

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

PLENARY ABSOLUTION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.”—Psalm ciii. 12.

WE shall aim at no novelty to-night, nor shall we try to serve up the old truths in any new and attractive forms. Upon your tables you always require bread, and generally you account salt to be indispensable. Some kinds of food are presented to us over and over again, and it would augur ill for our health if they were not always relished. It was an evil lusting which made Israel tire of the manna; an Israelite in his right mind found it to be a dainty still, though he ate of it for every day of his forty years' pilgrimage. Who tires of the verdure of the fields, the light of the sun, or the air we breathe? These things are ever fresh and new, and ever needful to us. The doctrine of forgiving love is one of those necessities of daily life, concerning which it may be affirmed that if we should set them before you every day we should not be guilty of vain repetition. None need fear of tiring man, or vexing God's Spirit by harping too much on this string. Therefore come we to our favourite theme to-night. To speak of the great gospel truth of the forgiveness of sin in the simplest manner we possibly can, is the purpose we have immediately in view. To babes, to young men, and to fathers in Christ, this all-important truth will be equally precious; while the poor trembling sinner who cannot yet claim to be one of the sacred family may be encouraged by it.

Our text has in it a word of *peculiarity*, and to this I call your attention at the outset. It is not every man in the world that could truly use the language of this verse, for it does not refer to all mankind: “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from *us*.” A people separated and set apart, a people upon whom there has been a peculiar work of divine power, a people whose experience of the grace of God towards them has melted their hearts with devout gratitude—such as these can sing this

joyous stanza, and none beside. I will describe these people to you. I should gather from the ninth verse, that they are a people who have been made truly, deeply, painfully conscious that they are sinful, and have felt the chidings of God in their conscience ;—therefore, it is that they say, “He will not always chide.” They know that God is angry with sin. They have felt some bitings of that wrath upon their spirit, and they have been humbled into contrition, repentance, and confession ;—therefore do they now say, “Neither will he keep his anger for ever.” They are a people who have keenly realised the desperate condition they were reduced to, who know that if forgiven it must be through mercy, and through mercy only ; that they have no claim upon God ; that they deserve to be cast away from his presence ;—therefore they say, “He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” But they are a people who have tasted of that surprising mercy which baffles all human thought, and excites the adoring wonder of all who contemplate this darling attribute of the Most High. They have gone to Jesus, in whom the mercy of God is treasured up. They have believed in him, and they have received mercy through him ; for mercy comes to men through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ ; and having tasted of that mercy, they say, “As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.” Then they go on to sing, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” Oh, priceless gift ! oh, matchless boon ! Say now, out of this vast throng, how many of us have been made to feel that sin is sinful, to loathe it, and to confess it with bitterness of heart ? How many of us have fled to the great atoning sacrifice, and have believed in Jesus to the saving of our souls ? So many may repeat this verse, and affirm it of themselves, with truth, but no more. Separate yourselves, then : let the force of conscience now be exercised, and let this text be to you, for a moment, like the throne of Jesus, before which he exercises the prerogatives of his gospel sovereignty, and divides the sinners from the saints, making men either tremble or rejoice.

Our text has a word of *positiveness*. In this song the Psalmist speaks of the pardon of sin as a positive fact ; he celebrates it in grateful strains as a matter of certainty to himself and to others associated with him. David was a Positivist of the right sort. Ifs and perhapses would not suit him. “As far as the east is from the west, so far *hath he removed* our transgressions from us.” He does not indulge in fond hopes, or express vague wishes, or point in hesitant tones to some favourable omens, but he speaks of his sins being forgiven, knowing it to be a matter of fact which there was no room to question. Now there are many professing Christians who do not think that you ever can know that you are forgiven while you remain in this world. They are not of this mind merely because they are ignorant of the gospel, but because that gospel is beclouded with errors. Their teachers throw dust into their eyes, or envelope them in mist. They see men as trees walking, and no more. They are brought up in orthodox fashion to repeat a mournful litany, and to call themselves “miserable sinners,” in stereotyped phrases. They are taught to go on for ever asking for pardon as if they had never received it. They are made

