

SIN BLOTTED OUT.

A SERMON BY REV. WM. MCKENZIE, RAMSAY, C. W.

I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.—Isa. xliii.

“If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” That is the language of a man who is not taking an exaggerated, or too gloomy view of the position of sinful men, but who looks at it simply in the clear light of eternal truth. In our own hearts, we are all inclined to judge favourably of ourselves; but “God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.” He is the ultimate judge. And, possessing a better knowledge of us than we have of ourselves, searching into the most hidden corners of that deceitful heart of ours, and knowing all that is there.—God’s judgment is sure to be the reverse of that which is pronounced upon himself by any natural man.

A man, no doubt, can do much of himself to give an outward beauty and symmetry to his life and character. He may rise above that which is base or mean, he may have an abhorrence of direct falsehood or dishonesty, his simple word may be as good as another man’s bond, he may delight in the exercise of a generous benevolence, and, with a scrupulous and ready kindness he may seek to fulfil all the obligations imposed by family ties and friendship. Still, as a creature of God, there is a higher sphere in which his affections ought to expatiate, and a range of more imperative and exalted duties which,—before all else, claim his regards: and, however consistent and beautiful his life may be in all lower relations and duties, he nevertheless comes miserably short of that which is required of him, if his affections never rise above that sphere, and if these higher duties are neglected or forgotten.—

How could even such a man stand in the judgment before an infinitely just and holy God? Even such a man, weighed in the balance of perfect rectitude, must be found lamentably wanting.

The attempt to justify ourselves, to build up, without one flaw, a fabric of righteousness before God our judge, must always end in disaster and shame. “If I wash myself in snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet wilt thou plunge me in the ditch, so that my own clothes will abhor me.” All that a man can do of himself, and by his own power, to beautify and adorn his outward life and character, while it may in the judgment of men, who can look only on the outward appearance, render him worthy of all praise, is yet utterly inefficacious to render him acceptable to God, who looketh on the heart. It is but like washing in snow water, it reaches no deeper than the mere surface, it does not touch that inner source of all sin, the heart, which remains yet unrenewed; and which, notwithstanding the fair outward appearance, still sends forth its evil thoughts, and conceives its sinful imaginations, all which are naked and open to Him with whom we have to do. With what direct and simple truth, then, do these words of the psalmist indicate the position of every living man, “If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?”

“But,” it is added, “There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared.” And hark! a voice from heaven falls upon our ear, “I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine