

Having grasped clearly the need of forgiveness we must examine carefully the other branch of the subject, the need and the duty of cherishing a forgiving spirit. We need to be forgiven, we ought to be ready to forgive. Our Lord tells a striking parable of a servant who owed 10,000 talents to his Lord. He flung himself at the feet of his Master and asked for patience and was released from the debt. Then he went out and met a fellow-servant who owed him 100 pence, and because he could not pay this small sum at once the overbearing creditor cast the debtor into prison. Do you think that this cruel, ungrateful man had much to complain of when his Lord was wroth and handed him over to the tormentors until he paid all that was due. Let us listen to our Lord's solemn warning, "So shall also My heavenly Father do unto you if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." This parable throws light upon the prayer, so we have the advantage of getting the Saviour's interpretation of his own teaching. The impression left upon our minds when we place the parable by the side of the text is not that we have to be Christy saints before we can expect forgiveness and help from heaven. In that case there would be no hope for us. The teaching, rather, is that God so overwhelms us with mercy, and grants us forgiveness so freely that it should be a joy to us to show the same spirit towards our fellowmen. To those who have had much forgiveness it should be a pleasure to forgive; whether it is a pleasure or not depends upon our state of heart, but the duty is plain and binding whatever our feeling may be.

"To err is human, to forgive divine." Yes, it is godlike to forgive, and to such godlikeness we are all called in the name of Christ, by the mercy and mystery of His cross. The doctrine of the atonement is a stumbling block to the worldly mind. The cross of Christ has been treated as foolishness by unbelievers, as a story of useless suffering and shame which can have no bearing upon the spiritual life of men. It is said that God should forgive without any sacrifice, in an easy, off-hand manner. We have not time now to attempt a philosophy of the atonement. We believe that God forgives in a way which shows at the same time His hatred of sin and His love of men, in a way that brings relief from both the power and the penalty of transgression. Do you find it an easy thing to forgive? If you are unfairly treated have you no righteous indignation or no desire for revenge? What are our little paltry wrongs compared with the deep wounds which we have made upon the justice of God? But do we find it easy to forgive and forget? One day the Apostles were standing listening to the powerful teaching of their Lord, and they said, "Lord, increase our faith." Why did they ask that? Did they wish to do a miracle, to cast a mountain into the sea, or something of that sort? No. He had been teaching them the need of forgiveness. If a brother sin against us seven times and turn in a repentant mood he must be forgiven. They wished to attain to moral strength to cast out the mountain of hatred and evil passion from their hearts, so they said, "Lord, increase our faith" that we may see our duty as Thou seest it.

It is commonly admitted that it is not an easy thing to forgive. The wrongs that are hardest to forgive are the wrongs which are imaginary, the wrongs which spring from a man's own envious or jealous spirit and which he broods over until they grow into big mountains which only a pure, fresh faith can remove. The man who has done the injury often finds it hardest to forgive. But even if we have suffered a real wrong, especially from a friend, and we want to forgive and cast the whole thing into forgetfulness, we do not find this easy to do. There is a barrier between the two spirits caused by unfaithfulness. It is hard to get both back into the old position, to restore

the old relationship, to revive the old confidence. It is a comparatively easy thing to say, let the past die and let us each go on our way, but that is not the height of forgiveness. Forgiveness in the Gospel means real reconciliation and harmonious fellowship. If we are to show forgiveness in that sense we must make a sacrifice. In forgiving paltry little wrongs we must sacrifice our evil passion and selfish pride, our mean spirit of revenge; and in forgiving a great injustice we must in some measure put ourselves in the position of the offender, considering his weakness and temptation and in our own feeling paying a tribute to the law of righteousness. We may never be able to fathom this mystery, but the deeper our spiritual life becomes, the more easy will it be for us to believe that God forgives sin through the sacrifice of Himself. On the other hand if we continue to cherish a hard, unforgiving spirit it is a proof that we do not realize very clearly our own need of forgiveness and that Christ's suffering on account of our sins has made little impression on our hearts.