to look upon themselves still as needing to be dealt with as lost sheep, and reconciled as rebels. Their standing is always at the foot of Sinai, they are not taught that the Lord has forgiven us all trespasses. Their Church, as if to chasten it for its alliance with the State, has lost the jubilant tone of faith, and made its daily service rather a wail for sinners than a song for saints. Now the gospel of Jesus Christ tells us that there is pardon; that we may have it; and that when we believe in Jesus, we have obtained full remission—that we *are* pardoned when we believe in Jesus, and that our iniquities *are* forgiven us. It is a matter signed, sealed, and delivered, a fact accomplished before the Lord, and infallibly ascertainable by us. Sin *is* put away. Though we shall never be in such a condition here that we shall not have need to confess daily sin—for new sins will rise—yet, at the same time, the moment the soul believes in Jesus, no condemnation is upon it, nor ever can be: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” We *are* forgiven. Pardon is a fact—a fact most certain in the history of believers: there is nothing more sure to them than this, that they are certainly forgiven inasmuch as they have believed in Jesus Christ. I know there are many professed Christians who shrink with morbid apprehension from claiming this great act of God’s love as a benefit which they really enjoy. They venture to hope it may be so, but still they dare not speak with confidence of their own pardon. This to their view would be presumption. But is it not far more presumptuous to pay so much respect to your own misgivings, as totally to ignore the blessedness of knowing that you are forgiven? Is it not awful presumption to settle down as so many do while their eternal state is a matter of question to them? Do you tell me that you do not know whether you are forgiven? Why, sir, you are indeed in a wretched bewilderment! You do not know if you were to die at this moment whether you would be in heaven or hell! How dare you sit in comfort in that seat? Dare you go to your bed in doubt about whether you are saved or not? How can you sleep? It seems to me to be profane presumption for a man to dare to be at peace till he is sure about his reconciliation to God. The presumption lies in settling on your lees, in resting short of the inheritance, and in saying, “Peace, peace” to one’s soul till you know that you are a saved man. Oh, I beseech you if you have any doubts do not play with them! Do not trifle with your soul’s affairs! This is a matter about which there should be no doubt whatever. No man would like to have a doubt as to whether there is a thief in the house when he goes to his bed at night. You would not like to be in doubt as to whether a mortal disease is upon you. You are anxious to be sure of your safety and your health: will you not desire to be as sure about your soul’s safety and the health of your inner nature? Surely you ought to be!

But can a man be sure? Ay, assuredly. See you here: The best evidence in all the world is the witness of God, who cannot lie. Any number of men in the world bearing witness to a thing can never be equal to the testimony of God. What he says none may dare to question. God’s witness is much more reliable and has much more weight in it than the most exact observations, and the most delicate inferences that

can be drawn from them. Suppose I can see a thing with my eyes. Men say, "Seeing is believing." Yes, but eyes deceive, as everybody knows. There are many things we think we see which we do not see after all. Eyes may deceive : God's witness, therefore, is better than the sight of our eyes. "But surely," says one, "feeling will not deceive you." Alas! there is nothing in the world more deceptive as to a man's state than his feeling. Those who are worst will often imagine themselves to be best, and some of the best of God's children have often felt in their humiliation as though they were the worst. I say, God's witness is to be preferred above our feeling, our eyesight, or the witness of men. What does God say? He says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Do I believe in Jesus? Have I been obedient to the other part of the command? God says I shall be saved, and therefore so I shall be, despite all the devices of Satan, despite all the sins I ever have committed or shall commit, despite anything and everything however unlooked for which may occur in time to come, for God's witness must be true. "Let God be true and every man a liar." God saith it. "He that believeth in him is not condemned." Have I believed in him, then? To believe is to trust,—have I trusted my soul with Jesus? Yes, yes, I am sure of that. Then I am equally sure that I am not condemned, equally sure that sin is forgiven, because as sure as I possess faith, so sure is it that "as far as the east is from the west, so far hath God removed our transgressions from us." Who wants better evidence than God's word? O, we may live on it; we may die on it; and we may stand before the judgment seat with it as our strong consolation. God has spoken it, and his word cannot be impugned, or his counsel invalidated.

