their own fear so dampens their hearts

that it makes them question that it is not so. But the ground of it is their own fears. As the ground of the wicked in thinking their estate is good is from their own opinion, so the people of God many times, from their own conceit and opinions rather than from the Word, think their estate is bad.

Take this rule, as you must receive no comfort but *out* of the Word, so you must not receive any trouble but *from* the Word. When you receive trouble any other way, you do not consider that God has laid your estates so high that all your troubles depend on nothing but the Word; and therefore answer all with Scripture. When the devil casts temptations before you, bid him prove that your estate is not good from the Word. "I have this out of the Word to prove it is so, and you have nothing to the contrary." In other things you will not be baffled, as in your evidences for your estates.

Suppose a man comes and lays claim to your estate. Although you cannot perhaps make out your title clearly, yet you will bid him prove the contrary and show what grounds he has to lay claim to it. It is not the clamors and talking of other men that will make you quit your hold, or satisfy you that it was never rightly yours. But let the devil come and clamor against your souls, and you are ready to join with him and say, "It is so, indeed, I am a hypocrite and have no true grace or spiritual life. My soul is under the curse of the Law and dominion of sin still." How unworthily you carry it to the blessed Spirit of God, and all the grace and goodness of God that have been manifested and made known unto you concerning the pardon of your sins. How unbecoming it is that on every clamor of Satan and stirring of corruptions in your own hearts you should raise the foundation of all your comforts by calling all the work of God presently into question. Many poor creatures, who find by evidences out of the Word that their estate is good, go away cheerful; but if

the next day there are any stirrings of corruption they let all go and raise the foundation of all their comforts. Do not walk so unworthy of the grace of God. Depend upon the Word, as for your troubles so for your comforts. As you are not comforted with anything but from what the Word of God speaks to you, so be discouraged with nothing but where you find the Word of God against you.

**RULE 5.** When at any time you are put to seek your evidences and cannot find them, the best way is rather to renew them than to spend time in finding the bed. Suppose any man or woman is searching out such evidences for salvation which they had before and cannot find them. It may be they are pouring upon their own hearts for such and such workings as they have had heretofore and cannot find them, and so are ready to conclude that all is naught and lie down as disconsolate people because their condition is not good. They cannot find such evidences as heretofore they had.

Now, in this case, the best way, if I cannot find my evidences or the use of them I had before, is to renew them. The time I spend in seeking and discouraging my heart, if I spent it in actings and workings of my heart after God for the renewing of my evidences, perhaps I might have renewed them in that time. It is as it is in matters between men and women in this world. They have evidences that would clear the matters in differences, but perhaps they cannot find them, or they are grown so old that they cannot read them. And so they spend a great deal of time about them, whereas possibly, if they went to the Court of Roles, they might have them renewed with less charge and time.

So it is with the soul. When it cannot find such and such evidences, it spends a great deal of time and sits down in dis-

couragement and disquietness of heart, whereas perhaps in less time you might have renewed them. For example, suppose you are looking after this evidence of your calling, "for God calls whom He justifies." Now you are looking after your call, and you are troubled that you do not remember how God worked upon your heart then or heretofore, and a great deal of time is spent. Cannot you find how it was with you then? No? Then fall upon this course: listen to what voice of God you hear now in your heart. Say to your soul, "Do I not now find the work of God in me? Do I not find Him now drawing my heart out of the world unto Himself, and does my heart not listen unto this call?" For the call of God is not only at first conversion, but God is always calling and drawing the heart from the world unto Himself. If you cannot make use of the work of God heretofore, make use of His present work upon you.

Again, those whom God justifies enter into covenant with God, for it was by way of covenant (as I told you). They give up themselves to God in an everlasting covenant. "But when did I come into covenant with God? I am afraid I am not the man or woman in covenant with God. I cannot remember any such work." Perhaps your heart sinks down within you, because you cannot clear up this work of entering into covenant with God heretofore. Now the time that you spend in seeking after this work, spend it in entering now into covenant with God at this present time. It will be no hindrance to you that you cannot find what was heretofore if now, at this moment, you can surrender up yourself to God in an everlasting covenant. This is enough; do it.

Now, if you can find your hearts, come in and yield up yourselves into covenant with God. You may have the comfort of this evidence as fully as if you clearly remembered all the former transactions and the work of God upon you in your first entering

into covenant with God. Again, those who had their sins pardoned, I told you, were brought into the kingdom of Christ.

But you will say, "I cannot remember how I was translated." Take now upon you the scepter of Jesus Christ.

Many trouble themselves saying, "I never found such humiliations and troubles for sin as you speak of, or as others have found." How is it now with your souls? Do you find sin now a burden to your souls? Is it not the greatest affliction? If you were put to your choice, would you not rather suffer anything in the world than sin against God, and not only out of convictions of conscience, but because you find a frame of spirit in your hearts suitable thereunto? For a hypocrite may have convictions of conscience, but the frame of his spirit is not suited thereunto. In you there is a frame of spirit suitable to the convictions of conscience within you. Though you cannot remember you have had such sorrows and troubles in convictions for sin as others have had while they were under the spirit of bondage, yet you may be comforted by the present frame of spirit that you have. And so, in like cases, if you cannot find your old evidences, work to renew your evidences, and do not spend time in lying down under the discouragements of your own hearts.

**RULE 6.** When you examine yourselves to find out your evidences, carry this thought along with you: you have to deal with God in the covenant of grace. And this will be of marvelous use to you. Perhaps to some these are very dry things, and they see but little in them and scarcely know what they are; but I hope there are many others who have knowledge of an eternal state to be between God and their souls. I hope I speak things that will be very precious to them. Yea, I say unto many of you, for while I am in this argument I am speaking to such as have had the fear

of God fallen upon their hearts; and they have made it the great business of their lives, above all things in this world, to know how terms are between God and their souls, to know how it stands with them for their everlasting estates. I know an abundance of people who scarcely ever call these things into question, to whom these rules will be of little or no use at all. But if I speak to some, or any troubled soul, to help and direct them, though I do not good to others, I shall think my time well spent.

