

THE SOWER.

SUPPER TIME.

Luke xiv, 15-24.

THE Supper's spread, the time is late,
The midnight hour is near,
And God invites both small and great
To come and taste His cheer.
The Lamb is slain, yea lives again—
All things are now prepared ;
Let none the message hear in vain,
Whom grace till now hath spared.

The poor, the halt, the maimed, the blind,
Each one, howe'er opprest,
May *now* the fullest access find,
And be a welcome guest.
The feast is rich, there yet is room—
The door wide open thrown ;
God willeth not a sinner's doom,
Oh, seal not, then, thine own !

Come as thou art ; He nothing wants,
Except that thou shouldst come ;
The suited robe Himself He grants,
And makes each feel at home.
No more do thou thyself excuse,
But to the supper haste ;
Lest shouldst thou still His grace refuse,
His judgment thou shouldst taste.

FORGIVENESS.

OUR FIRST NEED, AS SINNERS, is FORGIVENESS ; and there is forgiveness with God, of which His word thus speaks : “ Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” (Rom. iv. 7, 8.) This blessedness is a present possession, “ We have the forgiveness of sins ” in Christ. (Eph. i. 7.) And the portion is that of the simplest, as well as that of the most advanced believer, for we read—“ I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you.” (1 John ii. 12).

FORGIVENESS IS THE ACT OF GOD TOWARDS THE
SINNER.

We must not mix in our minds, our tears, prayers, repentance, or any inward work, with God's act of forgiveness. Suppose a man having no means whatever, owes one hundred dollars. His creditor pities him, and forgives him the debt. The forgiveness is not a long process worked within the mind of the debtor, but the act of the creditor : “ I forgive you,” he says, and the forgiveness is accomplished. The debt no doubt made the debtor feel miserable ; but when the creditor forgave the hundred dollars, the debt was gone, every cent of it, not because of what the debtor felt, but because of what the creditor did.

unc
goo
On
add
our
to f
the
and
forg
that
has
F
pure
hind
jorgi
Pr
state
hind
own
work
Israe
not n
idle !
of the
sinne
libert
forgiv
will n
says :

FORGIVENESS IS AN ACT OF PURE GRACE UPON
THE PART OF GOD.

We are entirely without resources ; we are sold under sin, and we have no strength to do any single good thing whereby we can merit favor from God. On the contrary, every day and hour of our lives we add to the debt of sin. Yet whatever the debt of our sins may be, there is with God abounding grace to forgive it. Our Lord tells us of "two debtors ; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty, and when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both ;" at the same time shewing us that the sinner, who has the greatest sense of sin, has the greatest sense of the grace which forgives sin.

Forgiveness being the act of God, and His own pure grace to sinners, we enquire—*What is the hindrance to the sinner receiving the knowledge of forgiveness of sins ?*

Pride of heart, which refuses to believe his real state, his utter sinfulness and helplessness, is a great hindrance. Pride sends man to the treadmill of his own doings ; and there Satan drives the helpless worker to despair, as the taskmasters lashed the Israelites of old, crying to them, when they could not make bricks without straw, "Ye be idle ! ye be idle !" Brickmaking did not bring the Israelites out of the house of bondage, neither will works bring a sinner out of his sins. Grace brought Israel into liberty, and grace frees the soul. Seeking to obtain forgiveness by our doings is spiritual slavery. God will not be in debt to any man. Listen to what He says :

"To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt."

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Rom. iv. 4-5).

WORKS AND GRACE CANNOT BE MIXED.

One drop of the poison of man's works let fall into a vessel full of God's grace deprives grace of its character. God will not allow that man shall spoil His gracious act of forgiveness by any mixture of works, for "If by grace then is it no more works; otherwise grace is no more grace. (Rom. xi. 6.)

THE GROUND UPON WHICH GOD FORGIVES SIN.

Self must be set aside and God brought in, if we would know His forgiveness. God consulted Himself and glorified His throne. God magnified His own character of righteousness regarding sin by the death of Christ. The blood which Jesus shed is of sufficient value to discharge the debt of every sinner; and God in grace forgives sins upon the ground of what the Lord has done. The blood of Jesus is available for all; and God's grace is like an exhaustless deposit placed at the bank, so that all, who are poor and needy, may obtain "the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace." (Eph. i. 7.) God's righteousness has been magnified about the very sins which burden the sinner's conscience, so that He declares "at this time His righteousness; that He might be just, and the Justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." (Rom. iii. 26.)

The following homely illustration of debt being forgiven, was used of God to give the subject of the story assurance as to the forgiveness of her sins. May our reader have equally simple faith!