This law of forgiveness is peculiarly Christian. Moral philosophers may sometimes have hinted at it as a characteristic of great souls, but our Lord revealed it as a law of the highest spiritual life, and linked it to the sweetest experience of every believing soul. The old, imperfect law was "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," "Love your neighbors and hate your enemies." But the Christian law of forgiveness is broad and generous. We are exhorted to forgive because God has forgiven us. If we allow a bitter, unforgiving spirit to hold possession of us it is very doubtful whether we have ever sought or received forgiveness from God. How can God's spirit dwell in us, how can we enter heaven if we allow envy, hatred and malice to rule us?

The law of forgiveness is needful for the purest and sweetest forms of social life. How much nobler and brighter human life would be if this law had a fair trial. The law of retaliation and the wild desire for revenge has had its trial and it was wrought untold mischief. Quarrels have been perpetuated until they have become like festering sores in the very heart of society. Strong animosities and deadly feuds have lived on because men have worshipped their own dignity and felt that they must have their full measure of revenge. In public life justice must be calmly and evenly meted out, but in social life what we need is more of the spirit of Christ. The religion of Christ has often been reproached with weakness and its principles regarded as impossible; but we know that the real Christian temper promotes not only peace but every form of goodness.

This law is commended to us by the example of the noblest servants of God. It has always been regarded as the sign of a great soul to be able to go calmly on the path of duty in spite of misinterpretation and opposition, cherishing a kindly feeling towards enemies and a deep love for friends. This gentle meekness which the world thinks weak is often the highest form of strength. Moses, the man of God, shows his true nobility when in the spirit of self-sacrifice he passionately prays for the people who have treated with ingratitude his most faithful services. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, shows the true Christian temper in his utter lack of bravado, in his gentle courage, and joyful resignation. The loftiest example of all is our Saviour Himself. The sacrifice which is to bring forgiveness to men and change the heart of stone into a heart of flesh is offered in this spirit. After being borne down to the ground

by the malice of wicked men he closes his career with the prayer, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Being reviled he reviled not again; with a heart full of pity for the slaves of evil passion he commended himself into the hands of a righteous God. We are far from such heroic heights, but we may surely have fervent charity among ourselves, treating each other with brotherly confidence and forbearance. He who forgave his bitterest foes, he who died for our pardon and peace, taught us to pray, "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors."

#### MISUSED QUOTATIONS.

Editor Dominion Presbyterian: There are expressions current in "Church Circles" which strike me as unscriptural, and though no doubt intended to honor God, in reality do Him dishonor. "Soldiers of the Cross," (with a capital C, please), now Paul admonishes Timothy to take his part in suffering hardship "as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." But that is to my mind very different. "The banner of the Cross." The scripture saith: The Lord my banner; "His banner over me was Love." "The standard of the Cross" brings to mind the mystic Tau, or sign of the cross, first the emblem of and last the emblem of Satan himself. Our ancestors abhorred this idolatrous emblem, but we sing its praises in hymn and anthem, and proclaim the glories of the accursed tree in a manner to draw away attention from the sacrifice once made thereon.

Another mis-used quotation I will mention. "The King's business requirith haste." This was a lie uttered by David when he had fallen into the sin of distrusting God—a sin that bought dishonor to David, and calamity upon the priest who believed him. The scripture saith he that believeth in the tried stone, the precious corner stone of sure foundation "shall not make haste." If God's people thought of faithful Isaiah, instead of David in his hour of faithlessness, fewer of them would break down from worry or overwork.

ULSTER PAT.

#### TORONTO.

At a meeting of the Session and managers of St. Andrew's church, Toronto, held on the 17th of December, at which nearly every member was present, the question of the future of the Church—to remain down town or to move to a residential section—came up for consideration. After full discussion it was unanimously resolved to remain at the present location, and a committee was appointed to consider a plan for alterations to the church, to be submitted to the congregation at the next annual meeting in January. It is probable a considerable amount will be spent in improvements, and St. Andrew's Church Institute may be moved over beside the church. A question which has caused much anxiety has thus been disposed of. Some time ago it looked as if St. Andrew's would have to move, but the congregations, especially in the wing have so greatly increased, and growth has so manifested itself in the various departments of the work, that it is felt there is still work for St. Andrew's to do down town. Some changes in the character of the evening service are contemplated, and it is confidently expected that this old and historic church will continue to fill an important place in the life and work of Presbyterianism in the capital of the Province of Ontario.

The enforcement of law is the preservation of society.  
Life is a soul's opportunity.