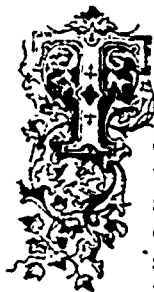


Sabbath Readings.

DIVINE FORGIVENESS.

"Thou art a God ready to pardon."—*Nehemiah* ix. 17.



THE words of the text are in the original, "Thou art a God of pardons." This is a name owned by him, and of which he accepts the ascription to himself. It is expressive of his nature; and whatever any name of God expresseth him to be, that he is, and we may surely expect to find him. He will be to us what his name declares, "a God of pardons," "a God ready to forgive."

Now God takes this name in a special manner, as that whereby he will be distinguished and known to fallen sinful men. He appropriates to himself, as expressing his nature in a way that no other name or title can express. When Moses desired to see the glory of God, the Lord tells him that "he could not see his face," for no man can behold the full and immediate majesty of God, and live. Only the excellency of his nature can be seen and understood by the names given to him, and by the manifestations of his character. So it is said, "The Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." To be known by this name is the greatest glory of God, the glory of his grace. In his own essential nature God is love; but in relation to man, as a fallen and guilty creature, his love takes the form of compassion and pity. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Every name and every attribute of God is engaged in Jesus Christ, in the covenant of grace, and is proposed to us to place our trust and confidence in. And especially this name is pledged as his peculiar glory, the God of forgiveness. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?" (*Mic. vii. 18*).

The first great purpose of the coming of the son of God into this world, of his humiliation, his suffering, his death, was to declare God's readiness to forgive sin. "In this was manifested the love of God towards

us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world" (*I John iv. 6*). And again: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

The often-repeated expression, that "he gave his only begotten Son," in connection with the love of God, is the highest argument that human thoughts and human language can appreciate. What greater assurance can we have that there is forgiveness with God for us? He himself has given it as a rule, that what was done by giving an only-begotten or well-beloved son, gives assured testimony of reality and sincerity in the thing that is confirmed by it. So he says to Abraham (*Gen. xxii. 12*), "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." This way, if by any way, it may be known. And hence faith may make a certain and a blessed conclusion from this consideration. Now I know that there is forgiveness with God, seeing that he hath not withheld his Son, his only Son, that he may accomplish it. Thus the apostle teaches us to reason: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (*Rom. viii. 32*).

When Christ came into the world, in the fullness of time, according to the promise, he not only declared that there is forgiveness with God, but he made the way plain for the exercise of it. The justice of God might have stood in the way of his mercy; but Divine justice was satisfied by the atonement made, when he "bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (*1 Pet. ii. 24*). He died, the just for the unjust, and made reconciliation for iniquity. He answered the demands of the law. He was made a curse for us (*Gal. iii. 13*), and so became the end of the law for righteousness to them that believe (*Rom. x. 4*). And as by his death he atoned for sin, and destroyed him that had the power of death (*Heb. ii. 14*), so by his resurrection he gave assurance of the full discharge from the debt of sin to the utmost. He was dead, but he liveth forever to make intercession for us; and among the blessings purchased by his mediation, and communicated to believers by the Holy Spirit, is forgiveness and pardon. The