

sinner. The penalty is remitted, and the obligation to suffer that penalty is dissolved; but it is still naturally due, though graciously remitted. Hence appear the propriety and duty of continuing to confess and lament even pardoned sin with a lowly and contrite heart. Though released from its penal consequences by an act of the Divine clemency, we should still remember that the dust of self-abasement is our proper place before God, and should temper our exultation in his mercy by a humbling recollection of our natural liability to his wrath. "I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God. Ezek. xvi. 62, 63. (2.) The account which has been given of justification, if correct, sufficiently points out the error of many of the Roman Catholic Divines, and of some mystic theologians, who seem to suppose that to be justified is to be, not reckoned righteous but actually made righteous, by the infusion of a sanctifying influence, producing a positive and inherent conformity to the moral image of God. This notion confounds the two distinct though kindred blessings of justification and regeneration. The former in its scriptural sense, is an act of God, not in or upon man, but for him, and in his favour; an act which, abstractedly considered, to use the words of Dr. Barrow, "respects man only as its object, and translates him into another relative state. The inherent principle of righteousness is a consequent of this act of God; connected with it, but not formally of it." (3.) The justification extends to all past sins; that is, to all guilt contracted previously to that time at which the act of justification takes place. In respect of this, it is, while it remains in force, most full, perfect, and entire absolution from wrath. "All manner of sin" is then forgiven. The pardon which is granted is a "justification not merely from some things, from many things, from most things, but from all things." Acts xiii. 39. God does not justify us, or pardon our innumerable offences, by degrees, but at once. As by the law of works he is cursed, who "continueth not in all things," which that law enjoined, so he who is truly absolved by the gospel is cleared from all and every thing which before stood against him; and "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Well may that gospel which reveals and offers such a benefit be termed a "great salvation." (4.) Another remark, which it may not be unnecessary to make, is, that justification, however effectual to our release from past guilt, does not terminate our state of probation. It is not irreversible, any more than eternal. As he who is now justified was once condemned, so he may in future come again into condemnation, by relapsing into sin and unbelief, although at present "accepted in the Beloved." Thus Adam, before his transgression was in a state of favour; but as he had not then fulfilled to the end of his probation, the righteousness of that law under which he was placed, his ultimate and final acceptance was not absolutely