Wherefore, then, in your examinations, ever carry this with you: you have to deal with God in the covenant of grace and not in a covenant of works. Certainly, that many are so troubled in their consciences about their eternal estates it is on this ground: because they look upon God in the way of the covenant of works. If they find any corruptions stirring and breaking forth, and temptations strong upon them, they think presently all is naught and that God will never accept them. What is the reason? If we had to deal with God in a covenant of works, the latest stirring of corruption would be enough to cast the soul down into eternal horror. Though Adam had never so much goodness before, because of the image of God upon him, yet one sin eternally cast him out had not the covenant of grace come in.

Now, though people will acknowledge there is a covenant of grace, yet, upon the stirring of their corruption, they carry it as if it served no other use than if they had to deal with God in a covenant of works, and as if there were no covenant of grace at all. Now, what a dishonor is this to the riches of God's goodness in the covenant of grace, which tells us we are not to be judged for our eternal estate by the covenant of works, and tells us that He that must be our Judge for our eternal condition is our Advocate with the Father, and tells us also that God accepts the uprightness and sincerity of the heart, and that the want of

perfection shall never damn your soul! He who stands before the Lord to make atonement, and to be our Advocate to plead with the Father for us, is He who must be the Judge of our eternal estate. And therefore, when I set myself before the Lord, I consider that I have to deal with Him in a covenant of grace.

Suppose I find and feel such and such corruptions and weaknesses in me. Is it not possible that my estate is happy by the covenant of grace? Collect yourselves and say, "Why do I determine of my everlasting condition? Have I to deal with God in the covenant of grace, and cannot these imperfections stand with it? Why do I make such conclusions that my state is naught because of the stirrings of such and such corruptions?"

The doubts and fears of most Christians arise because they have not a clear understanding of the difference between the covenant of grace and the covenant of works. There is nothing in the world would so satisfy the consciences of men and women as a clear understanding of the covenant of grace and the covenant of works. Many people cry out that preachers disquiet and trouble the hearts of people by their preaching. The truth is, no preachers occasion so much the trouble and perplexity of consciences as those who merely preach morality and the way of duty and never come to make them see clearly the difference between the covenant of grace and the covenant of works. I appeal to you, who are they who most quiet and settle your consciences and satisfy your spirits? Are they not those preachers who open the difference between the covenant of grace and the covenant of works? Certainly those preachers who show you what the covenant of grace is are the only men who quiet and satisfy conscience; and 'tis a truth that nothing can do it but that. You who are Christians, how should you then labor to get a further insight into the covenant of grace! And instead of other discourses less useful, let this be the subject

of your discourse—the difference between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, or the blessings of this covenant, and that this is the covenant that we must depend upon, notwithstanding our weaknesses.

And now I am speaking of this covenant, that weakness may stand with the covenant of grace. Many who have carnal hearts may be ready to abuse it. Take notice how dearly the comforts of your souls cost God, and God will have His ministers to comfort you, though the revealing of such things will endanger many a man's soul. God is content to hazard the damnation of other men to comfort you, for certainly those things that we speak for your comfort will be the damnation of many others. Think thus: "O Lord, must the comforts of my soul cost so dear, and that for my comfort many souls are hazarded who, by taking occasion to sin, abuse the grace that is reached forth to me, and so are like eternally to perish? Oh, then, what need have I to make good use of this grace that comes to me with the hazard of the souls of so many others!"

If a man should bring some precious balsam to apply to a wound, and you were to tell him there is not one drop of it but costs a thousand pounds at least, would not this be highly prized? Now, when we come and show you anything that may comfort your hearts and satisfy your souls, we must reveal such things as not only cost much, but also the least dram of gospel comforts, which cost was of infinite worth. 'Tis valuable in two ways:

First, every drop of the balsam of the gospel cost the blood of Christ; but besides this, the very revealing of it must cost the damnation of many souls, and yet God is content to venture that you may be comforted. We, in the name of God, come and preach the grace of the gospel, and we think many will be hardened by it, and will grow more secure and abuse God's mercy. But then we satisfy ourselves with this, that the comforting of

any broken troubled soul is so precious in the eyes of Jesus Christ that He is content to venture the hardening of many other souls. If they will be hardened, let them be hardened; Christ is content to venture it. And hereby we see how precious these comforts are. Therefore, you need to prize them and not cast them off. Suppose a captain, to save the lives of two or three men, should venture the lives of a thousand men merely to save the lives of two or three. Were not these men's lives very precious to Him? So Jesus Christ ventures the hardening of the hearts of many for the comforting of a few. Therefore, it shows your comforts are precious things. You should not easily put them off, for they cost dearly.

**RULE 7.** When you cannot see the work of faith reaching to assurance, yet labor to put forth the work of faith of adherence. There may be much of the workings of the faith of adherence where there cannot be the faith of assurance; that is certain. There may be true faith adhering to Christ for the pardon of sin where the soul has no certain assurance of it. Many poor creatures are crying out and saying, "If I had faith of assurance, and a full persuasion my sins were pardoned, I could be comforted." But because they have not attained to a full persuasion and assurance, they think they have no grace at all. But there may be faith in the pardon of sin where there is not a reflex act of the soul, whereby I come to know it has faith and that its sins are pardoned. In 1 John 2 and 3, the apostle shows there that they may have knowledge and yet not know they do know: "Hereby we know that we do know Him, if we keep His commandments." Hereby we know that we know Him. Now knowing of Christ, and knowing that we do know Him, is not all one. There is a knowing, and there is a knowing that we know Him. So there is a believing and there is a knowing we believe. There

may be a true work of grace that I may know Christ, and know Him to salvation, and yet not know that I know Him, that is, by a reflex act of faith, a knowing that I know Him.

So then, where there is not a faith of assurance, there may be a faith of adherence; that is, when the soul sticks to Christ and can give itself unto and venture itself upon Christ for pardon of sin, life, and salvation. That is faith of adherence.

Suppose in seeking my evidences (many of them being taken from the effects and fruits of faith), I cannot find them, and so cannot put forth a reflex act of the soul, which is faith of assurance; yet I may at that time have a faith of adherence. You may feel your heart stick to Christ, and you may venture your soul on Christ; that faith will save you though you have not a faith of assurance. That is, though you cannot find such evidences whereby you may draw up such a conclusion or make up such a judgment that you are pardoned, yet if you have a faith of adherence, so that you can stick to Christ and venture your souls on Him for life and salvation and all that is good, that faith will save you. And therefore, upon examination of your evidences, when you cannot get up to such acts of faith as assurance is, live then by a faith of adherence. Stick to Christ. Say, "Here I will resolve to live and die." Venture on the grace on God in Christ.