At a village shop the old woman, into whose debt her customers ran, would carefully mark upon the back of her shop door how much each one owed her. There, in white chalk, as well as upon her memory, was written the name of each purchaser with the exact amount owing beneath it. Name and debt were riveted together in the old woman's mind, and could only be separated by due and full payment of all that was owing.

Amongst the old woman's customers was one, whose conscience sorely troubled her on account of the debt of her sins, and who dreaded the opening of the books when small and great shall stand before the great white throne, and be judged according to their works. Our friend knew that her sins could never be erased from God's book by her own doings, and that unless they were blotted out, she must be everlastingly lost.

"Why do you mourn thus over your sins?" said one to her; "Why do you not believe what God says respecting those who really desire forgiveness? Has He not told such that *the debt is paid!* You never trouble about the chalk marks upon the shop door after the money is paid down. Can you not likewise rest in what the blood of Christ has done in paying the debt of sins, and satisfying the demand of divine righteousness?"

"I will go to the shop and see what she has against your name, and will pay the due; she will then rub out the chalk marks, so that when you next go there, she will tell you that not a mark stands against your name, and you will thankfully believe her. Yet in this work you will have no part, save the satisfaction that flows from believing your debt is paid.

"And thus dear friend, it is with the terrible debt of your sins over which you mourn, and for which you own you have nothing to pay. Justice is satisfied, for the blood of God's Son has been shed for the sins of His people, and not one sin is left against their names. Jesus has paid the price of them all in His own blood. Indeed, justice has, as it were, by that precious blood, wiped out all the debt of their sins; and we, who believe God, can and do rejoice in freedom from the debt of sin; and more, it is God's own joy to tell us that our names are no longer connected with our sins, but that our names are written in the Lamb's book of life."

God graciously owned the illustration from her every-day life, and our friend believed, and henceforth rejoiced in God.

THE SINS OF GOD'S PEOPLE ARE NOT ONLY FORGIVEN,
—THEY ARE ALSO NOT REMEMBERED.

An earthly sovereign once said when granting a pardon, "I forgive, but I cannot forget." If God acted thus, we could never be happy in His presence, but He says: "Their sins and their iniquities will I

rem
dwe
gra

S
conv
blot
of w
safe
of to
tell,

Go
futu
prea
Him
(Act
take
are j
faith
belie

great
His
mere
or sh
and c

Th
Coul
out c
our in
find t
in vi
griev

remember no more." (Heb. viii. 12.) Thus we can dwell in liberty in His presence, and rejoice in His grace.

THE SINS WHICH GOD FORGIVES, ARE ALL SINS.

Some seem to think that a line is drawn at conversion, and that all sins up to that day are blotted out, but they are not at rest when thinking of what sin they may possibly yet commit. "I am safe up to this moment," said one to us. "But what of to-morrow?" we inquired. "Ah, of that I cannot tell," was the reply. Self, not God, was his confidence.

God does not say He forgives past, present, or future sins, but SINS. "Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things." (Acts xiii. 38, 39.) The two "alls" in this verse take in every believer, and everything, *all who believe* are justified from *all things*. Whether it be strong faith or weak faith is not the question; but, do we believe? And, if we do believe, the question is not great sins or small sins, but *all* sins; nay God, in His grace, has spoken of *things*—not gross sins merely, but every kind of thing which we have done, or shall do, so that our consciences may be at rest, and our hearts rejoice before Him.

The perfect work of Christ embraces all sins. Could it do less? It is terrible unbelief to weigh out our sins against Christ's blood in the scales of our imagination. In the balances of the sanctuary we find that our sins, however heavy, are nothing at all in view of the preciousness of Christ's blood. The grievous hindrance to our rejoicing in God's forgive-

ness is unbelief in what Christ has done, and in God's grace which forgives all sins.

God knew every one of our sins when He "laid on Him the iniquity of us all," (Is. liii. 6); and Jesus endured the weight of them all, when "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." (1 Pet. ii. 24).

Where then are your sins, believer? They are not upon you, for God laid them upon Jesus. They are not upon Jesus, for He has borne them, and is in glory; where then are your sins? *They are gone.* Rest in the work of Christ, believe and rejoice. Your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake; you have the forgiveness of sins through Christ; you are one of God's blessed people. "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered."

GOD'S claim must be met either by judgment upon His own Son, or by judgment on the sinner. Oh, what a solemn thought that this world is ripening for judgment!

The testimony of God's grace is going on. Dear reader, are you saved.

Grace will have its limits, and refuges of lies soon shall crumble into dust. Think of that "shout" that is to come; are you ready for it? "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout!" 1 Thes. 4, 16.

Will it be to gather you out of the impending doom, or will it be but the signal for your destruction? Left behind for judgment! Shut out! What an awful portion!

LEAVE ALL.

IN consequence of a violent tempest which swept the shores of the English Channel, a coast-guard—a small vessel appointed to watch over a fishery—manned by a skipper, a sailor, and a landsman, sought shelter in a small inlet which was somewhat protected from the storm. For some hours the crew thought they were safe, but under the violence of the waves the cables which held the anchors were broken, and the vessel was dashed upon the reefs of the coast, and wrecked. The night was dark, a rescue seemed hopeless, and from moment to moment the small craft seemed ready to go to pieces. However, from a neighboring port the position of the vessel in distress had been seen; the life-boat had been launched and manned by a crew of devoted men. Repeated cries of encouragement from out the darkness of the night told the shipwrecked mariners that help was on the way.

The undertaking, however, was a very difficult one; and in view of the position of the shipwrecked vessel, but one course was possible. They must go into the midst of the breakers, and, taking every precaution, watch their chance, and then, at the favorable moment dash in on the crest of the waves, pass close along side the vessel, so that those on board could leap into the life-boat during the few seconds it was there, in passing.

The manœuvre was successfully accomplished the first time; the sailor, the most courageous of the three

mariners, seized the propitious moment, leaped into the life-boat, and was saved. But at the same moment an enormous wave separated the two vessels, and twenty minutes passed before it was possible for the life-boat to approach again. The brave men succeeded finally, at the peril of their lives, in again coming alongside; but alas! in spite of their repeated cries to the captain and his man who were clinging to the side of their vessel; "Leave all! leave all! let yourselves drop into the life-boat!" They both hesitated, although they had only to loose their hands, and let themselves drop. Their indecision was fatal to them. Again a huge wave drove the life-boat far away, and before they were able to approach the third time, nothing remained of the coast-guard save the debris which was being broken to pieces on the reef, and those who had been on it were swallowed up by the raging sea.

What was the reason that these two unfortunates were prevented from taking advantage of the rescue which was offered them? Was it the lack of decision, and the fear of abandoning, in the darkness, the rigging to which they were clinging, to let themselves fall into the life-boat; or were they looking for another rescue? We know not, but whatever it may have been, instead of having confidence in the means of salvation which had been brought to them, they hesitated and were lost.

Reader, you pity the fate of these two mariners, perhaps you blame them for not having seized the deliverance which was before them. But have you

never thought of the thousands of lives suspended over an abyss far more terrible than that in which these two men perished, of whom we have been speaking? As to yourself, are you right in thinking that you are in a place of perfect security? Are you quite sure that you are not at this moment hanging over the yawning gulf of death, and the awful eternity following from which only the fragile thread of your life separates you? And to face this you have only the deceitful props and hopes which they clung to. It may be that you will smile at what you may consider my exaggeration, or protest at what you may think an evil judgment of you; but listen for a moment. Do you not believe in a God who is all powerful, holy and righteous? Have you lived and served Him as an intelligent creature ought to do, consecrating to Him all your energy, and the whole of your life? Instead of that, have you not transgressed, in a thousand ways, His good and righteous commandments, both in thought, word, and deed? Have you not lived, as to God, to whom you owe all, in complete carelessness and indifference, thinking only of yourself, of your worldly interests, of your pleasures more or less legitimate? And if this is all so, do you think you will be able to escape the righteous and awful judgment of God, who cannot hold the guilty as innocent? This judgment is suspended over your head; O that you may believe it, O that you may not seek to get rid of the thought; in another moment it may fall upon you, as only the wave was needed to carry away from the shipwrecked mariners

the life-boat which was ready to receive them, and to engulf them without a possibility of recovery.

But for you also there is a life-boat which no wave is able to submerge; a safe and untiring pilot who knows neither cessation nor rest, who is always upon the waves, seeking those who are ready to perish— It is Jesus the merciful and Almighty Saviour. His voice is heard in the midst of the confusion of the world; He calls you and says; “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest * * * if any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink * * * he that believeth on me hath everlasting life * * * the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Thus reader, “to-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” This is the favourable moment. If up to the present you have not put all your trust in Jesus, if you have not yet cast yourself into the life-boat, sent in divine mercy to snatch you from eternal shipwreck, do not longer hesitate, whilst, in the midst of the noise of the waves, it passes away beneath your feet. Oh! let go everything, that you may fall into the arms of the Saviour which are stretched out towards you. Let nothing detain you, for it may be that in another moment, time, for you, will have ceased; the waves which beat against the frail bark of your life will have loosened the sides; and the life-boat will have passed never to return.

Leave everything! How many there are who have never had resolution! They cling to their own merits, to the remembrance of the good which they

ha
re
wi
be
we
hu
ju
of
ne
th

no
on
sid
on
Di
th
ma
yo
wh

wi
br
sh
yo
th

beg
no

have done, or that they have desired to do; to their reputation for uprightness, to the vain consideration with which the world surrounds them, and they believe themselves in safety! They do not see how weak the half rotten cordage is, how unreliable these human supports, to resist the frightful tempest of the judgment of God, to respond to the awful demands of His holiness; and they forget that eternal righteousness will soon break these worm-eaten planks, and that they will have only perdition before them.

Leave all! Have you done that dear reader? Do not put your hope of salvation in any besides the only Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Do not consider longer your morality, or your pious ways, but only the redemption which is by His blood. Disengage yourself from every deceptive support, that you may henceforth rest only in Jesus, that you may give yourself up to Him without reserve, that you may look only to Him in life, and in death, and whatever may arise may be found in Him.

Then you may fear nothing, but rejoice, for you will be in the true life-boat. If your earthly bark is broken, conducted by your faithful Saviour to the shelter from eternal judgment which cannot touch you, you will approach in peace the blessed shores of the heavenly country, and of divine felicity.

For "*God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

COMFORT IN THE DARK HOUR.

“THERE never was such affliction “as mine,” said a poor sufferer, restlessly tossing in her bed in one of the wards of a city hospital;

“I don’t think there ever was such racking pain.”

“Once,” was faintly uttered from the next bed.

The first speaker paused for a moment; and then, in a still more impatient tone, resumed her complaint, “Nobody knows what I pass through; nobody ever suffered more pain.”

“One,” was again whispered from the same direction.

“I take it you mean yourself, poor soul! but—”

“Oh, not myself; not me!” exclaimed the other; and her pale face flushed up to the very temples, as if some wrong had been offered, not to herself, but to another. She spoke with such earnestness that her restless companion lay still for several seconds, and gazed intently on her face. The cheeks were now wan and sunken, and the parched lips were drawn back from the mouth as if by pain, yet there dwelt an extraordinary sweetness in the clear grey eyes, and a refinement on the placid brow, such as can only be imparted by a heart acquaintance with Him who is “full of grace and truth.”

“Oh, not myself; not me!” she repeated.

There was a short pause; and then the following words, uttered in the same low tone, slowly and solemnly, broke the midnight silence of the place—

the
hal
mo
the
Hil
wei
the
*
the
hea
crie
Goc
T
syll
chai
barl
to t
“
“T
thir
“
won
to s
suffe
“
“
“
strai
“
our

“And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews. And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head * * * * * And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha * * * they gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall * * * * * And they crucified Him * * * * * And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads * * * * * And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying * * * My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!”

The voice ceased, and for several minutes not a syllable was spoken. The night nurse rose from her chair by the fire, and mechanically handed a cup of barley water, flavoured with lemon juice and sugar, to the lips of both sufferers.

“Thank you, nurse,” said the last speaker. “They gave Him gall for His meat, and in His thirst they gave Him vinegar to drink.”

“She is talking about Jesus Christ,” said the other woman, already beginning to toss restlessly from side to side; “but,” added she, “talking about His sufferings can’t mend ours—at least, not mine.”

“But it lightens hers,” said the nurse.

“I wonder how?”

“Hush!” and the gentle voice again took up the strain.

“Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows * * * * * He was wounded for our

transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.' ”

The following day, as some ladies, visiting the hospital, passed by the cots, they handed to each a few fragrant flowers.

The gentle voice was again heard : “ ‘ If God so clothe the grass of the fields, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith. ’ ”

A few days passed slowly away, when on a bright Lord's day morning, as the sun was rising, the nurse noticed the lips of the sufferer moving, and leaning over her, she heard these words, “ Going home. ‘ I have fought the good fight ; I have finished my course ; I have kept the faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day. ’ ” * * * * * Her eyes closed, and the nurse knew that the hand of death was grasping the cords of life. A moment more and all was over—the soul had gone to dwell in that city where “ there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. * * * * ”

OH! I would persuade you now concerning Jesus, for if you will not have Him here, you cannot have Him there. “ To-day, if you will hear His voice. ”