

God grant that some here to-day may come and confess themselves to be guilty, vile, foolish and helpless, and, believing that Christ died for such, receive a free pardon ; that they individually may joyously say : " He loved me and gave Himself for me."

### III. CONSIDER NOW THE DESIGNS CHRIST HAD IN LOVING THE CHURCH AND GIVING HIMSELF FOR HER.

Verily, they were not harsh designs. Christ bought His bride, having paid His life a ransom for her—not simply to have the sentence of death removed from her and then leave her in her filth, folly and enmity or make use of her simply as a slave. No, no, Christ's designs in loving the Church were most kind, and, as expressed in our text, were two-fold—one to be accomplished on earth and one in heaven.

The design to be accomplished on earth was that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word.

There are two parts of this work :

*First, the washing of regeneration* and pardon of all sin, when in effectual calling He wins her over to Himself, gets her hearty consent to take Him as hers and to give herself to be His for ever.

In order to effect this union, He instituted a ministry whose great duty is to act as the friends of the Bridegroom in seeking to show forth His love, exhibit his excellencies, and entreat sinners to consent to be His. John the Baptist, on being told that men were forsaking him and following Christ, was glad ; for the bride did not belong to him but to the Bridegroom. He was simply the friend of the Bridegroom, seeking to negotiate a contract or espousal, and therefore rejoiced greatly in seeing sinners flock to Christ. What a blessed work of the Christian ministry this is—seeking to get poor, sad, lost sinners united in a marriage contract with the ever-blessed Son of God. Well might Payson exclaim, " Had I a thousand lives, I would gladly spend them in it. Had I a thousand sons, I would gladly devote them to it." Yes, our work as ministers of Christ is