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PARDON OF SIN

IN THE

BLOOD OF JESUS:

A

SERMON,

PREACHED IN PHILADELPHIA, ON THE EVENING OF SABBATH THE
31st OF MAY, 1801.



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PARDON OF SIN, &c.

EPHES. i. 7.

*In whom we have redemption through his blood,
the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches
of his grace.*

WHOEVER believe that they have sinned, and that God is just, cannot be indifferent to their condition and their prospects. The perfect developement of his righteousness being reserved for a future state, and every question concerning it involving an immortal spirit and an eternal destiny, it would be madness not to inquire what shall be our fate. Reason and conscience pronounce, with revelation, that *the wages of sin is death*. And neither reason nor conscience, neither the works nor the providence of God, can discover the means, or warrant the hope, of escape. Dost thou doubt? Make fairly the experiment. Retire into thine own bosom, and ask, Can God justify the

ungodly? Thy reason, abashed, declines to answer; while the voice of Conscience pours accusations into thine ears, and her finger points to *the wrath to come*. Flee from thyself and thy fellow sinners, whose reason is as dark, and whose conscience is as guilty as thy own. Explore the works of the Creator. Thou wilt see order, bounty, magnificence; but not a trace of pardon. Go down, now, to the abode of those rebel-spirits *who kept not their first estate*. Ah! here are only *chains of darkness, and vials of wrath*. Hasten hence, and consult the angels who surround the throne. Ask them if thou mayest hope for more lenity than the apostates of their own family? Ask them if the HOLY ONE can save thee without prejudice to his glory? The heavenly hosts cannot solve the problem. Silence seals up their lips of love; and thou, thy soul unsatisfied, thy doubts redoubled, must return and pass the time of thy sojourning, alternately shivering with the ague, and burning with the fever, of despair.

On this darkness, which the lights of the creature serve only to deepen, God hath caused the light of his gospel to descend. It hath driven away those forms of horror which stalk around us in Reason's and in Nature's gloom,

and revealed his angel of peace, the Word made flesh. He calls us this day into his sanctuary, not to face his terrors, and to perish at his rebuke; but to embrace his overtures of mercy, and to rejoice in his salvation.

This, then, is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that, to secure an honourable exercise of mercy, God *spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death, that he might purge away our transgressions.* And we are commanded to announce to you these glad tidings of great joy, that *in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.* Astonishing words! More astonishing truths! *Forgiveness of sins—forgiveness through the redemption of the SAVIOUR'S blood—forgiveness according to the riches of his grace.* These are the sublime subjects of the text, and you see, in their order, the plan of discourse.

Spirit of grace and truth! impart thine influence, that we may speak of them and hear, as belongeth to those who speak and who hear the oracles of God!

I. I am to explain, that *forgiveness of sins* which is declared in the text.

To form a correct judgment on this point, we must ponder the condition into which sin has brought us. In his moral government God has inseparably connected sin with punishment. Exclusion from his favour, his communion, his presence: his abhorrence in this world, and the damnation of hell in the next, are its native consequences and its just reward. It is this obligation to punishment which we term *guilt*. The divine law ties down the person of the sinner to the penalty of his sin. Forgiveness looses the wrathful bond. It dissolves the connection, not between sin and suffering, which is as immutable as the holiness and truth of God, but between sin and the destruction of the sinner. His crimes are consigned to oblivion; and the Lord, instead of entering into judgment with him, acquits him from every charge, pronounces him innocent, and crowns him with blessing. Forgiveness, then, produces a double effect.

1. It removes the curse which, till that moment, abides on the sinner's person.

Justice had issued her sentence; the law had arrested him, and bound him for execution. Forgiveness steps in; takes the death-warrant out of the hand of the law; breaks the seal, and

cancels the authority, of that fatal instrument; strikes off the fetters of the condemned wretch, and bids him go forth.