Now for the soul to do this is a mighty work of faith, for if you can venture your souls on Christ you will venture your estates on Christ, your names on Christ, and all that you have on Christ. And therefore remember, if you have not a faith of assurance, then venture yourselves on Christ by a faith of adherence, and comfort will come in that way.

**RULE 8.** If at any time you feel comforts from evidences flowing in upon your souls, and that you are able to apply the comforts

to yourselves that the Lord has spoken to you by such and such signs of a pardoned sinner, take heed you do not rest much upon evidences. But then, at that very time, think with yourselves, "Though now I have comforts, I may lose them, and God may call me to another condition; God never granted these helps unto me for my saviors, that I should rest upon them. They are but bladders to help me to swim, and God may take away these and call me to live upon the mere actings of faith and not at all on sense."

That's certain He may do it, for when we bring these signs and evidences of grace as they come from faith and are effects and fruits of it, they are but as bladders to help young swimmers that cannot swim without them, and they learn then to swim. But those who have gotten the art, though the bladders are taken away, they can swim. Take them away from the others, and they will sink. So these evidences are for young and weak Christians who cannot live on primary acts of faith, which a strong Christian can do when all other things are taken away.

Therefore, when we feel the comfort of any signs, depend not on this. The Lord may take them away. And because He delights in the mere actings of faith, that is the reason why God withdraws Himself from the souls of His people, so that they shall not have the use of signs and evidences as they had before. He would teach them to live on the more necessary acts of faith. God loves the voice of Job, "Though He kills me, yet will I trust in him. I will venture my soul upon Him whatever becomes of me." When there's nothing else to rest on but God, then live by actings of faith merely on Him. He delights much in this; and, therefore, take heed you do not rest so much on signs, as if all your comforts were lost and you undone when you cannot have such use of them as you have had heretofore.

RULE 9. When you have at any time lost the use of signs, do not determine that all is gone and that you shall never have the use of them more. This is what mightily hinders many poor Christians who are in trouble of conscience, because they cannot find the evidence of the pardon of their sins and that God accepts them in what they do. What do they do presently? They yield to the horrible sentence of damnation against themselves. "God's Spirit," say they, "is now gone, and He will return no more. He will never come any more unto me." Take heed you do not fasten any such kind of thoughts as those are to determine your own estates, or that God's Spirit will not come again. Humble your souls before the Lord and wait upon Him.

RULE 10. When at any time all signs and evidences fail you, and you are ready to determine that all is gone, even then keep up good thoughts of God. The spouse in Song of Solomon 5:10, when her beloved was gone, yet prized him and said, "He is the chiefest of ten thousands." In Song of Solomon 5, when she was asked, "What is thy Beloved?" said she, "He is thus and thus," and then concludes, "He is altogether lovely" (5:9–16). And this was at such a time as he was gone, yet she retained good thoughts of him. So 'tis a good sign for any soul that when trouble of conscience is upon them, or any other trouble, they retain good thoughts of God and Christ and the ways of God. This soul says, "Whatever becomes of me, though I perish forever, yet God is good. His Word, His ways are good, His gospel and the covenant in His Son is good; and whatever troubles are upon me, yet God is righteous. And although God justifies me not, yet I will justify God."

If there is any soul that cannot find his evidences, or any of those signs before spoken of, you may make use of this: if you cannot find any other, do what you can to justify God. You are

afraid that God will not justify you; you justify Him. Sometimes it is with many men as with some wretched servant who has dealt falsely with his master. All the while he takes advantage of his master for his own ends, he will speak well of him. But if his master turns him out of doors for his wickedness, then he rails on him. It is ordinary for bad servants to do so when they are turned away for their wickedness. And so it is with many people. When all goes well with them, then they well like the ways of God; but if they come to such a condition that they think that God will cast them away indeed, and that they are likely to perish, then they begin to have hard thoughts of God, and, by degrees, they speak against God and His ways.

Take heed of this. Although you lack the evidences of His love and mercy, yet retain in your hearts good thoughts of God and of His ways, and this will be a special help to bring into your souls the comfort and assurance of your justification.

And now I have done with this argument. I have shown you who it is that has his sins pardoned. I have shown the several mistakes, and I have shown you certain infallible grounds from Scripture, evidences of the pardon of sin, and rules how to make use of those evidences. And now, upon what you have heard, you have testimony and assurance of the pardon of your sins or you have not. If you find your hearts do not answer to these evidences, or that you are afraid that your sins are not pardoned, then take a use of exhortation to put you on to seek after this blessedness.

## CHAPTER 19

# *Exhortation to Seek After Pardon of Sin, with Cautions and Rules How and What We Are to Do*

*I* am now come to a use of exhortation, and it concerns us all—either those who are not pardoned or those who have assurance of the pardon of their sins—for there is none that have assurance but may make use of it. Christ taught His disciples to pray daily for the forgiveness of their trespasses as well as for their daily bread, and what we are to pray for we are to seek after. So it concerns all. Blessedness is desirable to all; it is as natural for man as a reasonable creature to desire blessedness as it is for the fire to burn. Only here's the great mistake in the world: all would have it but they look not for it in the right way.

Now after all that has been said, that you may not have slight thoughts of the pardon of sin and say, “I hope they are pardoned,” and the like, I shall speak to awaken you. Suppose you were now set on the brink of the infinite ocean of eternity, and the bottomless gulf was ready to devour you and the records of

heaven were opened and there showed you that your sins were not canceled but remain upon the file. What you would do then, do it now; for this is our time, and this is the great work of our lives, not to encumber ourselves about many things, but about this one thing—to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. This is the great work, to seek to secure this blessing of the pardon of our sins which is the foundation of all. In the obtaining of it we obtain all blessings. It ought to be our chief care, and we ought to lay out our chief strength and endeavors in seeking it. And if God would be pleased to put His hand to your hearts, and turn the stream of your thoughts and endeavors, the very turning of your hearts after this business is a great mercy. There is so much blessedness in it as not only the obtaining of it, but the very motion of the heart this way, is worth all the world. In Acts 2 we read there were many thousands who had their hearts pricked at hearing the Word preached. They cried out in 2:37, “Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?” Oh, that there was a disposition in the hearts of men to cry thus. We see it is our blessedness if we have it; and if we have it not we are all cursed forever. What shall we do to get it? In Mark 10:17 we read of one who came running after Christ saying, “What shall I do to be saved?” Oh, that your hearts were now in such a frame to come running after Christ, saying, “What shall we do that our sins may be pardoned?”

