

THE SENSE OF FORGIVENESS.

No doctrine of holy Scripture can by possibility be more deeply interesting and important than that of a sinner's justification before God, consisting as it does in the full and free forgiveness of all past sin; so that the connexion between guilt and punishment is broken off, and the happy partaker of this blessing is invested with all the privileges of righteousness. Till this momentous change in a man's relation to God takes place, it is impossible that he should be happy; for the wrath of God abideth on him; he is under actual condemnation; and is liable every moment to die in his sins, and be plunged into hell. There are persons who, in their indiscreet zeal to exalt the privilege of entire sanctification to God, speak disparagingly of justification, and of the spiritual influence and enjoyments which are connected with it. But such persons have very imperfect apprehensions of divine truth, and need an Aquila and Priscilla to "expound unto them the way of God more perfectly." Justification is one of the greatest blessings that fallen man can receive at the hands of God; inasmuch as it is the foundation of all their safety and happiness both in time and eternity. Without it, there is no peace of conscience, no regenerating and sanctifying grace, no well-grounded hope of eternal life. But all these blessings follow in its train. Well may it therefore be said, (Rom. iv. 6—8,) "David also describeth the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works, *saying*, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Nor does "this blessedness come" exclusively upon the circumcised race. It is equally free for sinners of the Gentiles; for it flows from the mere mercy of God, which is "wide as the world;" it is conveyed through the sacrifice of Christ, which "taketh away the sin of the world;" and it is offered to every guilty soul of man, upon the one and simple condition of faith in Christ, exercised in a penitent state of the heart: so that, at whatever time any man truly believes in the Saviour, he passes from death unto life; he receives the Holy Ghost, the seal and witness of his adoption; and he becomes an heir of life eternal; the Spirit which seals him as the child and property of God, at the same time renewing his whole moral nature.

According to the general tenor of holy Scripture, when any man is actually "pardoned for all that he hath done," he enjoys the favour and the peace of God; in consequence of which he can, with childlike confidence, place himself under the divine protection, and contemplate the solemnities of death and eternity, not only without the terror which guilt inspires, but with cheerful hope. This was the doctrine of the Wesleys; and hence they taught their spiritual children to sing,

"How happy every child of grace,
Who knows his sins forgiven!
'This earth,' he cries, 'is not my place;
I seek my place in heaven.'"

For their teaching on this subject, they were strongly censured by Bishop Warburton, Dr. Church, and a host of inferior writers. Yet they steadily persevered in bearing testimony to this truth, which they found to be