2. Forgiveness confers the favour and fellowship of God, and the inheritance of his heavenly kingdom.

Pardon is the great preliminary to advancement. The Lord forgives, that he may bless. A pardoned rebel passes into the family of God's dear children. Accepted in the Beloved, the Spirit of adoption descends upon his heart, and his countenance brightens with the smile of reconciliation. Compassed about with favour as with a shield, he walks in safety and in peace. No weapon that is formed against him shall prosper. The eternal God is his refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Though his transgression may be visited with the rod, and his iniquity with stripes, yet, *my loving-kindness*, saith God, *will I not take from him; nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.* And while the Lord is thus his shelter and his shade; his glory and the lifter up of his head, manifesting covenant-mercy in giving that which is good, he is admitted to the divine fellowship. An open door into the holiest is set before him, through which he is

commanded and qualified to draw nigh and commune with the living God. Without reluctance, without misgivings, with all holy boldness, it is his duty to *go unto God his exceeding joy*. The privilege is most congenial with the principles of the new man. A pacified conscience, and a cleansed heart find their element in the presence and enjoyment of God. *O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.*

This state of friendship with God, is the pledge of his eternal kingdom. *We are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.* Whom he translates into his family, he appoints to his rest: pardons and adopts them, that they may be for ever, in the highest heavens, *to the praise of the glory of his grace.* Between sonship and the kingdom, his covenant has fixed an indissoluble connection. *If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and fellow heirs with Christ in glory.*

These are, indeed, glad tidings. Every syllable is accented with transport. "But oh!" cries the desponding spirit, "mock me not with a fallacious hope. I sink under my guilt: I perish, behold I perish!"

Nay, I preach not to you an idle tale. This gospel of forgiveness is faithful and worthy of all acceptation. It is the joint message of Mercy and Judgment through the lips of Truth. The principle on which forgiveness is tendered hushes every tumult, and relieves every doubt. That dread enigma, *how God can be just and justify the ungodly?* is unfolded in the text. All forgiveness of sin flows through the blood of Jesus Christ. This is the

II. Part of the discourse. *We have redemption through his blood.*

Here occurs a double inquiry. The one involving the *doctrine* of redemption; the other, the *nature of our interest in it.*

1. The *doctrine* of redemption, as taught by the apostle, may be reduced to the following propositions.

First. That sin cannot go unpunished: and, therefore, that a forgiveness which implies its impunity is impossible.

Second. That it is altogether consistent with

the divine righteousness to inflict the punishment of sin upon a competent *surety*, and to pardon sinners in virtue of his atonement.

Third. That no obedience or suffering of any mere creature can atone for sin.

Fourth. That the redemption of the blood of Jesus, as it is the only, so it is the all-sufficient reason of the pardon of sin. May the Spirit of Jesus help us to understand and improve these truths!

First. Sin cannot go unpunished: and, therefore, a forgiveness which implies its impunity, is impossible.

The impunity of sin is incompatible with the nature, the government, and the covenant of God.

His nature forbids it. An eternal contradiction to his perfection, *it shall not dwell in his presence*, but must be marked as *that abominable thing which he hateth*. And if his very being is set against it, this, in itself, is the most terrible punishment. All other plagues are lost in the abyss of that curse, God is thine enemy. Yes, brethren, his holiness is *a consuming fire, which burns up his enemies round about*; and, therefore, it forbids the impunity of sin.

His *government* also forbids it. A great God, and a great King, whose glory is the end, and whose will is the law, of creation; he *must* be obeyed, and on him must be the visible dependence of the universe. Sin is the attempt of a creature to throw off his dependence. And could he sin with impunity, his independence would be effected. But an independent creature is an atheistical absurdity. The punishment of sin, therefore, results necessarily from the divine *supremacy*.

It equally results from the divine *rectitude*. God *sitteth on a throne judging right*. But a righteous governor who does not punish crime is a contradiction. It is in giving every one his due, or, in other words, in apportioning condition to character, that righteousness consists. And the perfection of this apportionment is the perfection of righteousness. If, then, God should permit any sin to escape, his righteousness would be imperfect; if every sin, he would have none at all; nor could the idea of righteousness exist in the universe. Sin, therefore, is punished, because its punishment is intrinsically just, and cannot be remitted by a just God. Otherwise it would either never be inflicted, or be resolved into a question of

mere expediency: and this would annihilate the distinction between right and wrong, and with it every moral attribute of Deity.

