

own sake, and will not remember thy sins." When, looking to ourselves, gathering clouds and darkness, portending ruin, enveloped our hope of acceptance with God, when our soul was drawing near to the pit, and our life to the destroyers, nothing in justice standing between, then the most High had compassion, and said, "Deliver him from going down to the pit." The simple fact of such an interposition, the very utterance of such words as those of our text, put the matter beyond a doubt; not that some great sinners among men, but that all men were lost and undone, that in God's sight no man living could be justified, could stand in the judgment. Note.

I. *God Himself* forgives sins, "I even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions.

II. He blots them out of *His book*.—So that no record of sin stands against us for judgment.

III. He blots them out for *His own sake*.

IV. He blots them out of *His memory*.

I. God Himself forgives sin, "I, even I," He says Not we ourselves by any work or service performed for God, or by any gift or atonement that we can offer, but God against whom chiefly we have sinned, forgiveness is with God.

Preceding our text we find a catalogue of sins charged against Israel, which are, in effect, just those sins chargeable against us all, and in which all the ungodly live.—

They are chiefly omissions of those things which God requires of men; *e. g.*, it is said, "Thou hast not called upon Me."—That is, thou hast cast off prayer. Communion with God is not thy practice and thy delight. Again, "Thou hast been weary of Me." They were disinclined to God's service, they had no desire for His blessed fellowship, it was irksome and un-

pleasant to seek God and to remember Him. Those who neglect prayer, who have no delight in communion with God, just say in effect that they are weary of Him. Again, "Thou hast not brought Me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings." They grudged anything for God, they were niggardly and penurious in their service of Him, they were for a cheap religion, and in those acts of devotion which were costly they desired to be excused.—So little sense had they of the greatness of God, and of their obligations to Him, that they could hardly find in their heart to part with a lamb out of their flock for his honour, though God required, and would have received it graciously, from them. "Neither," it continues, "Neither hast thou honoured Me with thy sacrifices." What they did for the Lord in the way of outward service was not done in such a way as to honour Him. It might be their offerings were carelessly offered, or not given cheerfully, for the "Lord loveth a cheerful giver," or with no eye to God's glory. It may be they were glad to have God's service over, that they might return to worldly business and pleasure which they liked better, and so did they dishonour God, who looketh upon the heart, instead of honouring Him, and make their sacrifices as if they were no sacrifices. And that which greatly aggravates the sin of all this is, that God requires no burdensome thing from any man. It is said here, "I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense." None of God's commands are really grievous whatever they may become to us by reason of sin. "His yoke is easy, His burden is light."

But besides such omissions and shortcomings in our duty to God, there are direct transgressions, actual sins chargeable against every man. God says here, "Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins."—When we pervert God's good gifts to un-