

"Woe to him who, pardoning himself as easily as God pardons him, does not re-gravate his sins in his heart in proportion as God effaces them in his book, and remember them in proportion as God forgets them! Pardon is not for that man."

5. How wonderfully complete is God's forgiveness! Consider what God does with our sins; *removes them*, Ps. 103: 12; *covers them*, Ps. 85: 2; *does not impute them*, Ps. 32: 2, 2 Cor. 5: 19; *blots them out*, Isaiah 43: 25; *forgets them*, Heb. 8: 12.

6. Christianity provides alike for the *pardon* and the *purification* of the sinner. He who professes to have the *pardon*, whilst having none of the *purity*, is deceived, 1 John 1: 6, Matt. 6: 14, 15.

7. Though David was forgiven and sanctified and is now in Paradise, the fact still remains and will remain forever in his earthly record that he *committed adultery and murder*.

8. Beware of making God's mercy an encouragement to sin; nothing could be more ruinous.

March 9.—The Joy of Forgiveness.— Psalm 32: 1-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.—Ps. 32: 1.

INTRODUCTION.

The author of this psalm was no doubt David, as stated in the title of it and as confirmed by Romans 4: 6-8. David had committed the terrible double crime referred to in the last lesson. After the commission of that crime he remained for a time far from God, impatient and wretched. Then came to him Nathan the prophet, to bring him to his senses: (2 Samuel xii. See the wonderfully beautiful parable of *The Poor Man and his Lamb* in verses 1-6.) After Nathan's visit followed David's genuine repentance; and Ps. li contains his heartfelt confession and cry for pardon and purity. His cry was heard, and then came to him the peace and joy of being forgiven and restored to God's favour. Our lesson to-day gives expression to this joy, together with some lessons taught the psalmist by his late experience. *Matched*, the title given to this psalm, seems to signify, a *didactic poem*, i. e., a psalm in which instruction is given respecting God's dealings.

EXPOSITION.

Verses 1 and 2. *The Blessings resulting from the forgiveness of sin.* Blessed. This word in both verses is the same as in Ps. i: 1, and is literally, *Oh, the blessedness of*. For the different shades of idea expressed by the words *transgression*, *sin*, *iniquity*, see notes on last lesson. *Forgiveness*, more literally *carried away*. See Ps. 103: 12. The sin of the penitent is *removed, covered over, not reckoned*. How language is exhausted to give expression to the completeness of God's forgiveness of sin! To see this symbolized by a scene from real life, read the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke xv. Notice, verse 20, the father's action on the son's approach, and verses 22-24, the father's reply to the son's confession. Christ uttered that, the *parable of all parables*, to teach us what God is like and how God treats the returning penitent. David has lately tested the teaching of that parable in his own experience and has found it true, and is now exclaiming about the blessedness of returning and being so treated by God. *No guile*, no deceit, no falsehood, no attempt to represent things in a way different from what they really are. For David's honesty before God, see Ps. 51: 1-5. This honesty about one's sin is essential to forgiveness and the joy thereof. 1 John 1: 8, 9.

Verses 3 and 4. *David's wretchedness so long as his sin remained uncovered and unpardoned.* When I kept silence. "A whole year had

elapsed between David's crime and David's penitence. It had been a year of guilty satisfaction not worth the having, of sullen hardening of heart against God and all His appeals. Then came Nathan," &c.—*Morison*. *Bones*, the seat of strength. *My bones waxed old*, &c., might be read, *My strength wasted through my groaning*. The reference here is not to a physical disease, but to the extreme wretchedness of his mind owing to the burden of unconfessed sin it was carrying. *David's conscience* was assailing itself, and an outraged conscience can give one no end of misery. Since mind and body are so intimately joined, David's physical health was suffering at this time. *Thy hand was heavy*, &c. God ordered the moral law; God made the conscience; God has linked remorse and misery to sin, and what David suffered was just as much the doing of the Almighty as if He had literally put forth His hand to afflict. *Moisture*, sap, life-blood, vigor. *My eye was all dried up*, no energy, ambition, enthusiasm; but wretched, morose, conscience-smitten. Surely sin is a losing game. *Selah*. Conjectures as to the meaning of this word are without end. After devoting two pages of his Bible Dictionary to the word Smith concludes thus, "If any further information be sought on this *hopeless subject* it may be found," &c., &c.

