

We learn from the Saviour's words the remedy which God has provided for the disease of sin. What is this. A free pardon. There lay the paralytic before Jesus—helpless, impotent, able, to do nothing for himself, having nothing to offer the Physician for the spiritual health which, as much as bodily strength, he stood in need of; and there Jesus, looking on him, said, "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." So it is with ourselves; We have sinned, there is no doubt about that; sinned from the cradle up to this very hour; sinned in thought, word, and deed; sinned against light, and love, and conscience. And how are these sins, more in number than the hairs of our head, to be removed, and their eternal consequences averted? Can these ends be secured if we can only shut our eyes to our state and refuse to see the worst in ourselves—if we can wrap ourselves up in a false security, crying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace?" No, brethren. To forget the sin that is in us will not turn away God's anger from us in the great and terrible day of His wrath. For though we may forget them, He has "set our sins in the light of His countenance." Shall we then endeavour to cover over old sins by earnest efforts and honest attempts to do right for the future? Shall we let bygones be bygones, and, turning over a new leaf, begin a course of good works which may make amends for the past, and win God's approval for the future? Brethren, under all your efforts will lie the old sin still unforgiven, working there the second death—eating deeply into the soul like a cancer—untouched, uncured, by all your endeavours to conceal it from God's searching eye under a covering of works that you define as "good." A guilty past still remains to condemn. Where, then, lies your hope? In a full and free forgiveness; in an absolute and entire removal of your guilt. And this Christ is ready to bestow on all who are ready to receive it. He is willing to

speak the word of pardon to you now, at once, just as you are. This is the message: "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel;" or, in other words, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He only waiteth to be gracious, and to say to each penitent present, "Son, daughter, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."

Let us look at the evil of the scribes and Pharisees, and at the manner in which it was met by the Saviour. "The scribes and Pharisees" (in St. Luke's narrative) "began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" Now this objection to the Saviour's claim to the power of forgiving sins arose from a feeling true in itself, but false in its application to our Lord. If He who thus asserted His right to pardon the guilty had been nothing more than man, and not a sharer in the attributes of Godhead, their charge against Him would have been but reasonable when they said, "Who is this which speaketh blasphemies?" Their sin was not that they accused a man of blasphemy, who arrogated to himself the power of forgiving sins, but that they refused to recognise Jesus as the only begotten Son of the Father, who, as the representative of God on earth, "the image of the invisible God," had power to forgive sins. And in their accusation and our Lord's way of meeting it, we have proof of his divinity. For it is very worthy of observation that these scribes and Pharisees considered Christ to have claimed actual equality with God when He claimed the Divine prerogative of forgiving sins.

Concluded in our next.

---

The Afghan war is finished, and Beaconsfield has covered himself with glory.