But before I come to anything else, it is necessary by way of caution or proviso to say four things:

**CAUTION 1.** Although I must seek after God for the pardon of sin, yet know there is nothing in a natural man that is or can be acceptable. None of his endeavors have that in them that can gain him acceptance with God. But then to what purpose are we to endeavor to do anything? Yes, we must be striving

after the pardon of sin, although without Christ we can do nothing. A bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit, yet it is to some purpose that we are doing, for God well likes the exercise of the work of common gifts. Though they are not saving and to eternal life, yet God likes the exercise of them so far as there is anything good and commends them.

When that young man came to Christ in Mark 10:21, Christ looked upon him and loved him, though not with such a love as to save him and bring him to eternal life; yet God revealed love to such a one. Therefore it is to some purpose that a man should put himself on doing what he can, if it is only for that. It is to some purpose that the heart is stirring after God and Christ, because hereby we shall evidence that we are not so negligent of God and Christ and the things of eternal life as we were before. It is to some purpose for, in the stirring of the common works of God's Spirit, God many times comes in with saving works. For God works not upon men as upon stocks or stones, but God puts them on by stirring up the common works of His Spirit; and at that time when they are most in stirring, it is God's usual way to come in with the saving works of His Spirit. Therefore, it is not to no purpose that we are putting on poor creatures to do what they can.

**CAUTION 2.** Whatever anyone does in seeking after Christ before he has union with Christ, it is not to be reckoned as the condition of the covenant of grace or a gospel work. There are no preparatory works for the receiving of Christ that are the condition of the covenant of grace. Though they are such things as we must follow after, yet they are not the condition of the covenant of grace. Now that is the condition of the covenant of grace; it sanctifies him who has it and follows upon our union with Christ. Though God used to carry on the soul

in the way of legal terrors, humiliations, and the like, yet these are not the work of the covenant of grace. And, therefore, this may help many poor souls about terrors of conscience and humiliations who are troubled that they never had those degrees as others have. Why, as they do not prepare and fit you for Christ, so the want of them is no hindrance to the receiving of Christ.

**CAUTION 3.** Though you put yourselves upon the use of all means to the receiving of Christ, yet take heed you do not rest in any of those preparatory works. There's a great deal of danger in that. Many souls mistake, and it is to be feared it is in this, resting in something that they have done. It may be God has awakened their consciences, and they fall upon working, upon humbling, and reforming themselves, and here they rest. But this is a mistake. You must not rest until you find you are in Christ, until there is a union with Christ and your souls. The work is not therefore done because you are jumbled and reformed, and run a different course than what you did before. Romans 9:16: "'Tis not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." It is "not of him that willeth," that is, who has some good affections to it; nor of "him that runneth." That is, though his endeavors are never so strong, yet 'tis not of him either. Many think they have peace in their souls upon their good desires and endeavors. When their hearts are mightily stirred, and they are wonderfully enlarged, they make no question but all is done, and they quiet their hearts with that and think there is no further work to be done. But it is not so. "Not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Though we must will and we must run, yet there may be running and striving to enter in, and yet we may not enter. This is a very great

point to let us see, all of us, what need we have of the free grace of God in pardoning our sin.

CAUTION 4. Though God does not tie Himself to come into pardon upon these preparatory works going before, yet it is worthy of the utmost endeavors of any soul in the world that there is a possibility of obtaining it. Though God does not tie Himself to give pardon on those works, yet there is enough in it to require the utmost endeavors of anyone to be laid out. Could we do ten thousand times more than we can, even the very possibility of obtaining pardon is worth the calling forth of all our strength.

Know that the very possibility of having sin pardoned is enough to set all your hearts at work to seek after it, though God does not tie Himself to come in then and pardon. 'Tis not that God would have His creature seek Him, and then all should be left unto that seeking; no, for if it were granted that God foresaw something that His creature would do, and upon that He would give him pardon, then all the world would be saved. But all the world does not what they can. If God had tied Himself to come in when men do what they can, all the world might be saved; but it is not so. God has left it so that He will have His creature (do what he can) to rely upon Him; and when He does come in, then He enters into the greatest and strongest bonds that can be to do His creature good. But I come to enforce the exhortation to seek after the pardon of sin.

QUESTION. You will say, "How must we seek it? What is to be done?"

ANSWER 1. In seeking pardon of your sins, set yourselves as in the presence of God and put this upon your souls: "I am now looking after the pardon of sin, but how do I do it? Does my

heart work so that I can satisfy my own conscience in the work I do? Is it such a work that may testify my high respect for God from whom I seek it? Is it such a work as manifests that I am sensible it is a business of the most infinite concern that I have in all the world; and am I sensible of the infinite power and majesty of God as One who is infinitely above me?"

When you seek after pardon, you must do it so that you may be able to satisfy your consciences that your seeking is such a work as holds forth the glorious greatness of that God you are seeking after. Many pray slightly, "God be merciful to me," and mumble over a few words and are done. Does this hold forth that they have such an apprehension of the greatness, of the power, of that God they seek after? Surely not! That's the first point.

ANSWER 2. If you will seek after pardon of sin, it must be such a seeking as may testify that you prize your life here in this world above all things else in it because God gives you time to seek after Him. Is your seeking such that it manifests the time of your life is given you for this very end? If you were sensible of this, you would seek it in another manner than you do. You would seek it as a condemned man seeks his pardon, for, certainly, every man is a condemned man, and the time of your life is like a condemned man's time between his condemnation and execution. Now does your seeking testify and witness that you spend your time, and that your hearts are so stirred in seeking pardon that it holds forth that you account your lives precious, and use it for the same end, to get the pardon of your sin? If a condemned man had time to seek a pardon two or three days, and he followed drinking, playing, and the like, certainly none would apprehend this man to have spent his time as if it were given him to get his pardon. Look upon the courses and lives of most men. Are they such as testify that they live to

that very end, to seek pardon? If men were as sensible of it as they should be, they would cry and weep and lament unto God for the pardon of their sins, and so carry it as would testify that they prize their lives at a high rate for this end, that they may seek the pardon of their sins.

ANSWER 3. It must be done so that you may have this testimony in your consciences, that you never sought after anything in the world as you sought after this. Though there was never so important an occasion, yet there is nothing after which your endeavors have been so powerful as after this. I appeal to you in this place, is the work of your souls after pardon so that in your own consciences you can say, "If any business ever took up my heart, this has; if ever my spirit was up in anything in the world it is in this"? Certainly, unless it is so, you have not done that which God requires of you.

ANSWER 4. You must so do it as apprehending God as ready to be gone and to turn away from you. You must so seek after Him as apprehending, for all you know, that God is just going away, and if you do not have the pardon of sin now it is uncertain whether you shall ever have it. The soul must cry as a poor malefactor does when the judge is on the bench. He cries all that while. But when the judge is ready to rise and is going off, then he cries, "Mercy, mercy!" when he thinks that if he lets him go he shall never see his face more. He cries then for a purpose.

So should it be with every soul that understands the danger of losing God. You should so seek after pardon of sin as looking on yourselves standing before God the Judge of all the world, having the sentence of death out against you; yet, for the present, God is looking on you and allows you to look on Him—but so as apprehending God ready to turn aside and you know not whether ever He will grant you such an opportunity of seeing Him any more. Oh, then, a man should seek after God as ready

to turn aside from Him, and for all he knows he should never see Him more! Certainly, if you know the evil of sin, and the blessedness of pardon of sin, what a deep impression would such an apprehension make upon your hearts!

ANSWER 5. Seek after pardon of sin so that you may testify you would sanctify the great name of God in it. I do not say you can do it, but you must endeavor after it, and desire that which you do may have some resemblance to it. There is no work that ever God did from all eternity that has so much or more of His name in it than this work of the pardon of sin has. This is a positive work of God, and it is for this end—to declare His name. The works and counsels of God about this were the greatest things that ever God did. You heard much concerning the glory of God in this work in the opening of the doctrine. Now what I put you upon in the use is this: that in seeking pardon of sin, know you are so to endeavor after it as your endeavors may hold forth the apprehensions your souls have of the great name of God. Certainly this sanctifies God's name when we perform it so, when there is a work upon our souls suitable in some measure to the excellent and glorious name of God that appears in some measure in the work that we are conversant about.

Suppose it is the speaking of any attribute of God; then I sanctify God's name when there is that reverential respect for God in reference to such an attribute. So when I give God praise for a mercy, I sanctify God's name when there is a work upon my heart suitable to that glorious name of God that appears in the mercy bestowed on me. So if I seek God for a blessing, then I reverence God's name when there is a disposition in my heart somewhat suitable to the glorious name of God that appears on that blessing. So in endeavoring to sanctify God's name in seeking pardon of sin, you do it then when there is such a frame in your heart as may hold forth to men and angels that this work

of yours has some kind of suitableness to the glorious name of God that appears in it. This is to sanctify the name of God, and it is a great work. This is the great thing for which you were made, and this is the great thing for which the counsels of God, yea, the deep counsels of God were set, a work from all eternity.

Now the dispositions of our spirits must be such as may manifest the great end the wisdom and counsels of God had in it, and therefore it must be a great work that must manifest that. For, certainly, those whom God pardons He makes understand what pardon means.

Now then, if your seeking is such as that you know what it is you seek after, then it must hold forth also that you understand the name of God to be exceedingly glorious in it. And then, as you apprehend this, so accordingly your heart will work after it; and therefore, when you are alone and find your hearts working this way, say, "What do I do? Do I so call upon Him and seek after Him that this work of mine declares to God and my own conscience I seek for it so that I may manifest the glorious name of the great God that is in it?" Certainly if I do not do it thus, I take God's name in vain.

ANSWER 6. Further, you must seek after pardon of sin as if you were now to answer for all your sins before the Lord. As you would wish you had done it then, so do it now. I put it to every one of you. Have you not been on your sick beds, and in your apprehension near unto death? Has not God awakened your consciences, and have you been afraid upon the account of your sins? What kind of temper your souls have been in then, know it concerns you every day, in the whole course of your lives, to have the same apprehensions as you had at that time. Do now as then you would have done. Certainly you do not understand what pardon of sin means if you do not seek it thus.

ANSWER 7. Do it as you think in your conscience the damned souls in hell would do if God should give them a possibility. What would they do if God should proclaim unto them a possibility of pardon? What would they do? Divers things you may conceive they would do, and here it comes up fully to my hand to put you upon it to say, "Oh, that shall I do!" Were we to preach to them in hell, do you think that there is any one of them but would mightily cry to the God of Heaven? 'Tis not likely that there is any one of such an audience but would mightily cry to God if the great counsels of God concerning pardon of sin were preached to them, and will not every one of you now mightily cry to God for it? Certainly if they would do it in hell, why should not you do it now? That which you think they would do, not with a few slight vain expressions, you do now with all your might.

ANSWER 8. Do this: so seek after pardon of sin so as to desire, if it were possible, that you might bring as much glory unto God as He would have had of you if He should have damned you forever. This is an excellent frame of spirit, though you do not know it; but though you do not, yet you should put yourselves upon such a kind of work and God may come in. You cry out for pardon, but you never cry out for God's honor, "Oh, what shall become of the honor of God that He has lost by me, and the dishonor I have brought to Him!" Say, "Oh, Lord, I have dishonored Thy name! Oh, that I might honor Thy name as much as I have dishonored it! Oh, lord, Thou might make up Thy honor in my eternal damnation, but, oh, Lord, I would, if I could, do anything that might make up the dishonor that I have brought by my sin. If I could do anything that Thou mightiest have any honor in, I would do it."

For a close, I shall put this for a consideration to you: whatever you would do upon any supposition (suppose your danger

were as great as ever it was in all your lives), what you would do then do it now. You must do all that can be done by a creature. Now if you would do more on such a supposition as this, after all those sermons you have heard of the evil of sin, and now of the great blessedness of the pardon of sin, if you do not do what a creature is able to do, how can you look for pardon of sin in the face of God? And, therefore, what you would do on any such supposition, do now, though you should not get pardon. Suppose you were now ready to be damned, yet is it not better to do it than not to do it? Having spoken of these general things, I come now more particularly to the other part of the question: what is to be done?

First, be sure you take off your heart from all other imaginary blessedness. Certainly there is no man in the world but has something else his heart is running after. Now you must get your heart off from that thing, whatever it is. It may be your heart was set upon friends or pleasures of the flesh, and you thought yourself happy the more you had liberty for your lust. Now you must be convinced that you have fed upon ashes, and have not been able to say, "There is a lie in my right hand; but God has now shown me there is a lie, and I have looked for happiness elsewhere. But now I see it is not there to be found." Win your soul fully to this: "Oh, my soul, are you taken off from all other things? Has God convinced you that you may have honors, riches, pleasures, and yet be a reprobate? Woe unto me for the time that I have lost. I have laid out my time and money for another blessedness that is nowhere to be found but in the grace of God."

Second, let conscience have free liberty to show you your sins and charge them upon you, yea, to accuse and condemn you. Help your conscience. When conscience accuses and condemns, then condemn yourself. If you would be pardoned, then

give conscience scope and liberty. 'Tis very dangerous, when God begins to stir the hearts of men and women, to make any stop or give any check to conscience. The wisest course is to give conscience liberty, for it will have liberty one day to accuse and condemn you. Why will you not now give it liberty? Conscience will one day bring all your evil deeds before you and accuse you. Let it now accuse and condemn you; and certainly, if you do so, you are in a very good way to come to the absolution of your sins in your conscience now, for at the great day the books shall be opened. Now bring, as it were, a Day of Judgment upon yourself; contract the throne of God into your own hearts and call for the book of conscience, and say, "Conscience, what do you say against me that I may get it blotted out now, that it may not be read against me at the Day of Judgment?"

Third, be willing to own all your sins. Confess and reveal them with all the heart-breaking circumstances and aggravations you possibly can. The Lord knows your sins whether you confess them or not, but God will have you to come and lay them open. God will have you to come and charge yourself with them. It is a very good thing to open conscience freely before the Lord, not in a slight way but in a way of anguish and bitterness of spirit, bewailing them and crying by way of prayer and petition against them.

Fourth, be willing to accept the punishment of sin. Say, "Oh, Lord, as thus I charge and acknowledge, bewail and cry out of my sins, so here I am, Lord, ready and willing to accept the punishment of my sin." And the soul that is in this frame is in comfortable way of pardon of sin.

Fifth, resolve to avoid sin whatever comes of it. At the very time you are seeking pardon of sin, be sure to resolve never to sin again; for know that for all you know, the very next sin you commit may make God come upon you for all your former sins.

Sixth, cast out whatever is gotten by false ways. Make restitution, as Zaccheus did in Luke 19.

Seventh, be sure that you are put off with nothing else but pardon of sin. Never rest, keeping your soul always in a waiting frame, looking up to God for pardon.

To all these things I shall add that all these must have reference to the great work of the Son of God when you cry out, "What shall we do?" Though I have spoken of divers things, yet know all is with reference unto Christ the Son of God, God-Man; look upon Him as the Head of the second covenant, offering up Himself for our sins. Let your eye be upon Him, and as you give your conscience liberty to charge your sins upon your own soul, so charge them upon Christ, the Head of the second covenant. Have an eye to Him for the discharge of them. Do you vomit up your sins by confession and cry to God for pardon? Remember that you cry to Him through the meditation of Jesus Christ. Look upon Him who must make up the breach, restore you to favor, and remove the curse. In every work, be sure you eye Christ, and make use of these rules so as may further the venturing of your soul upon Christ.

Unless your soul rises to work you to Christ, all the other is but a natural work. Though, as I said before, you should let conscience condemn you, and though you have anguish of spirit, know all these are but natural works any further than they serve in reference unto Christ.

And now I have shown you what you are to do. What is it that you will do? Will you set up your resolution that through the grace of God in Christ, whatever has been told you, you will set about the same? Then happy are you. But if you do it not, it may be you may wish you had done it when sin lies heavy on you. Then you will cry that God would be merciful to you, but then God and conscience will say, "I warned you at such a time, in

such a place, and were you not there put on a way to seek after pardon? What did you do after you went away? The next day you went among your companions and were as drunk and as wicked as ever before." If it is so, then trouble will be upon you.

It may be some poor creature who sat in the same pew with you had a heart to seek pardon and is absolved before men and angels, and at the Day of Judgment shall sit at Christ's right hand. You heard the same Word and have neglected it. Now you come to have your soul lie under the weight and burden of your sins. God forbid that there should be such a difference made! You have heard the way; seek after the pardon of your sin. Let it not be in vain that all these sermons have been preached unto you. In Acts 10:43, when they preached about pardon of sin, it says, "to Him gave all the prophets witness." Oh, that you might come in and give witness that this day remission of sin was preached unto you! Oh, that while you hear this Word the Holy Ghost might fall upon you, that you might have your hearts fired with strong resolutions to set about this work in the power of the Holy Ghost, and rest not in anything on this side of a pardon!

Now I come to give you some encouragements, and they will work in two ways. They will either draw you to Christ or forever stop your mouths that you shall have nothing to say against Him. I shall name fifteen encouragements unto you.

## *Encouragements to Seek After Pardon of Sin*

1. *The time of your life is given for this very end, to seek the pardon of your sins.* If a man has any great business to do that concerns his life, and another comes to him and says, “Sir, this is the very nick of time that you have taken, or else you had been lost forever”; so this is the very nick of time given you to get pardon of your sins and interest in the blood of Christ.

2. *This time is not only afforded for this end, but the means the Lord has brought you under is a great argument that He intends mercy for you.* And you may conclude that there are more of God’s elect who may have pardoning mercy than in former times. The light of the gospel breaks forth, and certainly there are more to be brought in. The gospel is the fruit of Christ’s death and given for the elect’s sake. In Acts 18:9–10, He bid Paul go preach, for “he had much people.” He would have opposition, but the command was “Go, be not afraid, for I have much people in that place.” It is true, the rain will fall upon the tiles as well as on the tender herbs and grass, but, certainly, where God sends His Word He has people to be gathered in. And if you take notice of God’s providence in this point, it may greatly encourage

you to come in. Certainly there are many in this congregation, and in others, where the Word is preached whom He will pardon. In Mark 10:46–49, the blind man, hearing it was Christ who passed by, cried for mercy. Many charged him to hold his peace, but he cried the more, and Christ stood still and called him unto Him. Now, if you see your sin and cry for pardon, Christ will call you, to give pardoning mercy to you as He did to Bartimaeus.

