

## THE PULPIT.

## THE CONVERSION OF THE DYING THIEF.

*"And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."*

As Jesus hung upon the cross, derided by the rulers, reviled by the chief priests, nailed on by the multitude, mocked by the soldiers, and to all appearance forsaken by his God, one solitary human voice proclaimed him Lord; one man alone confessed Him to be God's anointed, and spoke of His kingdom. That one man was a dying malefactor. Even the faith of His disciples had completely failed; they "trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel," but the cross had put an end to their hopes. Not so with this poor sinner; the cross was no stumbling-block to him. Neither was his own past guilty life, nor his utter inability to make any amends; but with a simple, childlike faith he committed his soul's eternal welfare to "Christ and Him crucified." Millions have trusted to Christ since His exaltation; only one sinner trusted in Him during His deepest humiliation. "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." How simple the prayer, and how speedy the answer; "Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." If such a sinner at such a time could be pardoned, surely no one need despair.

This man had done nothing to commend him to the favour of God. Neither was it his penitence, nor his faith, nor his prayer that drew towards him the love of God, or that procured for him the forgiveness of his sin. It was while he was yet "dead in trespasses and sins" that the love of God the Father yearned towards him, and the love of God the Holy Spirit wrought in him. It was a manifestation of the free, unmerited, infinite mercy of God, and the mighty power of the Spirit working in the heart of the lost sinner, "to the praise of the glory of his grace."

And such is a type of the conversion of every sinner who turns to the Lord. It is not the prayers and tears of the penitent that touch the heart of God. It is not the desire for pardon and deliverance on the part of the awakened soul that moves Him to pity; but the very first motions towards grief and hatred of sin are begotten by God Himself in the heart of the sinner. Alarm for the consequences of sin may be but the result of natural fear, but the first cry of the sin-burdened soul, like the first wail of the new-born infant, is an evidence that God has breathed into it the breath of life. It is the Holy Spirit's first work to convince of sin, and the soul that is truly seeking the Lord may know that it is God Himself who is drawing him with "the cords of love."

We often hear of deathbed repentance, and, blessed be God, there are such cases. Foolish and wicked as it is to put off salvation to the fag-end of life, with all the risk, moreover, of being "suddenly cut off, and that without remedy," yet even up to the last moment, if the soul can but look to Jesus with the eye of faith, as the glazing eye of the serpent-bitten Israelite might have turned towards the serpent of brass and found healing. He who is "able to save to the uttermost" will be found