But, because we sometimes are troubled and vexed within, there is another assurance which God is pleased to give to his children. Over and above his written word, he gives them the inward witness. The man who has believed in Jesus feels a deep peace in his soul. "Jesus died for me," saith he. Then if Jesus died in my stead my sin is put away. God will not be so unjust or inconsistent as to punish me for the very sin for which he put Christ my substitute to grief. If Jesus suffered in my stead, I shall not suffer. It were not just that two should suffer for the selfsame sin. The believer, knowing this, finds satisfaction, smells a savour of rest, and feels peace. O, what a peace! Believe me, there is nothing like it in this world, it is the peace of God which passeth all understanding, a peace like that which rules amid angelic thrones. Then, in the midst of that deep calm the Holy Ghost comes down like the dove brooding over the waters, the calm and quiet waters of the believer's soul, and bears witness with the man's own spirit that he is born of God. The man's own spirit bears witness in the peace it feels, and then God's Spirit comes and sets a seal thereto, and the man knows and is persuaded by the witness of God in the word, and the living witness of God in his soul, that as far as the east is from the west, so far hath God removed his transgressions from him. Some of us recollect the very day and hour wherein our sins were put away, and can look back to the date, and call it our spiritual birth-day. It shall be to us the beginning of days, even as was that day in which Israel came out of Egypt. And others, who have not so distinct a recollection

of the time, yet as they look to yonder cross and see the incarnate God bleeding on it, feel that their transgressions are blotted out, and every time they look they get a renewed assurance of complete absolution. There are some, I know, who think it best always to gaze upon their crucified Lord, as if they had never before looked upon him. They stand and hug the cross, and kiss those bleeding feet, and look up to that dear face bedewed with drops of grief, and that dear brow be-crowned with thorns, and say, "Thou art my Saviour! Dear lover of my soul, I rest in thee! Thy side riven for me yields me my pardon. Thy death is my life. Thy life in heaven is the guarantee of my immortality." O happy they who can so stand at the cross-foot and feel always that as far as the east is from the west, so far hath God removed their transgressions. None can sing so heartily and joyfully the high praises of God.

"Since I have found a Saviour's love,
To him my hopes are clinging;
I feel so happy all the time,
My heart is always singing.
A light I never knew before
Around my path is breaking,
And cheerful songs of grateful praise
My raptured soul are waking.
I feel like singing all the time,
I have no thought of sadness;
When Jesus washed my sins away
He turned my heart to gladness."

Now, brethren, as we return to our text I would have you notice the *comprehensiveness* of it. I do not find any list of sins here. All I find about sin is contained in these two words, "our transgressions." I am not skilful in matters of common law, but I remember hearing a lawyer make this remark about a man's will, that if he were about to leave all his property to some one person, it would be better not to make a recapitulation of all that he had, but merely to state that he bequeathed all to his legatee, without giving a list of the goods and chattels, because in making out the catalogue he would be pretty sure to leave out something, and that which he left out might be claimed by some one else. Indeed he gave us an instance of a farmer, who, in recounting the property he devised to his wife, intending her to have had all, actually omitted to mention his largest farm and the very house in which they lived. Thus his attempt to be very particular failed, and his wife lost a large part of the property. We do not want too many particulars, and I am thankful that in this verse there is a broad way of speaking which takes in the whole compass of enumeration. "He hath removed *our transgressions*." That sweeps them away all at once—"our transgressions." If it had said "our *great* transgressions," we should have been crying out, "How about the little ones?" We should have been afraid of perishing by our lesser faults even if the huge crimes were pardoned. Suppose it had said "our transgressions against the law." Oh! but we should have asked, "What shall we do with our transgression against the gospel?" Suppose it had said, "our wilful transgressions," that would have been very gracious; but we should have said,