3. *It may be you are not only under the means of grace and the outward call, but you begin to feel an inward call.* There are some stirrings of God's Spirit within you. You could say before that you wondered what the matter was with people to run after sermons, but now you begin to feel the effect of it. And the glory of God appears to you in this place when you are hearing His Word. You may hence reason, as Manoah's wife in Judges 13:23, that certainly "if God had intended to have killed us, He would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands; neither would He have shown us all these things." So say to your soul, "If God had intended to kill me, He would not have been so willing to have drawn me after Him, neither would He have shown me all these things." And let that be an encouragement to you.

4. *The end why God continues this world in being is that He might give pardon to His elect.* Certainly this world would have been dissolved long ago if it were not that He might bring pardon to His elect, and to those who see their sins. This must be a great encouragement to a soul, to those who see their sins, to come in. When this pardoning work is done, Christ will deliver up His kingdom to His Father. If a malefactor should come to sue out his pardon, and one should say unto him, "It is well, sir, you are come, for the king would not have kept his court so long here but that you should come in," would not this be a great encouragement? So I say, were it not that men should come to get the

pardon of their sin, the court of the world would have been broken up long before this time.

5. *The principal scope of the Scriptures is for this very end: to reveal the pardoning grace of God.* You have here the heart of God laid open. Christ wept and mourned that sinners would not come in that they might be pardoned and saved. I have read a story that in Athens there was a temple, and in it there was a woman weeping. In one hand she had a bleeding heart and with the other she was writing pardons. So Christ stands weeping over you that you will not come in, and He has a bleeding heart, bleeding for you in the one hand, and with the other hand He is ready to write you a pardon, Luke 19:41–42.

6. *Nay, He not only weeps, but He sends His ambassadors to woo you to come in, and tells them they shall not take a denial at your hands, 2 Corinthians 5:20.* They entreat and beg as in His name; nay, it is the beseechings and entreatings of God Himself. As if a king should send one of the attendants on him to a poor, condemned prisoner and say, “Go tell such a one that he must come for his pardon, and tell him, I beseech him, and take no denial of him. I beseech him to come in.” Would not this manifest the great willingness of the king to pardon? God does so, He sends His ministers and beseeches you to come in and take a pardon. It is as certain God speaks thus by His ministers as if you heard God speaking by Himself. This should move you to come in. Christ begs and entreats you to be reconciled that His blood might not be shed in vain. Seeing it is so, that God begs you to come in, why should you not come in and take pardon of your sin? Why can you not come in and give up yourself and all you have and are to Him?

7. *Know it is the great office and work of Christ’s mediatorship to bind up the broken hearts of wounded sinners.* Isaiah 61:1: “The

Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, and He hath anointed Me. He hath sent Me to preach good tidings to the needy. He hath sent Me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." This in the New Testament is applied to Christ. Now this being the great work for which Christ came into the world, to bind up the broken hearted, see whether you cannot rely on Christ by an act of faith. This should be a great encouragement.

8. *Consider that the God you have to deal with, His nature is mercy in the abstract; and, if so, He is free in His mercy.* As the sun shines because it's the nature of it to shine, so the mercy of God must work freely because it is His nature. As the fire burns naturally, Exodus 34 and Micah 7:18, God pardons because He delights in mercy. You say you are a poor sinner. Well, though it is so, yet you may say, "Though God can see nothing in me, yet seeing that He is a God who delights in mercy, this may move me to come in. For:

First, He has more delight in pardoning any sinner than in any of the creatures of heaven and earth. God delights in all the works of His hands, but this He delights in more than in all. He delights in them all, but not so much as in magnifying His grace in Jesus Christ; for in this He magnifies His Son. And therefore He has more pleasure, and takes more delight, in pardoning a poor, humbled sinner than in all the works of His hands besides.

Second, no one can take so much pleasure in the salvation of his own soul as God does in pardoning your sin. And the reason is that this is the greatest design that God has, which is the setting out of His glory in His pardoning mercy in Christ. And therefore this may be a great encouragement.

Third, God is more delighted in the work of your heart closing with free grace than in all the legal works of humiliation.

What does Christ say? This is the good will and pleasure of God. And David was called a man after God's own heart. Why? Because he was a man who would do His will. So that this is a great encouragement. Though many abuse this and pervert it to their own destruction, yet God will have it taught that you might have the comfort of it. And therefore you should close with God and come in and take hold of His pardoning mercy.

9. *Though God has taken such away in mercy to pardon sin, yet He loses nothing in His justice.* Christ has taken such order that His glory shall in no way be diminished. His justice shall be satisfied, and therefore you need not say, "I have so sinned against God that I know not. I cannot tell how to make up His glory"; for there is care taken for that already, and therefore that need not discourage you.

10. *There are as vile sinners now triumphing in heaven as any of you here, be you never so black and vile.* Therefore, do not be discouraged at the greatness of your sins; for though they are very great, yet that may not keep you out. Others as vile as you are now in heaven.

11. *Make the utmost of your sin you can, yet this need not hinder you to come to God for it.* For all that men or angels know, you have as much interest in Christ as any saint in heaven ever had; and if you come in and lay hold of Christ, your very laying hold of Christ will plainly show that you have a right to Him. And therefore be not discouraged but come in.

12. *Upon your closing with Christ, you will find such a change as was never wrought in any creature besides.* For though you were vile and filthy—more vile and filthy than a newborn child by original and actual sins engendered in you—yet you shall be made cleaner than a child, and more pure in the eyes of God than any child cleansed from his filthiness. Would you not do

anything to be pure in the eyes of God? Make use of what I say and you shall be clean. When you hear the ministers utter the threatenings of God, you fall out with the man and say, "He preaches nothing but terror!" Alas, 'tis our delight to preach the pardoning grace of God, but we must show the evil of sin, and it is that you might come in and embrace mercy; for know that we delight to preach mercy more than anything else. And know that if you desire that all your thoughts, ways, and actions may be for God's glory, He will not upbraid you for coming in to Him. John 6:37: "He that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." Though you have been never so great a sinner, yet you may come in and close with Christ; for he who comes to Him, be what he will, He will in no wise cast out.

13. *You will fill heaven with joy, and there will be more melody in heaven than at the coming in of any prince to his kingdom.* And I may say unto you, even in this place, if you come in the angels will rejoice; for there are many angels who stand about you. Therefore, take heed of your carriage, for they come to see your behavior. Have a special care that your hearts are set upon the work you come about, for they are here to see how you carry yourselves.

