

THE GLORIES OF FORGIVING GRACE NO. 1555

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 29, 1880,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness
of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”
Ephesians 1:7.*

LAST Sunday morning the subject was redemption, “You are not your own: you are bought with a price.” The sequel to redemption is pardon. The text gives us that doctrine, for it tells us that redemption through the blood of Jesus involves the forgiveness of sins. Our subject at this time shall be the forgiveness of sin, the measure, mode, medium, and manifestation of it as set forth in the words before us. May the Holy Spirit sweetly open up to us the glories of our sin-forgiving God and cause us to exult in the riches of His grace.

Beloved friends, no one can say that we have before us a theme which is unpractical, speculative, and fanciful. No one will be able to charge the preacher with discoursing upon a subject with which his hearers have little or nothing to do, or wandering into barren fancies which cannot affect their actual lives. It is true that some sermons are barely human and might as well have been addressed to the inhabitants of Jupiter or Saturn as to ourselves, but such shall not be the case with our discourse. We have no hairlines of metaphysical subtlety before us. Our theme runs parallel with the beaten track of everyday life.

Sin is, alas, too familiar with us. We have all committed it; the slime of the serpent has been upon us; we are still affected by it, as an adder in the path, it bites at our heels and it will be our daily trial, like the fiery serpents in the wilderness, till we enter the promised rest. Sin, as a thing of the past, cannot be forgotten. Was there ever a more sore bondage than that with which made us serve it with rigor? Sin as a matter of affliction for the present is not to be ignored. Was there ever a sterner fight than we have to wage against evil outside and within? Sin as a danger still ahead must not be overlooked. Were there ever rocks or quicksand more terrible to the mariner than temptations to sin which yet lie before us on our voyage to heaven? Sin is always around us. Where shall we hasten to escape from its presence? If in holy communion we climb to Pisgah's top, we stumble even in view of Canaan and slip upon our high places. And if we descend into the lowest deeps, like David, till all God's waves and billows have gone over us, our despondency and unbelief cause us to sin amid our humiliations. Should I take the wings of the morning and fly unto the uttermost parts of the sea, unless I could escape from myself, even there would sin follow me and its hand would smite me to my sore wounding.

Nothing can be more practical than the doctrine which deals with sin and its removal, and no news can be more pleasant than the tidings of remission. Why, the very sound of that word, “Forgiveness of sins” is a joy forever. No marriage bell has more music in its notes. To the guilty, forgiveness is a tone of joy which their jaded ears are able to hear without strain. It ministers refreshment to the weary heart. High joys and rare delights are apt to send forth raised notes which terrified consciences cannot endure. Their very sweetness is sharp and distressing to the sorrowful, and their harmony causes a deeper discord in the broken heart. But forgiveness has a soft, silver sound, mellow and tender, and when man's ear is stunned with the thunder and the terror of the wrath to come, then he is charmed to listen to its soothing melody. The gentle love whispers of free grace and dying love, and pardons bought with blood are as heaven's own sonnets to troubled souls.

It is my earnest desire, dear friends, that many this morning may come to believe in the joyful doctrine of the forgiveness of sins. It is an article in the creed, but I want it to be a substantive in your lives. Most men say that they believe it, but their belief is often nominal and a nominal faith, like nominal wealth, only makes the absence of the reality the more deplorable. In two instances there is clearly no faith in forgiven sin, and the first is in the case of those who have never felt that they are sinful. How can he who does not believe in the existence of sin believe in the forgiveness of it? His whole confession on

that matter belongs to the region of fiction. If sin is not a terrible fact to you, pardon will never be more than a notion.

A second class of persons who do not believe in forgiveness are those who know the guilt of sin but are not yet able to believe in the Lord Jesus for the remission of their transgressions. They need to be admonished as Luther was by the godly old monk. When he was greatly distressed under conviction of his guilt, the aged man said, “Did you not say this morning in the creed, ‘I believe in the forgiveness of sin’?” Luther, like many more, had repeated those words, but had never grasped their meaning. Oh, my dear hearers, do not be theoretical believers. You believe in sin, believe also in its pardon. Let the one be as much a truth as the other. You believe in the punishment of sin in the case of the impenitent, be equally sure of the pardon of sin to believers. You believe in the guilt of your own personal sin, believe also in the power of Jesus at this moment to blot out all your transgressions and lo, they shall vanish as a cloud which is driven before the north wind. Forgiveness in Christ Jesus accepted by faith is now to be enjoyed and with it perfect rest and peace of heart. God grant it to you at this present moment, then shall my theme be marrow and fatness to you.

According to our text, forgiveness of sins is a matter of grace and yet it is connected with the price paid by our Redeemer. We spoke last Sunday morning of a price being paid and here the text says, “In whom we have redemption through His blood.” But the fact of Christ having paid a price and having satisfied justice does not remove the pardon of sin out of the region of pure grace. Because justice is satisfied we are not, therefore, to say that mercy is excluded. I cannot at this time go into the details to explain how the facts stand, but so it is according to the word of revelation, that, albeit the salvation of a sinner is conducted upon principles which are as just as his condemnation, yet at the same time the forgiveness of a sinner is an act of gratuitous favor on the part of God. As the giving of Jesus Christ, by whom justice is satisfied, was an act of free favor on the part of God, so the giving of the pardon which comes through Jesus Christ is in the same manner a matter of absolute grace and by no means of debt or obligation. Do not, therefore, whenever you speak of our Lord’s satisfaction which He made to justice, think that justice has eclipsed mercy. Or on the other hand, whenever you speak of the grace of God in pardoning sin, do not imagine that mercy has blinded the eyes of justice, for it is a part of the Christian faith that in the death of Christ justice shines out full-orbed like the sun at midday, while mercy is glorified after a like fashion. God is just and yet the justifier of him that believes. Where sin abounded, grace does much more abound. Justice is not forgotten, but grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. Transgression, iniquity, and sin are put away by the All-merciful according to the riches of His grace.

Our text speaks of, “the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace,” and from it we learn *the measure of forgiveness, the manner of it, and the manifestations of it*. O for heavenly light while we view this grand truth. Illuminate us, O Spirit of all grace!

I. From the text we learn THE MEASURE OF FORGIVENESS. Hear this, you burdened souls, you self-condemned spirits, you that have shut yourselves out from hope of mercy—hear me earnestly, I pray you, that your souls may live. It may be while I am speaking to you your minds will be quieted and you will find the key which will unlock every door in Doubting Castle and you will be set at liberty from Giant Despair.

Observe, then, that the measure of forgiveness is the riches of God’s grace and this statement leads us to observe that *it is not the character or person of the offender which is the measure of mercy, but the character of the offended One*. Is there not rich consolation in this undoubted fact? The pardon to be hoped for is not to be measured by you and what you are, but by God and what He is. In matters of offense and forgiveness, the rule almost always holds good that pardon becomes likely or unlikely, easy or difficult, not so much according to the offense as according to the character of the person offended. One man will forgive a grievous wrong while another will not overlook a wry word. Take an instance from English history. John had most villainously treated his brother Richard in his absence. Was it likely that when he of the lion’s heart came home, he would pass over his brother’s grievous offense? If you look at John, villain that he was, it was most unlikely that he should be forgiven, but then, if you consider the brave, high-souled Richard, the very flower of chivalry, you expect a generous deed. Base as John was, he was likely to be forgiven because Richard was so free of heart and accordingly pardon was right royally given by the great-hearted monarch. Had John been only half as guilty, if his brother Richard had been like himself he would have made him lay his neck on the block. If John had been Richard and

Richard had been John, no matter how small the offense, there would have been no likelihood of pardon at all. So is it in all matters of transgression and pardon. You must take the offense somewhat into account, it is true, but not one-half as much as the character of the person who has been offended.

Suppose I were asked, at this present time, to reconcile two persons who are at enmity. If the one who evidently had been injured was one of certain brethren around me, whose forgiving spirits I have long relied upon, I should feel my task to be easy, whatever the offense might have been. But I know some others about whom I would say, "I don't know. I am afraid I shall not get on the right side of them. I shall have to approach them very carefully. However small the offense, it will be hard to remove their anger." I know certain persons of old, they are quick-tempered and ready to be aggrieved for small reasons, and they are slow in burning out, having fine memories for an affront. It is hard to get a forgiving word out of such sour spirits. You see, the nature of a pardon materially depends upon the character of the pardoner. Let us establish this fact and then see what light it throws upon the probability of pardon to any of you who are seeking it. With whom are you dealing? You have offended—who is He whom you have offended? Is it one whose anger is quickly awakened? No, the Lord is long-suffering and exceedingly patient. Forty years long was He grieved with one generation and many a time did He pity them and remove His wrath from them. Is He one who is hard to satisfy and not easily persuaded to forgive? No, the choirs of the temple of old chanted as one of His sweetest praises, the oft-repeated words, "His mercy endures forever." Again and again they answered one to another, "His mercy endures forever."

If the pardon were to be according to your character, you would never be pardoned at all. If it were to be measured according to your offense, you would never be forgiven, but since the probability of pardon lies in the character of God, then, O you guilty one, you self-condemned one, take heart and come to your Father's feet and say, "Father, forgive me, for I have sinned." Look into the face of God and see if He is not ready to forgive. Do you tell me that you dare not even think of the face of your offended God? Then I ask you to look into the face of Jesus Christ, for in His loving countenance shines all the brightness of the Father's glory. Is it possible for you to look at the Lord Jesus and doubt His willingness to forgive? He whose eyes wept over a guilty city? He whose hands were weary with incessantly doing good to those who despised Him? He who gave His feet to the cruel nails for His adversaries and who at last poured out the life-floods of His heart for those that mocked Him? He must be willing to forgive! The measure of forgiveness, then, lies in the riches of divine grace and this may encourage the chief of sinners to expect mercy.

Again, since the forgiveness of sins is "according to the riches of His grace," then *it is not according to our conceptions of God's mercy*, but according to that mercy itself and the riches of it. We conceive harsh things of God at times. We measure His corn with our bushel. We feel that He cannot pass by this and that crime, but that in certain points His grace may be vanquished by human wickedness. Our ideas of God's mercy are narrow and we think Him to be altogether such as we are. Listen, then, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are My ways your ways, says the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts." God's love is not to be measured by a mercer's yard, nor His mercy to be weighed in the balances of the merchant. He has riches of grace surpassing all the wealth which the imagination could ascribe to Him whose name is Love. When He gave His dear Son, His other self, that He might bleed and die, He gave us proof that there was no penury of love in the coffers of His heart. "He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" The measure of mercy, then, is not our conception of God, but God as He really is, and who is he that can tell us how large is His love, how wide is His grace, how high is His goodness, how deep is His favor? I would have you come, poor sinner, to God as to a deep abyss into which your sins can be cast and never heard of again. I would have you come to God in Christ as to one who is able with a glance of His eye to make your sin dissolve like snow in the summer's sun and vanish utterly, so that if it is searched for, it shall not be found. Yes, it shall not be, says the Lord. Is there not a fountain in this truth overflowing with comfort to the most cast down one, whose bleeding heart is smarting under the lash of an angry conscience? I think if I had heard this truth plainly stated years ago I would not have remained so long in bondage, but I would have risen to my feet and have run to the Savior and have found peace at once.

If, again, the measure of mercy is, "according to the riches of His grace," then *no limit to pardon can be set by the amount of human sin which can be forgiven*. Sin is no trifle and yet pardon is no impossibility. Nobody can measure the greatness of the guilt of a single sin. It is a world of iniquity. People talk

of little sins, but there are no such things. The least rebellion against God is an intensely great evil. Yet there are degrees of sinning and one offense may be greater than another, and one man's offenses may be far more rank and crying than those of his neighbors. If it be possible that one of my hearers has committed all the grosser sins, has heaped them up, has raked the kennels for them, has committed crimes in a way scarcely to be spoken of, has committed them again and again until the amount of his sins has become well-near incalculable, yet this does not render his forgiveness impossible. If there is one here who has gone to such an extreme of sin that he must set himself apart as being above all ordinary sinners, worthy of a special place in hell, worthy of a red-hot bolt from the right hand of the avenging God, yet pardon may be granted him. Hear me, O my friend, you have not gone beyond the power of God to pardon you, for the measure of His pardon is "according to the riches of His grace." And He does not say that He stops short here or there by reason of excessive vileness on the transgressor's part. "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." There is a sin against the Holy Spirit which shall never be forgiven, but that is unpardonable only for this reason—that where once it is committed the man never seeks forgiveness, nor desires it. That sin kills his conscience, for it is a sin which is unto death and the sinner henceforth goes gaily down to destruction, never seeking forgiveness. If you seek mercy, be you who you may, you shall have it if you will believe in Christ Jesus. If all the sins of all mankind were heaped upon you, if you sought mercy by confession of sin and faith in Christ, you should not be denied, but your sin should be blotted out "according to the riches of His grace."

Another comfortable conclusion follows from this, that *no limit is set to the time in which a man has sinned*, so as to bind the reach of grace by the lapse of years. Our text does not say that there is forgiveness of sins according to such-and-such a time of life, but "according to the riches of His grace." It is a blessed thing to come to God when you are young, a thing to sing of throughout the rest of your existence. Happy day when my young heart first leaped at the sound of the Savior's name! But oh, if grey hairs are covering your head and years have plowed their furrows on your brow, think not the forgiveness of sin to be impossible to you. What though your remaining days are so few that a little child may write them and the last of them will soon flicker away into darkness, yet if you will come and put your trust in Jesus, your transgressions shall vanish and your soul shall be even as a new-born child, for Christ makes all things new. "According to the riches of His grace." This reaches the oldest man, this brings hope of mercy to the most aged woman. I would to God I could speak familiarly with all unconverted persons who are getting into years and tell them not to stand back from Jesus through any fear that the past has sealed their doom, for there is forgiveness and plenteous redemption. Still the gate of mercy stands wide open and if you are the oldest sinner that ever came to Christ, then you will be one of the special wonders of heaven. You will be one that they will gaze upon with astonishment in glory and point you out with pleasure, saying, "Here is the oldest sinner that was born again." I think you are more likely to be received than anybody, "according to the riches of His grace."

Let me draw another inference. If pardon is "according to the riches of His grace," *it is not according to the bitterness of the sorrow which has been felt by the sinner*. There is a notion abroad that we must pass through a period of keen remorse before we can expect to be accepted by God. "Yes," says one, "I do not wonder that such a person was pardoned, since for years he was ready to destroy himself in his despair. He scarcely slept. He forgot to eat bread. He went about wringing his hands in agony." Beware of doting after this fashion. There must be sorrow for sin in every true believer and there will be, but the best form of sorrow for sin generally follows forgiveness and does not precede it. I never hated sin so much as when I knew that God had forgiven me. With all my soul do I sometimes sing to myself the choice lines of Mr. Monsell—

*"My sins, my sins, my Savior!
How sad on You they fall,
Seen through your gentle patience,
I tenfold feel them all.
I know they are forgiven,
But still their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on Thee.
My sins, my sins, my Savior!
Their guilt I never knew
Till, with You, in the desert*

*I near Your passion drew.
Till with You in the garden
I heard Your pleading prayer,
And saw the sweat drops bloody
That told Your sorrow there."*

"But," says one, "I am so afraid that I can never be forgiven." You have no right to entertain such a fear, for that is making God a liar. "But I dare not trust Christ." My hearer, mind what you say on that score, for it is a tender point. You ought not to dare to doubt Christ, but there is no daring in trusting Him. When God sets forth His dear Son to be a propitiation for sin, it is not humility, it is wicked pride that makes anyone say, "I dare not trust Him." Who are you to raise a question about trusting Jesus, the faithful and true? It is black presumption to refuse your confidence to God who cannot lie. The Lord Himself bids you come and trust His Son. Do you refuse His command? Will you sooner perish than do the Lord Jesus the justice to trust Him? "Ah, but surely," says one, "I knew a person who was months and years in distress about his sin." I know such a person now. I know one who was five years an unbelieving seeker, but he was a fool for being so. There was no reason why he should have been in the dark so long, for the sun had risen. His eyes were blindfolded by his own folly. If he had believed in Jesus Christ right off, he might have had the forgiveness of sin at once. Half of that which is put down in biographies as the work of the Spirit is the work of the devil and the result of unbelief. John Bunyan gives a long story in "Grace Abounding," and I am thankful that he does, but he never meant that we were to imitate him in his unbelief and harsh thoughts of God. Those hideous doubts and horrible fears were not the work of the Spirit of God. They were the work of John Bunyan's vivid imagination and the devil together. They had nothing to do with the pardon of his sin except that they hindered him from finding it month after month. Your business, poor guilty sinner, is to believe that mercy is dealt out by God to sinners, not according to their despair and remorse, but "according to the riches of His grace." Where has God commanded us to despair? Does He not command us to believe? Where has He ever commanded remorse? Does He not bid us hope in His mercy? We are to come to Jesus just as we are and trust Him and we shall be forgiven all trespasses in a moment by our loving, waiting Father. "He that believes in Him is justified from all things, from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses." "He that believes in Him has everlasting life."

And so let me say that the measure of God's forgiveness is *not even the strength of a man's faith*. The measure of God's forgiveness is "according to the riches of His grace." You, dear soul, are to come and trust in what Jesus Christ did when He bled away His life for sinners and then your pardon shall be measured out to you, not according to the greatness and strength of your confidence, but according to the immeasurable mercy of the heart of God. You may have faith but as a grain of mustard seed. Your faith may only dare to touch the garment's hem of the great Savior. You may get no further than to say, "He has said, 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out,' and I do come to Him. If I perish, I will perish trusting Him," and yet that faith will save you. I would that your faith were stronger. I believe it will be so before long, but if it is only as the green blade which timidly springs up from the soil in the cold spring and is almost afraid of the biting wind, if there is but life in it, if it lives alone upon Christ Jesus, it will suffice for salvation. Jesus says to the weak believer as well as to the strong saint, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Your sins which are many are all forgiven you if you believe in Jesus, for the measure of your forgiveness is not your faith, nor your tears of repentance, nor your bitter regrets, nor your sin, nor your conception of God's goodness, nor your character, either past or present or future, but the forgiveness which is granted from the Lord "according to the riches of His grace."

I feel half envious of men who can speak with the tongue of eloquence, for this theme deserves better speech than mine and yet, if I had the tongues of angels I could not set forth to you one half of the comfort which is to be found in this charming subject. My bare and unadorned style will not ever match the matchless beauty of the grace which stands before you in its own native loveliness. The God of heaven and earth who hates sin, nevertheless, loves sinners. He has given His dear Son to die for them and upon their accepting His Son as their hope and trust, He passes by their transgression, iniquity, and sin, not according to the feeble measure of their conceptions, but, "according to the riches of His grace." Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill towards men! Thanks be unto God for such amazing grace.

II. In the second place, I am going to spend a little time, as God may help me, in speaking upon THE MANNER OF FORGIVENESS. The manner of forgiveness is “according to the riches of His grace.” Then I see in the mode and manner of forgiveness, first of all, *absolute freeness*, “According to the riches of His free favor,” for that is the meaning of the word, “grace.” God forgives none because of payment made by them in any form. If we could bring Him mountains of gold and silver, they would be nothing worth to Him. If we bring Him tears in rivers or alms in alps, or resolves, vows, and promises in countless numbers, all will amount to nothing as a bribe of grace. Forgiveness, like love, is unpurchasable by us. God’s pardons are absolutely free. He forgives because He chooses to forgive, out of sheer pity to the sinner, out of clear, unmixed compassion, but with no adulteration of anything like bribe or price. Forgiveness is absolutely free. Then why should you not have it? Oh, you who have said, “It will never come to me”—why not to you? “Oh,” you have said, “I am not prepared.” Why should it not come to you though you are unprepared? Is preparedness a sort of price? Since it comes freely, why not to you? “But I have scarcely thought of it. I dropped in here this morning merely to spend an hour”—and why not spend that hour in singing of free grace and pardoning love? Why not let this be the first hour of your true life—the hour in which you begin to live unto God? Pardon is absolutely free, “Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”

“According to the riches of His grace.” This hints a royal ease. When you and I give away money to the poor, we have to pause and see how much is left in our purse. We have to calculate our incomes to see whether we may not be spending too much in charity, but those who have great riches can give and not calculate. Even so, God, when He grants forgiveness, gives it “according to the riches of His grace.” He never has to think whether He will have grace enough left. He will be none the richer if He withholds it, none the poorer if He bestows it. There is a magnificent ease about the benefactions of God. He scatters the largesse of His mercy right and left with unstinted liberality. The Roman conquerors, traversing the Via Sacra in triumph, were accustomed to scatter gold and silver with both hands as they rode along, and the eager crowd gathered up the shower of gifts. Our Lord, when He ascended on high and led captivity captive, scattered gifts among men with royal splendor and munificence. So does God pardon sinners as if it were everyday work with Him. His goodness flashes on all sides as water from a fountain in full play, or as light and heat from the noonday sun. You have not to extract forgiveness from a palm fast closed. God is more pleased to pardon than we are to be pardoned. When the prodigal son laid his head in his father’s bosom and his father kissed him, who had the most joy, think you, the son or the father? I know the prodigal’s heart overflowed with gladness, but then the father’s heart was more capacious and when he said, “This my son was dead and is alive again; was lost and is found,” there was an incalculable depth of delight in the expression. It was the father who called for music and dancing, feasting and merriment. I fear the son was hardly so demonstrative in his delight.

O poor weary seekers, hear you this inspired word and be glad, “He delights in mercy.” Come home. Come home, poor wanderer! It is harder work to you to come home than for your Father to receive you. It is more trouble for you to ask for mercy than for God to give it to you. It is harder work for you to believe that He can save than it is for Him to do it. To Him mercy is pleasant work, the cunning art of His right hand, which He never can forget. Oh, come and receive the mercy which the Lord gives lavishly, according to the wealth of His goodness.

“According to the riches of His grace”—that means *unquestionable fullness*. The man who is forgiven of the Lord is not half forgiven, but altogether absolved. There is a theology which teaches that when a man believes in Jesus Christ he is pardoned up to a point, but in the future he may get into arrears again and if he does not see to it, he may again be accused and summoned before the judgment seat. This is not our theology. We believe in Him who said, “I give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” I believe that when Jesus Christ died for His people, He did not make atonement for half their sins, but for all of them. And in that day when He said, “It is finished,” there was a virtual wiping out of all the score of all His redeemed from the book of God’s remembrance. Hence His salvation is complete and those who have it are altogether delivered from the ruin which sin involves. If you come to Christ He will grant you deep, full, living, substantial pardon, such pardon as will put you among God’s children, such pardon that God will have no back reckonings with you, no calling of you to account at some future time. Such pardon that you shall be as much accepted as if you had never sinned and God shall love you as though your whole life had been spent in His fear. The blood of Jesus makes us whiter than snow and absolute innocence cannot be more

white than that. There shall be no sin left against you to be, in the future, quoted to your dismay. Thus says the Lord, "In those days and in that time, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for and there shall be none: and the sins of Judah and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve." Such a mode of pardon is "according to the riches of His grace."

Again, the text implies *irreversible certainty*. "According to the riches of His grace." For God to pardon and then afterwards to condemn would not be "according to the riches of His grace." If Her Majesty were to issue a free pardon for a criminal and then afterwards hang him, it would be poor work. It would not be according to the riches of her favor certainly, and if you and I get pardon through Jesus Christ, we can no more be lost than God can become poor in love. Believe in Christ Jesus and get a pardon for your transgressions under the sign manual of Jehovah and you are clear forever. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us," and how far is that? It is an infinite distance and from an infinite distance our sins can never be brought back. They are gone. They are blotted out. Drowned like the Egyptians in the Red Sea. Their faces we shall never see again forever. That pardon must be irreversible which is given "according to the riches of His grace."

Once more, it suggests *unfailing renewal*. It is "forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace." It does not mean forgiveness up to a certain point and then if you sin again no more forgiveness, but daily forgiveness for daily sin, a fresh spring rising for fresh thirst. Joseph Hart sings—

*"This fountain from guilt, not only makes pure,
And gives, soon as felt, infallible cure,
But if guilt removed, return and remain,
Its power may be proved again and again."*

We may come to Christ as freely today as we did thirty years ago and find ourselves washed white again. We may come again with all the accumulated wanderings and backslidings of our past years and just believing as we did at first, we shall find our soul again set at its first liberty and admitted into its first joy. God grant us to know all this in our own souls. I wish I could speak as I can sometimes think, or think as the Word of God allows me to think. O blessed thought, that you and I, condemned and lost and ruined by our guilt, should only need to look to Christ on the cross and in a moment should receive pardon, "according to the riches of His grace." All for nothing, all freely given, not given as a sham, but as a reality. Real pardon for real sin, abiding pardon, everlasting pardon, a pardon which retrieves all our loss and adds a charm which unfallen spirits cannot know. O the splendor of God! Where does it flame forth so overpoweringly as in pardoning grace! Is not this the glory of God at its full, that He passes by transgression and remembers not the iniquity of His people?

III. Our last word is to be upon THE MANIFESTATION OF THIS PARDON. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Here we see that *forgiveness of sin comes to us entirely through Jesus Christ our Savior* and if we go to Jesus Christ, fixing our eyes especially upon His atoning sacrifice, we have pardon by virtue of His blood. I see nothing here about any human priest. Christ is Priest enough for us. I see nothing about absolution by man. No, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." It must be a very dangerous thing to be hoping for pardon because you have confessed to a man. Whatever manipulations may have been performed upon his shaven head, it must be a very risky thing to have your salvation depend upon whether or not he was properly ordained by a priest of higher rank. We escape all such perils by going to the fountain-head, even to Christ Himself, the one Mediator between God and man. According to God's command, we trust Jesus and receive pardon, not in word only, but in spirit and in truth. There is no hazard in faith in Jesus, for all those who have tried it will tell you how blessed the result has been in their own cases. Pardon by any other means is impossible, but by Jesus Christ it is certain. Everything else fails, but faith in Christ never fails. Only trust Him. Only trust Him and you are pardoned, pardoned at once through His most precious blood.

The text says, "We have" it and I want to lay stress on that for just a minute. "We have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." We have it. As many as believe in Christ are pardoned. Why, then, should we go to church and say that we are "miserable sinners?" Believers are not miserable sinners. They are full often happy in a sense of full remission. If our sins are blotted out, why do we speak to God as if His anger still remained? Shall we lie to God? We are indeed miserable sinners if we assume a misery which we have no reason to feel. We are miserable sinners for not believing God and pretending that we do. Is

there no difference between a believer and an unbeliever, so that the self-same words will suit both one and the other and they may kneel down side by side and alike call themselves “miserable sinners”? Then what has the Gospel done for believers? What is the use of the sprinkled blood? There is all the difference in the world between a believer and an unbeliever. The unbeliever has the wrath of God abiding on him, but as for the believer, his sin is forgiven him for Christ’s name’s sake and let him know it and declare it. “Am I not, then, daily to confess sin?” Yes, daily as you commit it, but not under the garb of misery, as though you were an unpardoned criminal. Are you not a beloved child? Confess sin with the certainty that you are forgiven and that still the sentence of forgiveness runs on and includes these present and future sins as well as all that are past. You are to humbly plead for continued mercy, but you are not to pray as if you were at enmity with God and miserable under a sense of His wrath. Far better is the spirit which sings, “O God, I will praise You, for though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comfort me.”

That is the way to talk. If you believe, you should speak in that fashion. No longer is the weight and burden of sin lying on your conscience and heart. Your load is lifted. You are forgiven. If your child has been offending you—and you are angry with him, he feels ill at ease in your presence. At last you say, “My boy, it is all gone now. Do not offend again. You are quite forgiven. Come here and let me kiss you.” Does he reply, “Father, I am afraid”? If so, it is evident that he does not understand that you have forgiven him and even if he receives your kiss, but still remains unhappy in your presence, it is clear that he does not believe in you or in the sincerity of your forgiveness. As soon as the light dawns on his mind, “Father has quite put all my fault away,” then he is merry in his play and easy in his conversation with you. Now, be with God like a child at home. Do not act towards Him as if He still frowned upon you. He smiles. Do not pray to Him as if you dreaded Him and thought He would smite you. He cannot smite you. He has smitten Christ instead of you. Your debt has been paid and can never be demanded of you. Christ nailed the receipted bill to His cross in the face of heaven and earth and hell. Eternal justice cannot charge you now with sins which were, once and for all, charged on your great Substitute and borne by Him. God is not unrighteous to first punish Christ and then to punish those for whom Christ died—to take the payment first from Christ and afterwards from you—from the Surety and then from the debtor. No, no. Rest, then, in perfect peace. “Forgiveness according to the riches of His grace” is yours by faith, yours at this moment, and you may know it. You that have believed in Christ ought to know that you are accepted in Christ, for you are so accepted and it is a pity not to have the joy of it.

I want you to feel the love which rises out of pardoned sin. You must love Him who has removed all your iniquities. I want you to feel the zeal which finds fuel in the forgiveness in sin. Bring your alabaster box and pour the ointment upon His head who has forgiven you so freely. There are no workers like pardoned men and women. There are no givers like pardoned men and women. There are no lovers like pardoned men and women. There are no singers like pardoned men and women. There are no saints before the throne of God, no courtiers at the right hand of the eternal Sovereign like those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Come, then, you guilty, and receive forgiveness in Christ! Come, you vilest of the vile, the door is set open for you and a loving heart invites you through these lips. I am full of hope that you will come. You must come. Love will constrain you to believe in my Lord. Oh, may the Holy Spirit compel you *now* to come to the Savior and to be cleansed from all sin. When you have obtained mercy, hasten to tell others of the boundless mercy of the God of love and of the riches of His grace displayed in forgiving you all your trespasses. God bless you for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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