Verse 5. *David narrates how he confessed his sin and how God forgave him.*

Verse 6. *David's experience of God's mercy an encouragement to others.* See 1 Tim. 1: 16; Luke 22: 31, 32. For this, i. e., because God is merciful as seen in His forgiveness of David. "Where one man finds a golden nugget, others feel inclined to dig,"—*Spurgeon*. Every one that is godly. The clause may perhaps admit of this rendering: "Every God-fearing man, who is conscious of having sinned, remembering my sin, my confession and God's merciful forgiveness of me, and knowing that God is the same always, will be encouraged to come to God with confidence and prayer for pardon and purity." In a time, &c. This seems to teach that there is a time when repentance will be too late and unavailing. Isaiah 55: 6; Proverbs 1: 28. Surely in the floods, &c. "David apparently compares, as our Lord does in His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7: 24-27), God's judgments upon sin to the torrents which in the East rise suddenly after rain, and sweep all before them with impetuous force. The judgments so come they shall not fall on him whom God has graciously forgiven,"—*English Lesson Notes*.

Verse 7. *An expression of David's confidence and rejoicing in God.*

"Rock of Ages cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

Songs are expressions of joy and triumph. Contrast the sentiment of this verse with that of

Verse 8. "Most of the older interpreters, including the modern Stier and Ewald, regard verses 8 and 9 as the word of God. Almost all recent interpreters regard these verses as the words of David."—*Dr. Holt*. There is nothing in the original to determine which of these opinions is correct. On the whole I think the former is most likely the true one, and would therefore regard verse 8 as a *promise of instruction and guidance given by God to David*. We would hardly expect David to say to his fellow-sinner, "I will guide thee with mine eye." This clause is more literally "I will counsel thee; mine eye shall be upon thee." "We are not pardoned in order that we may henceforth live after our own lusts, but that we may be educated in holiness and trained for perfection."—*Spurgeon*.

Verse 9. *An exhortation not to act like irrational creatures. Lost they come near unto thee.* This translation does not convey the true sense, but the opposite. It should be, *Disobey they will not come near thee*, i. e., the only way you can manage them so as to get them to do what you

want, to go and come at your bidding, is by means of *bit and bridle*. They have no understanding, but we have a mind and a heart and should render the obedience of rational and moral beings. "The true bridle for man is the eye of God."—*Rushin*. God wants to lead us as a shepherd, not drive us as a taskmaster. But if we will not be led we must be driven. Does not this verse indicate that sin is not only a violation of conscience, but also a counter to sound intelligence? Sin is a blinder, as well as a crime, the sinner is a fool, as well as a culprit.

Verse 10. *Contrast between the experience of the wicked and that of the righteous.* Compass about, i. e., surround on every hand, as a circle surrounds its centre, as we are surrounded by the atmosphere. The same expression occurs in verse 7.

Verse 11. *An exhortation to the godly to rejoice in the Lord.* Be glad, rejoice, shout for joy. There is a gradation in these words. The first means to be of a cheerful disposition and joyous countenance, the opposite of all melancholy; the second, to be joyful even unto leaping for joy; and the third, to possess a joy which breaks through all restraints and expresses itself in songs and shouts. Notice the source of all this joy—"in the Lord."

REMARKS.

1. Verse 1. The angels are blessed because they have never sinned; that blessedness can never be ours, but ours is the blessedness of this verse. We can never be other than *sorry that we have sinned*, yet there is an intensity of blessedness in being redeemed from sin that angels can never know. e. g. Health is prized so much more by him who has been brought back from the door of death than by him who has been once been shipwrecked. Hence such a passage as Luke 15: 3-10, especially verses 7 and 10.

2. Verses 3 and 4. When men have sinned they are not done with it. "If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly." Shakespeare makes Macbeth say this before he murders Duncan. After the murder listen again to Macbeth:

"Will all great Neptune's oceans wash this blood
Clear from my hand?"

There is the moral law violated, there is conscience within to wake up, and accuse, and torture. Many a man has had a fortasse of hell in this world from the stings of conscience. "We are beginning to find out that not only have we conscience, but that conscience has us!"

"The mind is its own place, and of itself
Can make a hell of heaven."

"You carry the brimstone with you," said an old lady to a young man who was scoffing at the idea of a hell of fire and brimstone. When David sinned his conscience was like a sleeping lion; his sin waked up the lion. All sin is tampering with this sleeping lion, and is sure to wake him, if not in this world, then without fail in the next. e. g. *Judas*. May not this be the worst that never dies?

3. Verse 5. If we try to hide our sin God will expose it and deal with it, but if we expose and confess it God will hide it. How foolish for one to think that he can hide his sin. See Psalm 94: 7-9. "Be sure your sin will find you out." How the Christian delights to come before his God and confess and lay all bare, and then seek God's mercy in Christ. Notice that David went right to God with his confession and directly from God he received forgiveness. So still, no man, no organism, must come in between the soul and God. I believe this to be the fundamental difference between Evangelicals and Ritualists, between Protestants and Roman Catholics; the former contend for direct, uninterrupted union between Christ and the individual soul; the latter say, *between Christ and soul there is one hindrance and the sinner on the other, and the church, the*