Moreover, the protection which the justice of God owes to his innocent creatures, as well as to the honour of his own holiness, requires the coercion of transgressors. That a principle of ingratitude, rebellion, and enmity against him—a principle which defies his wrath, and threatens his throne; which hurls desolation and wretchedness through his world—should go uncontrouled, or unchastised, is a thought infinitely shocking. Scripture coincides with these views and this reasoning. *The wrath of God revealed from heaven against the unrighteousness of men, it calls his judgments.* As a judge *with whom there is no iniquity*, he will determine their final state, by recompensing to some, eternal rest; and to others, eternal tribulation. *If he rain upon sinners snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest*, it is because he is *the righteous Lord who loveth righteousness.*

To the consideration of God's general government we must add that of his *covenant with man.*

The law of morals prescribed to our race is

armed with penalty, not only in the nature of things, but by the express declaration of the lawgiver. Coupled, moreover, with a federal transaction, which embraces, on the one hand, the threatening of death, and, on the other, the sweet promise of life, it binds to the fulfilment of their respective stipulations the fidelity both of God and man. But the law is violated: the covenant is broken: the forfeiture is incurred; and fallen man is under a dispensation of wrath flowing from the breach of the covenant of works. His sin is, therefore, under a double obligation to punishment: the one arising from the holiness and rectoral justice of God; the other from that covenant-threatening to which he consented, and which the divine veracity is pledged to execute. Accordingly, the Law of God knows nothing of forgiveness. Encircled with terrible glory, she takes her position on Ebal, and with her trumpet, which is *as the voice of the Almighty God, when he speaketh*, issues her proclamation, *The wages of sin is DEATH! CURSED is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them!*

It appears, then, that the perdition of a sinner is inevitable, unless some expedient can

be devised which may conciliate his pardon with the holiness, the government, and the truth of God. Blessed be his name! such an expedient is possible. For,

My *second* proposition is, That it is altogether consistent with the divine righteousness to inflict the punishment of sin upon a competent surety, and to pardon sinners in virtue of his atonement.

By *atonement*, taken in a large sense, is understood, such an obedience as shall fulfil the precept, and such suffering as shall exhaust the penalty, of the divine law; and thus, by satisfying the claims of justice, remove every obstruction to the exercise of mercy.

Atonement proceeds on the principle of *substitution*. The guilt of men being transferred to an able, a voluntary, and an accepted surety, their responsibility attaches to him, and they are released. So that, by an intervention of an atonement, the righteousness of God may be displayed in the punishment, and his grace in the pardon, of sin. Nor is the propriety of such a dispensation liable to just exception. On the contrary, it is susceptible of the clearest proof. For them who, without murmuring or disputing, receive the testimony of God, it is

sufficient that his word declares the fact. The Lord Jesus, *his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree.* Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all; yea, hath made HIM to be SIN for us, who knew no sin; that WE might be made the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD in him.

But in forming our judgment on this point, the nature of justice, and the works and providence of God, come to our aid.

1st. Justice requires that the law be maintained; and, therefore, that violations of it be punished. And, provided this end be gained; that is, provided *every transgression and disobedience receive a just recompence of reward,* justice has no farther demand. The reason why, in all ordinary cases, her stroke lights on the person of the offender, is, that, in all such cases, she has no other way of punishing his offence. It is plain that her quarrel is with sin, and with the sinner solely on account of his sin: but now, on the supposition that his *guilt* can be separated from his *person*, so as not to elude the sentence of the law, it is equally plain that her quarrel with him ceases. For the sin which was the cause of it, and to punish which she had arrested him, is, notwithstanding his liberation, in her hands, to be

punished to the uttermost. This is the effect of suretiship. The same homage is yielded; the same rights asserted; the same testimony against sin exhibited; the same vengeance executed, in the obedience and suffering of a surety, as in the obedience and suffering of the principal. Expiation of sin by a surety is, therefore, most agreeable to the nature of justice.

- 2d. That part of the divine *works* with which we are most conversant, our own nature, gives strong confirmation to this doctrine. The principle of substitution, of the discharge of obligation by a surety, is interwoven with the texture of the human mind, and with all the operations of human society. Even those who are most hostile to it, when it appears in the form of imputed sin and imputed righteousness, are constantly and necessarily governed by it. The wisdom and integrity of their agent redound to their advantage, and they must reap the fruits of his folly and his faults. In short, it is the life-spring of intercourse among men; nor could the affairs of the world be carried on one moment without it. Trace up, then, to its source, and pursue through its results, the *principle* of the substi-

tution of Christ Jesus in the room of his people; and when you find, as upon sober inquiry you will, that it coincides with an essential character of man's moral constitution, you will no longer contemn it as unreasonable, or revile it as unjust.