14. *In obtaining pardon of sin and closing with Christ by faith, you are made heir of the whole world, Romans 4:13.* Many of your mariners, and others, venture upon dangerous voyages to get great estates in this world, and you count them happy that are born to great estates. Why, by closing with Jesus Christ by faith for remission of sins, you are made heirs of the whole world. I mean not of that to come, but of this present world. Though none of you certainly desires more than may carry you to heaven, yet you are true and proper heirs of the whole world. All is yours, the Scripture is very clear in it; but I cannot now stand to enlarge upon it. See 1 Corinthians 3:21–23.

15. *For all you know, you are one of God's elect, and there is nothing you are to do but God has promised to enable you to do it.* For there is such a transaction between God and Christ that he who shall be saved shall not have only favor vouchsafed unto him, but shall be enabled to do whatever God requires of him. Here shall be grace given to every one of the elect of God. And now, if you come in and give up yourself and all that you are, have, or can do to Christ, how do you know but you are one of those who are elect, and so shall be made forever happy? But if after all that has been said you go away with slight thoughts of this rich and transcendent grace of pardoning mercy, and do not set presently upon the work to obtain it, be forever ashamed and confounded but let the pardoning mercy of God be forever magnified.

*Finis*

THE LIFE OF  
*Jeremiah Burroughs*

(1599–1646)

*T*his very amiable divine was born in the year 1599. He was forced to leave the university, and afterwards the kingdom, on account of his non-conformity. After he later finished his studies at the university, he entered the ministerial work and was chosen colleague to Edmund Calamy at Bury St. Edmunds. In 1631 he became rector of Tivetshal in the county of Norfolk, but upon the publication of Bishop Wren's articles and injunctions, in 1636 he was suspended and deprived of his living. He sheltered himself for some time under the hospitable roof of the Earl of Warwick, but, on account of the intolerant and oppressive proceedings of the ecclesiastical rulers, the noble Earl, at length, found it was impossible to protect him any longer. Shortly after, to escape the fire and persecution, he fled to Holland and settled at Rotterdam, where he was chosen teacher to the congregational church of which Mr. William Bridge was the pastor.

Upon his arrival, he was cordially received by the church, and continued to be a zealous and faithful laborer for several years, gaining a very high reputation among the people. After the commencement of the civil war, when the power of the bishops was set aside, he returned to England, says Granger's *Biographical History*, "not to preach sedition, but peace, for which he earnestly prayed and labored."

Mr. Burroughs was a highly honored and esteemed person, and he soon became a most popular and admired preacher.

After his return, his popular talents and great worth presently excited public attention, and he was chosen preacher to the congregations of Stepney and Cripplegate, London, then accounted two of the largest congregations in England. Mr. Burroughs preached at Stepney at seven o'clock in the morning, and William Greenhill at three in the afternoon. These two persons, stigmatized by the historian Anthony Wood as notorious schismatics and independents, were called by Mr. Hugh Peters, one "the morning star," the other "the evening star of Stepney."

Mr. Burroughs was chosen to be one of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, and was one of the dissenting brethren, but a divine of great wisdom and moderation. He united with his brethren, Messrs. Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, William Bridge, and Sydrach Sympson, in publishing their own "Apologetical Narration" in defense of their own distinguishing sentiments. The authors of this work, who had been exiles for religion, to speak in their own language, "...consulted the Scriptures without any prejudice. They considered the Word of God as impartially as men of flesh and blood are likely to do, in any juncture of time; the place they went to, the condition they were in, and the company they were with, affording no temptation to any bias."

They asserted that every church or congregation has sufficient power within itself for the regulation of religious government, and is subject to no external authority whatever. The principles upon which they founded their church government were to confine themselves in everything to what the Scriptures prescribed, without paying any attention to the opinions or practices of men; nor to tie themselves down too strictly to their present resolutions, so as to leave no room for alterations upon a further acquaintance with divine truth. They steered a middle course between Presbyterianism and Brownism: the former they accounted too arbitrary, the latter too rigid, deviating from the spirit and simplicity of the gospel.

These are the great principles of the Independents of the present day.

Richard Baxter, who knew his great worth, said, "If all the Episcopalians had been like Archbishop Usher, all the Presbyterians like Stephen Marshall, and all the Independents like Jeremiah Burroughs, the breaches of the church would soon have been healed." The last subject on which Burroughs preached was his *Irenicum*, an attempt to heal the divisions among Christians. This title has been published by Soli Deo Gloria Publications. His incessant labors, and his grief for the distractions of the times, are said to have hastened his end. He died of tuberculosis on November 14, 1646, at the age of 47. The historian Granger says, "he was a man of learning, candor, and modesty, and of an exemplary and irreproachable life." Thomas Fuller has classed him among the learned writers of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Williams' *Christian Preacher* says that his *Exposition of Hosea* is a pleasing specimen, to show how the popular preachers of his time applied the Scriptures in their expository discourses to the various cases of their hearers. He published several of his writings while he lived, and his friends sent forth many others after his death, most of which were highly esteemed by all pious Christians.

# *A Summary of the Gospel*

by Jeremiah Burroughs

*From Gospel Conversation (1657)*

*and reprinted by Soli Deo Gloria Publications*

The gospel of Christ in general is this: It is the good tidings that God has revealed concerning Christ. More largely it is this: As all mankind was lost in Adam and became the children of wrath, put under the sentence of death, God, though He left His fallen angels and has reserved them in the chains of eternal darkness, yet He has thought upon the children of men and has provided a way of atonement to reconcile them to Himself again.

Namely, the second Person in the Trinity takes man's nature upon Himself, and becomes the Head of a second covenant, standing charged with sin. He answers for it by suffering what the law and divine justice required, and by making satisfaction for keeping the law perfectly, which satisfaction and righteousness He tenders up to the Father as a sweet savor of rest for the souls that are given to Him.

And now this mediation of Christ is, by the appointment of the Father, preached to the children of men, of whatever nation or rank, freely offering this atonement unto sinners for atonement, requiring them to believe in Him and, upon believing, promising not only a discharge of all their former sins, but that they shall not enter into condemnation, that none of their sins or unworthiness shall ever hinder the peace of God with them, but that they shall through Him be received into the number of those who shall have the image of God again to be renewed unto them, and that they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

