

same work of the Spirit which was manifested on the day of Pentecost, and in the early days of the gospel, is carried on now; "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts v. 31).

What, then, is the practical use of this statement of the doctrine of divine forgiveness? It is to give firm ground for faith to rest upon, and to give encouragement even to the chief of sinners to come to God through Christ for the pardon of sin. Many there are who never felt the guilt and the danger of sin, and these seek not the forgiveness of which they have never felt the need. Others presume on the mercy of God, apart from the appointed way of forgiveness through faith in the Redeemer. But this is the one and the only way of pardon, and there is none other name given among men whereby we may be saved. Conviction of sin, and knowledge of the way of salvation, these are two things necessary before any sinner can enter into the subject of divine forgiveness. For those who acknowledge their sinfulness, and look to Christ for salvation, we offer two considerations which may strengthen their faith.

1st. Consider that divine forgiveness, like all the excellences of the divine nature, is full, free, and boundless. Were not forgiveness in God something beyond what men could imagine, no flesh could be saved.

This he himself has declared (Isa. lv. 7—9): "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (*Heb., He will multiply to pardon.*) "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." They are, as is plain from the context, thoughts of forgiveness and ways of pardon of which he speaks. There is forgiveness with him to outdo the multiplied sins of any that return to him to seek for it. This is not

the manner of men. True, but God saith, My ways are not as your ways. As the heavens are above the earth, so are my thoughts, in this matter, above your thoughts. It is when we measure the forgiveness of God by our thoughts that faith is discouraged. But he has provided against this cause of disquiet and unbelief. "I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; FOR I AM GOD, AND NOT MAN" (Hos. xi. 9). Our satisfaction in this matter is to be taken from his nature. Were he a man, or as the sons of men, it were impossible that upon such and so many provocations he should turn away from the fierceness of his anger. But he is God; this gives an infiniteness and an inconceivable boundlessness to the forgiveness that is with him, and exalts it above all our thoughts and ways.

2nd. Consider that God has placed his greatest glory in the declaration of this boundless forgiveness; nor can man honour him more than by coming to him to receive his free grace. Many speak as if they were more ready to be forgiven than God is ready to forgive. Many feel as if God were unwilling to receive sinners, and would rather punish than pardon them. But this is directly opposed by God's own word. The whole design of the gospel is to make his grace glorious, and to exalt pardoning mercy. He is not willing that any should perish, but rather that they should come to him and live. There is no way by which more glory can be brought unto God than by receiving forgiveness from him: and the greater the sinner, the greater the glory of Divine grace. And, in infinite condescension, dealing after the manner of men, God has confirmed his promise by an oath: "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." By this oath he designs to leave no room for unbelief concerning his readiness to give mercy, grace, and pardon to sinners: "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Heb. vi. 18.)

A PRAYER.

Keep us, Lord, O keep us ever!
Vain our hope, if left by thee;
We are thine, O leave us never,
Till thy glorious face we see:
Then to praise thee,
Through a bright eternity.

Precious is thy word of promise,
Precious to thy people here;
Never take thy presence from us,
Jesus, Saviour, still be near:
Living, dying,
May thy name our spirits cheer.