3d. Upon this dispensation, which is founded in the nature of justice, and has a counterpart in our own frame, the *providence* of God furnishes an ample comment.

He has always dealt with men through the medium of representation. The fall of our first parent, who, as our surety, transgressed the covenant of his God, "brought death into the world and all our woe." *In Adam all die: for in him all have sinned.* In his covenant with Israel, God urged the blessing or the curse which he should bring on their posterity, as motives to deter them from sin, and secure their obedience. He has revealed himself as *a jealous God; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love him and keep his commandments.* In holy baptism parents are the sureties of their infant children. The baptismal vow, (let the truth,

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O young people, sink down into your hearts!) the baptismal vow is binding upon them; and if they despise it in riper years, especially if they die unbelievers in that Saviour to whom they were dedicated, God will plead with their souls for the profanation of that *blood of the covenant* of which the symbol has been sprinkled upon them. In the present crisis of human things, the vials of his wrath are poured out upon the posterity of those who betrayed his truth, and slew his servants. He gives them blood to drink for the blood of his saints which was shed by their ancestors. Nay, while the sentence is on my lips, thousands of Adam's children, incapable of action, are writhing in agony and sinking in death, the victims of his curse, though not, by any personal agency, the partakers of his crime. The world, then, is full of the imputation of sin. And why shall it not as well be imputed *to* a representative for expiation, as *from* a representative for punishment?

From this strong ground we are not to be driven by the plea, that righteousness and sin, being moral and personal qualities and acts, cannot be transferred to a surety. We know it. Neither do the scriptures teach, nor we

maintain, any such transfer. Instead of establishing, it would destroy, our doctrine.* We admit that personal acts cannot be *transferred*; but affirm that they are *imputed*. Imputation lies in transferring to a surety, not the qualities and acts themselves, but their *legal connection*. It is a transfer of *obligation* and of *right*. The moral principle of this transfer, or, in other words, of the imputation of sin to a surety, enters into every case of representation, whatever be its objects or modifications. And the question, How can sin be expiated by a surety? which stumbles all *the disputers of this world*, has the same embarrassments, and the same

* For if my personal sin could be taken from me, and made the personal sin of another, he must then suffer for himself, and not for me, as I would be personally innocent. He would not be under the imputation of my sin, because I would have none to impute: and I could not enjoy the benefit of his righteousness; because, on the one hand, I would require none; and, on the other, he, as suffering for himself, would have none to offer. So that here would be no representation; neither the substance, nor the shadow, of a vicarious atonement. Therefore, while my personal demerit must for ever remain my own, the consequences of it are borne by my glorious surety. It is this which renders the imputation of sin to the Lord Jesus, a doctrine so acceptable to the conscience, and so consoling to the heart, of a convinced sinner. And this simple distinction between a transfer of personal acts to a substitute, and the transfer of their legal connection, which is properly imputation, relieves the friends of truth from the embarrassment in which an incautious manner of speaking has sometimes involved them; and blows into the air the quibbles and cavils of its enemies.

solution as the question, How can the deed of my *representative* be sustained in law and equity as *my own*? It is for these disputers to shew why I may not as well *suffer* as *act*, by representation? Our astonishment in every other instance but that of the kinsman-Redeemer, would be, not that the principle of imputation should be admitted, but that it should be doubted. As it continually recurs, we lose its difficulty in its utility, and forget that it is mysterious, because it is familiar.

A vicarious atonement being thus consistent with the divine righteousness, the chief obstacle to our hope is surmounted, and the apparent contradiction between the pardon and the punishment of sin, vanishes. But our joy is premature. We have discovered that pardon, through an atonement, is possible; but an essential point remains to be settled. By whom shall the atonement be made? Here is a new and a sad perplexity. In vain we cast our imploring look upon the creatures: Not one of them has the love or the power. And this introduces my

Third proposition; which is, that no obedience or suffering of any mere creature can atone for sin.