‘ Ah, but what will become of our sins of ignorance ? ’ Suppose it had said, “ our transgressions before we were converted,” then we should have exclaimed, “ Ah, but how shall we escape from our sins since our conversion ? ” But here it is—“ our transgressions ”—he hath removed them all, *all*, ALL ! from the cradle to the tomb—they are all gone ; sins in private and sins in public, sins of thought, word, deed, they are all removed. The moment you believe in Jesus they are all, all, all gone ! I cannot help giving you a picture I have sketched before. When Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, with her timbrel in her hand, went forth, the women of Israel following her, dancing by the Red Sea, one of the sweetest notes of her song was this :—as she looked over the dark waters of that mighty sea, there could not be discovered the crest of a single Egyptian captain, nor one solitary horse struggling for his life, nor a chariot, nor a banner, nor any implement of war, nor one solitary champion that had borne arms, and therefore she struck the timbrel, and the damsels sounded it out aloud : “ The depths have covered them ! There is not one of them left—not one ! not one ! not one ! not one of them left ! ” I think I hear their song. I think I see their feet twinkling like stars as they dance forth their joy and Jehovah’s praise : “ There is not one, not one, not one of them left ! ” Even thus do I look upon Jesu’s precious atoning blood, and think of all my sins and yours, my brethren who have believed in him, and I shout with equal, if not greater joy, “ The depths have covered them. There is not one, not one of them left. He hath removed our transgressions from us.” “ The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

Another thing which claims special note in the text is the *perfection*—the absolute perfection of the pardon. The text says, “ As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” Can anybody tell how far the east is from the west ? You begin to calculate perhaps upon the surface of the globe ; but I say, “ No, not so. The east is farther off than any distance you can travel on this globe. Look to yon sun.” Then you begin to measure within the bounds of the solar system towards the east ; but I say, “ No ; the solar system is but a speck in the universe : I must have larger measurement than that.” “ We will measure space, then,” saith one. Space ! What mean you by that ? Do you mean all that has ever been seen by the optic glass of the astronomer when he has gazed at night upon the milky way ? Ah, but that is only a corner of boundless space ! I must have the infinite measured ; and you shall go that way with your line to the east, and I will go this way with my line to the west, and you shall tell me how far the two are asunder. Why, the interval is boundless ; it means an infinite distance ! Now God has taken his people’s sins away from them to an infinite distance, that is to say, there is no fear that their sins should ever return to them. They are gone, gone, gone, gone completely ! I do not know how it is, but some of our friends of a certain school of theology believe that after men are pardoned they may yet go to hell. I will never quarrel with them about that doctrine. If it gives them any comfort, they are welcome to it. It does not seem to me worthy of a God, or even of a man. Poor is that pardon which may yet be followed by eternal torment. If God has pardoned his people, surely no fresh proceedings can be opened,

no subsequent indictment preferred against them. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." I have heard of the Duke of Alva pardoning a man, and then hanging him; but I do not believe God ever trifles thus with mercy. If he has pardoned my soul, then I am saved. If he has done it once, he has done it for ever. He has removed my transgressions not a little way, but "as far as the east is from the west." I think that means just this, that the pardon of our sin is so complete that when a man is pardoned he never can be punished for his sin—not in any measure or degree. He becomes a child of God, and, as a child, he may be chastened, but he will never have to stand before God as a Judge, and be called to account for those sins; for they *are not*—they do not exist. "Strong language," say you. I say it again, they do not exist; for Jesus Christ has "finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness." What does that mean? "Made an end of sin"? Why, it means what it says, and sin is made an end of. No soul, then, for whom Jesus bled, who has believed in Jesus, being redeemed from sin, can ever be punished for his sin before the bar of divine justice. Christ has been punished for him, and his sin is gone. "But, though not punished for sin, may not a man suffer some detriment? If God will not send me to hell, yet, at any rate, it may be, he will not love me so much because I have been a sinner. He will not treat me as if I had never fallen." Ay, but when God wipes out sin, he puts away all the consequences of sin. "But do we not feel the consequences in our bodies?" Yes, assuredly, but it is for a season only, and for loving reasons. Our mortal bodies are doomed to death, and they are full of pain sometimes, but they shall not always be so. Our bodies shall rise again, and there shall be no detriment through sin upon those bodies. They will be just as glorious as they would have been had God made them perfect in the garden of Eden. Nay, they will be even more so, for they shall be fashioned like unto the glorious body of our Lord Jesus; but upon that I will not stay.

