

READY TO FORGIVE.

The central idea of the Gospel is that God is love. This truth is the illumination that streams from the Sun of Righteousness, to enlighten man's darkened mind, and to gladden his desolate heart. It is most important that no mists of error or of prejudice should obscure man's view of this glorious verity.

The declaration that God is ready to forgive leads the mind away up into his loving heart. He is ready to forgive because he is a God of love. His readiness to forgive is a most wondrous display of his mercy.

Forgiveness is the remission of the penalty due to sin. It is deliverance from exposedness to punishment. Sinners deserve punishment, and as unrepentant, are exposed to punishment. God is holy, and as a holy Ruler, he must, in some way, display his holiness in his dealings with sinners. Sinners, therefore, who repent not, must at last be banished from God's gracious presence, deprived of his heaven, and consigned to the place of woe. When sinners are forgiven, they are freed from God's law as a condemning law, and restored to his favour; though guilty they are treated as if they were not guilty as regards their eternal state.

God is ready to forgive sinners. He is waiting to be gracious. There is in him a disposition to pardon. He longs to receive sinners back to his bosom of love, and to fold them in the arms of his mercy.

God's readiness to forgive implies atonement. It is not because he looks lightly on sin that he is ready to forgive the sinner. If he is a sinner-loving, he is also a sin-hating, God. When he declares his readiness "abundantly to pardon," it must be on the footing of some manifestation of his detestation of sin, which makes it gloriously evident, that, while he is waiting to clasp sinners to his heart and take them home to his heaven, he regards their iniquities with holy abhorrence. Hence the need of the atonement of Jesus Christ. The sufferings and death of Christ far more expressively evidence the evil of sin to the universe than does the punishment of rebels. In love to man, from his own exhaustless resources, God has provided the atonement of Jesus for his salvation. He most freely gave up his Son to die for men. Jesus did not suffer and die to make God willing to forgive. He suffered and died because there was in God a desire to forgive, the intensity of which is to be measured by the sacrifice that he made in