Conscience, wounded by guilt, groping in the glimmerings of tradition, besotted with ignorance, and abused by imposture, has tried various expedients to propitiate deity. Ab-lutions, pilgrimages, penances, and a thousand other superstitions abound in Pagan and An-tichristian nations. Wealth is lavished in of-ferings of peace, and the body is tortured for the relief of the soul. Lying vanities all. *Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression; the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* Ah, no! The evil lies infinitely deeper than to be reached by such remedies. That sacrifice which will be to God of a sweet-smelling savour, cannot be offered by men, nor by angels, nor by man and angel united. Not by men—for the end of an atone-ment is to deliver them from that very curse which must be borne in making it. Not by angels—for this would be inconsistent with the truth of God, which denounced the curse upon the *human nature*. Not by an angel-man—be-cause no combination of created natures can sustain the wrath, or magnify the law, or vindicate the government, of God. An overwhelm-ing difficulty, therefore, remains. Where is

the sufferer to be found? Who shall yield an obedience to merit heaven for millions, or offer up for their souls the redeeming sacrifice? The mere possibility of relief without a friend to apply it, only doubles our distractions. The light which was dawning upon our darkness recedes, and leaves us to deeper horrors. But hark! it is the voice of the Deliverer! "LO, I COME!" Who art thou, most gracious? "I, THAT SPEAK IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, MIGHTY TO SAVE!" It is the only begotten Son of God, who comes, clothed with humanity, for the salvation of perishing sinners. Whence my

Fourth proposition is, That the blood of Jesus Christ, as it is the only, so it is the all-sufficient, reason of the pardon of sin.

1st. It is, in itself, of infinite value. Whatever a sacrifice could derive from the person of the sufferer: whatever detestation of sin, or determination to punish it: whatever terror of perdition which it involves: whatever impossibility of its expiation by a creature: whatever consistency of its pardon by a surety, could be testified by the spectacle of a humbled God; all *that* is to be found in the sacrifice of Jesus; for it is the blood of the only begotten Son. Being really man, when he endured the cross

the curse was executed upon the very nature on which it was denounced. But being unspeakably more than man, even the Father's equal, JEHOVAH IN THE FLESH, he was able to bear, at once, the whole weight of wrath, and impart to his obedience and suffering a merit and efficacy proportioned to the glory of the Godhead. The submission of the Lord Jesus to fulfil the righteousness, and bear the iniquities of his people, reflected infinite lustre upon the divine government. It did what never could have been done by the eternal obedience of all sinless, and the eternal destruction of all sinful, creatures—*MAGNIFY the law, and make it HONOURABLE.* Now, the evil of sin is demonstrated, the threatening of God executed; his truth preserved; his justice vindicated; his government maintained: and what should hinder the release of the wretches for whom these wonders have been wrought? What crime cannot the blood of Jesus atone? What stain can it not efface? How is it not impossible that it should not *cleans*e from all sin? Who shall set the transgressions of man in array against the righteousness of God? Here the conscience may be at peace; for here the divine law is satisfied, and the fires of the curse extinguished. We surely need ask no more. For,

2d. Nothing more is required by the holy God.—

The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake; and hath set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. With sinners, who are willing thus to accept forgiveness, and to choose life rather than death, he pursues his quarrel no longer, but is *in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, but forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.*

3d. What the atonement of Jesus is, in itself, and what his Father has expressly declared it to be, millions of sinners have found it to their eternal joy. *All the spirits of just men made perfect, and all believers at this hour upon earth, have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* Search the records of the saved, and you will see names of the most atrocious offenders who were pardoned, and sanctified, and are now with God. Ask them how they escaped the wrath to come, and entered the everlasting rest? With one voice they will exclaim, *He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood!* Ask all the family of grace who shall speedily join the

celestial throng, how they obtained deliverance from the curse, and access to that terrible God? With equal unanimity they will reply, *We are accepted in the Beloved!* There is, therefore, *redemption through his blood.*

Let us then proceed to our

2. Inquiry, which relates to the interest in this redemption which is implied in the text—*We have redemption*, says the apostle.

Those who enjoy the dispensation of the gospel have, *as sinners*, a common interest in the redemption of Jesus: that is, the Father has made a *grant* of him in the gospel to sinners, *as such*; for the grant of the Saviour is absolutely free. Unshackled with conditions, it is presented to them not as penitent, sensible, contrite; but as guilty, rebellious, vile. This grant invests them with a *right* to the Lord Jesus; whom they are to receive upon the authority of the divine warrant; with the assured faith, that, in thus receiving him, they shall be saved. Do any of you, then, demand where you are to seek forgiveness? The answer is short. You have it in the redemption of the blood of Christ. There it is offered to you. There you must apply. You shall not be sent

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away empty; for he hath said, *Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.*

Believers, who have *fled for refuge to this hope set before them*, are in actual possession of redemption. Faith in the blood of Jesus, that faith which is the grace of the Holy Spirit, has made it their own. That which is common to all in the indefinite grant of the gospel, has become, by particular appropriation, their personal inheritance. Theirs it is with its whole train of blessings: theirs are the ordinances: theirs the promises: theirs the gracious covenant: life is theirs: death is theirs: eternity is theirs: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are theirs—they *shall never come into condemnation: neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord.*

While our souls rejoice in this plenteous redemption, and the forgiveness which it secures, let us lift up our eyes to the source from whence both proceed. This is the

III. And last part of my discourse. We have redemption and forgiveness *according to the riches of Jehovah's grace.*

Such is the plan of salvation, that while sinners are delivered from going down to the pit, *the Lord alone shall be exalted.* In the pardon of sin, the voice of human pretension must not be heard. *Grace, mere grace, the riches of grace,* is the burden of our song. The text suggests infinite arguments of this truth.

1. Sin is such an evil, that nothing but the *grace of God* could have projected its pardon. Sin! Ah! my brethren, who can develope the meaning of the horror-smiting term? Canst thou dive into its depths, and display its hidden hells? *One sin* changed legions of holy spirits into devils. *One sin* brought perdition on our wretched race. Make thy suit to the benevolence of angels; lay before them, in its true colours, the least of thy provocations; and thy best hope will be *as the giving up of the ghost.* Not one of them would dream of mercy for thee. It belongs not to creatures to shew *such* forgiveness. Herein he is glorious; herein he is seen to be GOD, that when he alone has a full view of the sinfulness of sin, he alone can think of its pardon.

2. As nothing less than divine grace could forgive sin; so the purpose of it *originated* in no exterior cause. Many, whose affections are

touched with the love of Christ, entertain forbidding thoughts of the austerity of the Father. This is a great error. Christ purchased not the Father's love. On the contrary, it was the Father's love which appointed, and sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Grace is its own reason. *He loved us, because he loved us,* Here is the original fountain; here the overflowing ocean from which forgiveness issues. Had it depended upon any thing external, no Redeemer had been known; no hope revealed; no sinner saved.

3. The most *ineffable effect* of the Father's grace; its *riches*, its *infinite expression*, is the forgiveness of sin at the expense of the blood of Jesus. Had he given the universe beside, it would have been little, it would have been nothing, in comparison of his Son. With all holy reverence be it spoken, Grace can go no farther. Sinners, here is the very heart of God! Here he has uncovered the profound of his compassions. God *SO loved the world, that he gave his ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON*—for whom? for rebels; for those who were *enemies to him by wicked works*. For what? *That whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but might have everlasting life.*

4. In the *application* of forgiveness through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, *grace is exceedingly abundant.*

Not only is it beyond our desert and expectation, but far above all that we are able so much as to think. The forgiveness which the gospel reveals, is the forgiveness of God. We can form no conception of the generosity, the extent, the riches, of forgiveness, unless we consider the wonderful redemption through which it flows. Grace went every length in giving the Lord Jesus for an atoning sacrifice; and it goes every length in pardoning them that believe in his name.

The doctrine which I have now laid before you, brethren, is not a lofty speculation which you may admire without adopting: It is truth of everlasting moment; truth essential to your happiness; and for which you shall soon, very soon, give an account at the bar of God. I address you as sinners who need forgiveness; who perish without it; and shall never obtain it but through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. In his great name, therefore, allow me to demand what reception you will give to the gospel of his cross? *Exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and*

forgiveness of sins, he waiteth to be gracious; and tenders to the chief of sinners, without money and without price, all the benefits of his covenant. *Behold, they are his own blessed words, Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If ANY MAN hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.* Let no sinner, then, exclude himself from mercy which is offered in the gospel, as directly to him, as if there were not another sinner under heaven: and offered with such marvellous grace, that nothing but his *acceptance* is wanting to place him for ever beyond the reach of the curse. The corrupt heart will invent a thousand pretexts to palliate its neglect of the great salvation, and has even the effrontery to charge its sin upon the holy God. But be it known unto you, that if, after all your means and opportunities of grace, you die in your iniquity, you will be found, at last, to have been your own destroyers; and the real, the guilty cause of your rejecting Christ Jesus, to have been your own VOLUNTARY, CHERISHED, UNBELIEF. *Ye WILL NOT come to him that ye might have life; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it!*