At this day God loves us, and he will love us for ever. He loves us infinitely, and he could not love us more than that if we had never fallen. At this time, in Christ Jesus, we are brought nigh—I will say it—as nigh as if we had never sinned, yea, and nearer. I do not see how, if we had never sinned, we could have been so nigh as we now are; for, had we never sinned, there would never have been a Mediator, and Jesus might never have been "Immanuel, God with us." But now we poor sinners have one who is our brother, who is very God of very God, even Christ, the Son of Mary, and yet the Son of Jehovah. This is a wonderful nearness which God has given to us! We are made his children: we are made to come into his immediate presence, and to taste of his love. Our sins are so effectually removed that we shall not ultimately suffer any loss or damage through having sinned. That detriment was laid on Christ. His was the loss: ours is the gain. His was the tremendous suffering: ours is the unutterable joy.

"Thy blood, not mine, O Christ,
 Thy blood so freely spilt,
 Has blanch'd my blackest stains,
 And purg'd away my guilt.

Thy righteousness alone
 My soul doth beautify,
 Wrapped in that glorious robe
 Thy Father I draw nigh."

And, dear brethren, this is what the Lord means also when he tells us he has put sin away "as far as the east is from the west." He means that he has forgotten it. Can God forget? Well, we speak of the nature of God sometimes after the manner of men, and rightly so if we adopt those forms of revelation which have been vouchsafed to us. We rightly regard everything as in his remembrance, because he dwells in all ages and everything is present with him, and yet if he tells us he forgets we may not venture to disbelieve him. But I do not inquire just now what our conceptions of God may be: enough that we should cordially receive what he would have us believe. Here is a text—"Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more for ever," that is God's own assertion. He knows his own memory and he has put it so. Let me repeat those words. They melt my own heart while I speak them, and therefore I hope every child of God will feel the sweetness of them. What inconceivable love! What force, what pathos, what grace there is in every syllable!—"And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more for ever." O, blessings, blessings on his dear name for such a word as that. Has he not said, "I have blotted out, like a cloud, thy transgressions?" Has he not said, in another place, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool?" That is, they shall vanish as colours fade: they shall disappear and shall no longer exist. These are glorious truths. I want every child of God to endeavour to realize the fact that at this very moment his sins are gone,—effectually, completely, perfectly gone,—through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ!

Beloved, there is in the text a ray of *divinity*, full of hope to us: "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath *He* removed our transgressions from us." *God* is the great remover of sin. There be some who, when they feel the guilt of sin weighing heavily on their conscience, go to a priest and ask him to remove the burden. The theory they act upon is this—that the priest is ordained of God, and has received power from the Most High to declare and pronounce absolution in God's name. They think it too great a thing for God himself to deal personally with men, and, therefore, he employs some ordained person to speak in his name. Now, I have no doubt that there are many persons who get a good deal of comfort from the declaration of the priest that they are forgiven. I cannot understand how they can be so wretchedly duped, but I suppose the manner of administering a sacrament may be so imposing as to stifle any enquiry into the prerogative which the Father Confessor pretends to exercise. And yet I know, on the

other hand, that there are some who, after they have obtained that kind of absolution, are not so comfortable as they expected to be. They feel somehow or other as if it did not quite meet the case. Perhaps such a person may have dropped in here. You want to know that your sin is forgiven with greater authority than the lips of any mortal can impart. O may the Lord himself put away your sins and your heart will know it and be at rest. To some people these scruples will cause the most agitation just when they looked for the most tranquillity ; and if they are God's people, and God is working in their hearts, I am sure of this, that fifty thousand priests could never give them an assurance that could make them feel true peace or heart's ease. They would still be disquieted, still be troubled, even if Bishops and Popes should pronounce them absolved. God's voice alone can still the tempest of their souls. See how the Romanist is pursuing phantoms all the while that he is following the directions of his church and observing her laborious ordinances. He never reaches the goal of peace ; he can never be free from anxiety in life or apprehension in death, because his church never speaks to him of perfection through the one sacrifice, offered once for all, and when he dies he does not know where he may go. He conceives himself to be really forgiven, after a sacerdotal fashion, but he is not so divinely pardoned but that he has to go to purgatory for a time, to be purged from spots which still remain. He is never certain where he is with regard to the bar of divine justice. His pardon at the best is not worth having as a guarantee of heaven. In most cases the most religious Papist only goes to purgatory, a place which certain of their ablest writers say, is so cold on one side that they are all frozen like the inhabitants of the arctic regions ; and then the victims are tossed to the other side, which is so extremely hot that it is as though they were being baked alive ; so they are tossed about from one side to another till sin is either frozen or dried out of them. This is a fine prospect for good religious Romanists ! The statements of Romish theologians as to the purgatorial regions are even more grim and terrible, for in some such imaginary place the remainder of sin is to be put away ! But, beloved, we have it in the text that *God* is to remove our transgressions. O what a remove is that ! Hands off, ye priests ! Ye are too feeble for such weights as ours. Our sins are too stupendous for your puny strength. But the Lord comes with his own right hand of majesty, puts away our sins, and lifts them on to Christ, and Christ comes and flings them into his sepulchre, and they are gone and buried for ever : "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

"He seiz'd our dreadful load, our guilt sustained ;
And heaved the mountain from a guilty world."

Our transgressions were against the Lord our God ; to him therefore

appertained the right to pardon them. These transgressions had done dishonour to his Holy Name; he has a right, if he wills, to put them away if he can do so without tarnishing his glory. By the substitution of Jesus justice is satisfied, and God himself blots out our sins. And here is the beauty of it: since the Lord has removed our transgressions from us the thing is done completely, and it is done for ever and for ever! What a man does he may undo. You know how some men are like children—they will give a thing and take a thing back, and so play fast and loose with you. They will speak well of you to-day, and say “Yes, they forgive”; but they cannot forget; they recollect again to-morrow, revive their old resentments, and, in their anger, call up again past grievances. No so, our God. “I am Jehovah! I change not,” saith the Lord, “therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” When God removes transgression, the work is so done that it never shall be undone—certainly not by himself; and if not by himself, who then can do it? My brethren, what consolations you have since you have believed in Jesus! I pray you, feast upon them and be satisfied to the full.

Our text has in it also a touch of *personality* for each one of us. I was ruminating upon this passage the other day, and it came to me with a peculiar sweetness,—not on account of any of the thoughts I have given you, but on account of this: “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from”—himself? Yes, that is true, but it is “from us,” from *us*. And this was what passed through my mind—Then my sin is gone away from *me*, from *me*! Here am I, fretting that I am not what I should be, and groaning, and crying before God about a thousand things; but, for all that, there is no sin upon me; for, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from *us*.” From *ourselves* the sins have gone; from *us*, as well as from his eye, from his book, and from his memory; they have gone from *us*.” “But *I* committed them,” says one. Ah, that you did. Your sin was yours, yours with a vengeance! It was like that fiery tunic which Hercules put on, which he could not drag from him let him do what he might, but which ate into his flesh and bones. Such were your sins. You could not tear them off. But God has taken them off, every one of them, if you have believed in Jesus; and where is that tunic of fire now, which would have devoured you for ever? Where is it? Ye shall search for it, but it shall not be found, yea, it shall not be, saith the Lord. It is gone away from you. I sometimes see believers troubling themselves as if all their sins were laid up in an iron safe in some part of the Lord’s house. It is not so; it is not so. They are fretting as though somewhere or other there were a horde of sins in ambush which would accuse them and bear witness against them before God;