Some who have been religiously educated,

and who add to a general profession of Christianity, all the exterior decencies of life; who are sober, just, humane; active in their temporal vocations; at peace with themselves, and respected by others; may consider as inapplicable to them, remonstrances which imply an impious character and a dangerous state. Supposing their religion to be sufficiently correct, they give to the wind all their anxieties about their present pardon, or their future condition. While, at the same time, they are strangers to the power of godliness; nor ever understood the meaning, by enjoying the mercy, of *passing from death unto life*. Be not deceived. The salvation of God is not so slight a matter, nor so slightly to be possessed. The Christian name; the charitable opinion of men; the outward privileges of God's people, embellished with the whole train of social morals, fall far short of that *holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*. All this will not prove forgiveness of sin, nor the sanctification of the Holy Ghost. To a hope which shall not become the mock of death, more, my brethren, much more is necessary. You must be divinely convinced of your natural enmity against God. This en-

mity must be slain, and you reconciled to him by the death of his Son. You must receive, as condemned rebels, a pardon written in his atoning blood. You must be renewed by his Spirit, and conformed to his image; be united with him by that faith which purifies the heart and works by love; be communicants in his death, and the power of his resurrection; and become, in virtue of this union and communion, fruitful branches of the true vine, or—*ye have no life in you.*

In some, who congratulate themselves on their escape from the bondage of superstition; and who remit religious care to minds incapable of liberal research, this doctrine of forgiveness may, perhaps, excite only a smile of scorn. Yet with all their contempt for what they call vulgar prejudice, and all their superiority to religious belief, they must allow me one moment to expostulate. *We* rejoice in the salvation of Christ Jesus: it is our greatest happiness that we have redemption through his blood; the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace. *You* affect to pity and despise us; while you reject our Redeemer's cross, and *put him to an open shame.* To justify this violence, your own hope ought to be better

founded, and more animating than ours. Is this the fact? Are you *sure* that you have committed no offence which, without forgiveness, must ruin you for ever? Are you *sure* that there is forgiveness with God in any other manner than through the redemption of the Saviour's blood? or that the gospel which reveals it may not prove true at last? Are you *sure* that your own sins are pardoned? or that you run no hazard of any judgment to come? Can you produce a single instance of pardoned sin except through the obedience and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ? On what, then, do you presume? I shut up this volume of inspiration, and challenge your hope. What is its nature? and where is its warrant? Is it in these heavens? Is it in that deep? Is it inscribed on any page of Creation's book? or engraven on the tablets of Conscience? Unbeliever! give glory to God, and homage to his truth. Thou knowest that on all these points, on all that awaits thee beyond the grave, thou art tossed from conjecture to conjecture; and thy most flattering expectation is, at best, but dread uncertainty. Upon such slender ground, in the love and indulgence of a thousand lusts, thou art about to take the adventurous leap

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into a world of everlasting retribution! And, with all this, thou art a man of reason, a philosopher, who never believes but on evidence, nor acts but from conviction; and looks down with disdain upon the Christian's faith! God have mercy on thee, poor fanatic! Yet thou canst not altogether stifle thy secret misgivings. There are times when, like Felix, thou tremblest! Guilt, with all thy boastings, makes thee a coward. Nor wilt thou ever find relief but in the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Be persuaded to try this happiest of all experiments. He is rich in mercy, and ready to forgive even thee. A refusal will cost thee thy soul; and thou wilt perish under that most fearful condemnation which will follow the rejection of eternal life, when it was near, *even at the door.*

Here, then, we part; and I turn to a voice of anguish which pierces my ear. Who is this, that standeth afar off, with his eyes downcast to earth, smiting his breast, and crying, in broken accents, *God be merciful to me, a sinner!* What aileth thee? Have the terrors of the Almighty seized upon thy spirit? Are thy sins set in order before thee? And while thou art compelled to sue for par-

don, art thou filled with apprehensions lest thy suit be refused? Come to a forgiving God in the name of Jesus, and dismiss thy fears. Let no enormity of transgression be an obstacle to an *immediate* acceptance of "his unspeakable gift." Sinners entertain most injurious thoughts of forgiving mercy. They measure it by their own contractedness. Be persuaded, brethren, that Jehovah is as far above you in grace as he is in majesty. You profess to believe that there is merit enough in Jesus to save you, but doubt his *willingness* to apply it to *such* sinners. This is accursed pride, veiled in the garb of humility. "If you were not such atrocious offenders, you would more easily take courage." That is, if you had less unworthiness, or, which is the same thing, were more worthy. You wish to come with a price in your hands. You are not reconciled to a salvation of which Christ Jesus shall have all the glory. Here is the secret. Men affect to doubt *his* willingness, but *they* are not willing. Let them take eternal life as a free gift, and it is theirs. O brethren! never question the superabounding grace of God in Christ. *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white*

as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. This glorious forgiveness is too high to be reached by carnal, or merely rational, apprehension. The mind will still shrink back from it as more desirable than credible? “Is this the manner of man? Is there any resemblance to it among the creatures? How can it be true? How can it be possible?” No, it is not the manner of man: There is nothing like it among the creatures: and yet it is possible; and yet it is true. Hear the word of Jehovah, O ye of little faith. *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will* ABUNDANTLY PARDON. “Thou hast multiplied sins upon sins,” saith God, “and I will multiply pardons upon pardons.” Ah! Lord God! I could not pardon, with the ten thousandth part of such goodness, my brother that is as mine own soul; and how canst *thou* pour down such pardons upon *me*? “Because thou art a man, and I am God. Let not the thankless objection again pass thy lips, nor rise in thy heart.” *For my thoughts are not*

your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Let the doubting, disconsolate sinner throw himself, with all his guilt and vileness, into the arms of this forgiving mercy. It never yet repulsed any who came in the faith of the Mediator's blood, and it will not begin its repulses with thee. Go, without delay: Go with all boldness in this blood; and thou shalt find as cordial a welcome as grace can give thee.

This forgiveness of sins in the redemption of Jesus, imposes infinite obligations upon them who have *believed it to the saving of their souls.* Whoever disparage the doctrine of sovereignty, it must not be such as owe to it all their present interest in the salvation of God, and all their hope of his eternal glory. But such are we. *By nature the children of wrath even as others; alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in us; rushing madly on in the paths of death; grace, unsought, undesired, met us; opened our eyes to our folly; hedged up our way with thorns; turned us back into the path of righteousness.* Our wounded consciences and wearied hearts

found healing and rest in Jesus Christ. His precious blood was the remedy of our guilt. How soothing the voice which whispered to our troubled spirits, *Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace!* Shall we ever forget that we deserved every thing the reverse of what we have received? *That our birth and our nativity was of the land of Canaan, our father an Amorite, and our mother an Hittite? That we were cast out in the open field, to the loathing of our persons? And that the compassionate Saviour passed by us, and saw us polluted in our own blood; and said unto us when we were in our blood, LIVE: yea, said unto us when we were in our blood, LIVE? If we have fled from the wrath to come; if we are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; if we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, ABBA, Father; all this, and all the glory which is yet to be revealed in us, are the blessed fruits of forgiveness through the redemption of the blood of Jesus. Sweetly constrained by his love, shall we not judge, with the apostle of the gentiles, that we must henceforth live, not unto ourselves, but unto him that died for us*

and rose again? The sum of our duty and happiness, O believer! is comprised in this precept—*As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so WALK YE IN HIM.* The blood of sprinkling, kept by faith in the conscience, is the sure preservative from guilt; the holy secret of a comfortable and familiar walk with God. In this privilege let us go *from strength to strength*; lifting up our eyes to the *hills from whence cometh our help*; *shewing forth the righteousness and the salvation of Jehovah all the day long*: and waiting for that great consummation, when, all the sorrows of earth's pilgrimage ended, and all its defilements washed away.

“Heav’n lifts her everlasting portals high,
“And bids the pure in heart behold their God!”

AMEN.

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