bar, and so they would be condemned after all. It is not so ; it is not so. They are all gone ; they are all gone. Satan may stand and howl for accusers, and say, "Come, gather yourselves together, and accuse the child of God !" and you yourself may tremblingly fear that they will come, and therefore you may put on your filthy garments, and come in before God, and stand there like a poor wretched criminal about to be tried. But what does Jesus say when he comes into the court ? He says, "Take away his filthy garments from him ! What right has he to put them on ; for I have taken them away from him long ago by my substitution ? Take them off ! Set a fair mitre on his head. This is one whom I have loved and cleansed : why does he stand in the place of condemnation when he is not condemned and cannot be condemned, for there is now no condemnation since I have died." Ah, we many times go down into the hold of the vessel and there we lie amongst the baggage, and our doubts and fears fasten down the hatches, and there we are, half stifled, when we might as well come up upon the quarter deck and walk there, full of delight and peace. We are moaning and fretting ourselves, and all about what does not really exist. I saw two men, yesterday, handcuffed and marched to the carriage to be taken off to prison. They could not move their wrists. But, suppose I had walked behind them, with my wrists close together, and had never opened my hands, nor stirred them, and said, "Alas ! I committed, years ago, some wrong, and have handcuffs put upon me." You would naturally say, "Well, but are they not taken off ?" and I reply, "Yes, I have heard they are, but somehow, through habit, I go about as if I had them on." Would not everybody say of me, "Why, that man must be insane !" Now you, child of God, once had the handcuffs on ; your sins were upon you ; but Jesus Christ took them off. When you believed in him, he broke all your fetters, and now they are not there. Why do you go about trembling and saying, "I fear!—I am afraid !" What fearest thou, O man ? What fearest thou ? Are you a believer and afraid of your old sins ? You are afraid of foes which do not exist. Your sins are so gone that they cannot be laid to your charge. Do you not believe this ? Can you not rise to something like the true estimate of your position ? You are not only pardoned, but you are a child of God. Go to your Father with joy and thankfulness, and bless him for all his love to you. Wipe those tears away, smooth those wrinkles from your brow : take up the song of joy and gladness, and say with the apostle Paul, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Be glad in the Lord, ye pardoned ones !

“Shout, believer, to thy God,
 He hath once the winepress trod ;
 Peace procured by blood divine,
 Cancell'd all thy sins and mine.

In thy Surety thou art free,
 His dear hands were pierced for thee ;
 With his spotless vesture on,
 Holy as the Holy One.

Oh the heights and depths of grace !
 Shining with meridian blaze ;
 Here the sacred records show
 Sinners black but comely too.”

As for you who have never received that pardon, does not the mention of it make you long for it ; cry for it ; and beg for it. O that you would above all, believe for it ; for it is to be had by you. The guiltiest of the guilty shall have forgiveness if they believe in Jesus. Whoever among you will trust in the crucified Saviour shall be pardoned this night. The moment you trust him you shall have a full acquittal for all your sins and crimes ; yea, *all* transgressions, and you shall sing, as our poet Kent does,—

“Here's pardon for transgressions past,
 It matters not how black their cast,
 And O my soul, with wonder view,
 For sins to come here's pardon too.”

God be praised ! Let his word be believed : let his name be trusted ; and then he shall be praised. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm ciii.

[The fifth number of “The Interpreter” is nearly ready. Our friends would find it a great help at family reading. It has cost us great labour, and we hope we have not toiled in vain ; yet far fewer have purchased it than we had hoped. Friends should order at once the numbers published, and take it in month by month ; and then the expense will not be too great for them. A gentleman from Scotland in writing to us kindly says :—“I find much good in the use of the ‘INTERPRETER’ at worship. It gives something like a stated Bible Lesson, and more point and definiteness to prayers : all the family are more interested thereby.” The ‘Interpreter’ is published on the 20th of each month, in Shilling Parts containing 36 large pages. Passmore and Alabaster, 4, Paternoster Buildings.]