

FORGIVENESS AND FEAR

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A SERMON

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“There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”
Psalm 130:4.

THIS is good news, indeed—the best of news—and they will prize it most who are like the Psalmist was when he wrote these words. And who are they?

First, they are those who are in soul-trouble—“Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord.” Some of you may, perhaps, think this subject is a very commonplace one, but the soul that is in deep spiritual trouble will not think so. Bread is a very commonplace thing, but it is very precious to starving men. Liberty is an everyday enjoyment to us, but it would be a great gift to those who are in slavery. O you who are in the depths of soul-trouble, like shipwrecked mariners who seem to be sinking in the trough of the sea, or being dragged down by a whirlpool—this text will bring sweet music to your ears! “There is forgiveness.” There is forgiveness with God.

This good news will also have a peculiar sweetness to those who have begun to pray. Read the second verse—“Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.” Prayer makes men value spiritual blessings. They are asking for them. They are sincerely seeking them. They are knocking loudly at Mercy’s gate in order to obtain them. And they who are in earnest in their prayers prove that they value the blessing they are seeking and they are delighted to hear that they are likely to secure it. Oh, that it might be said, for the first time, of someone here, “Behold, he prays.” I am sure that such an one will be right glad to listen to even the simplest language that tells out these glad tidings—“There is forgiveness with God.”

And if, to soul-trouble and earnest prayer, there should be added a very deep sense of sin amounting, even, to utter self-condemnation, then I am quite certain that there is no carol that will have sweeter music in it than my text has! Read the third verse and see if you can truly repeat it—“If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” Do you feel that your iniquities condemn you? Are you compelled to plead guilty before God? Well, then, though you cannot claim acquittal on the ground that you have no sins, yet here is the blessed information that there is forgiveness for sinners! Stand in the dock where the guilty ought to stand and let the Judge condemn you. No, spare Him the trouble—condemn yourself and, when you have done so, and have also trusted the great Atonement made by His dear Son, He will say to you, “There is forgiveness. Be of good cheer—your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you.” I do not expect to say anything to delight deaf ears, but I do believe that the simple tidings I have to tell will have great weight with those who are in soul-trouble, with those who have begun to pray—and those who are self-condemned on account of sin.

I am going to take the text thus. First, here is *a most cheering announcement*—“There is forgiveness with You.” Secondly, here is *a most admirable design*—“That You may be feared.”

I. First, here is A MOST CHEERING ANNOUNCEMENT—“There is forgiveness with You.”

This announcement has great force and value because *it is most certainly true*. When a man hears some news which pleases him, he loses that pleasure if he has reason to suspect that it is not true. The first questions you ask, when someone tells you of some good fortune that concerns you, are of this sort, “Are you quite sure it is so? Can you give me good authority for your assertion?”

Well, this news is certainly true, for *it is consistent with God's very Nature*. He is a gracious God. "He delights in mercy." Mercy was the last of His attributes that He was able to reveal. He could be great and good when the world was made, but He could not be merciful until sin had marred His perfect handiwork. There must be an offense committed before there can be mercy displayed towards the offender. Mercy, then, I may say, is God's Benjamin—His last-born, His favored one, the son of His right hand. I never read that He delights in power, or that He delights in justice, but I do read, "He delights in mercy." It is the attribute that is sweetest to Himself to exercise. When He goes forth to punish, as He must, His feet are, as it were, shod with iron—but when He comes to manifest His mercy, He rides, as David says, "upon the wings of the wind." He delights to be gracious and, therefore, I feel sure that there is forgiveness with Him.

We are even more sure that it is so when we remember that *God has given us the best pledge of forgiveness by giving us His dear Son*. He could not be merciful at the expense of His justice, for His Throne is established in righteousness and that righteousness requires that He should by no means spare the guilty. How, then, could He display His Grace and mercy and yet be the just God? He did it thus. The offended One took the nature and the place of the offenders and here, on this earth, Jesus of Nazareth, who was "very God of very God," suffered all that we had brought upon ourselves, that the Law of God might be honored by executing its full penalty and yet that the Free Grace and mighty mercy of God might be equally manifest. If any of you doubt whether there is forgiveness with God, I pray you to stand on Calvary, in imagination, and to look into the wounds of Jesus. Gaze upon His nail-pierced hands and feet, His thorn-crowned brow, and look right into His heart where the soldier's spear was thrust—and blood and water flowed out for the double cleansing of all who trust Him. O Christ of God, it could not be that You should die and yet that sinners cannot be forgiven! It would be a monstrous thing that You should have bled to death and yet that no sinner should be saved by that death! It cannot be—there must be forgiveness—there is forgiveness since Jesus died, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

Moreover, *we have God's promise of forgiveness*, as well as the gift of His Son. His Word says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." It is declared by the Apostle John, under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin. Many other passages in the Bible teach the same glorious Truth—"Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you." Time would fail me to mention all the Lord's promises of forgiveness, they are so many. And remember that it is the God who cannot lie who has given the promises, so you may be sure that they are all true and that there is forgiveness with Him!

We are certain, also, that there is forgiveness, *because there is a Gospel, and the very essence of the Gospel lies in the proclamation of the pardon of sin*. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." But no one can be saved without sin being pardoned—therefore, there is pardon for the sin of everyone who believes and is baptized according to the Gospel command. Christ's ministers may all go home, for their office is useless, if there is no forgiveness of sins! We may shut up all our houses of prayer, for it is a mockery to God and man to keep them open if there is no forgiveness of sins! We may abolish the Mercy Seat, itself, and burn this blessed Bible if there is no forgiveness of sins! What value can there be in the means of Grace—what can be the use or signification of any Gospel at all—if sin is not pardonable? But it can be pardoned! There is forgiveness. If you want evidence in confirmation of that declaration, there are hundreds of us who are prepared to prove that we have been forgiven—and there are hundreds of thousands, now alive, who know that their sins have been pardoned and that they have been absolved from all their guilt for Christ's sake! And there are millions of millions, beyond all count, before yon burning Throne of God who continually praise Him who loved them and washed them from their sins in His own blood!

I bear my own personal testimony that I know there is forgiveness, for I have been forgiven. If it were the proper time to do so, I would ask all here who know that their sins have been forgiven, to stand up. If I did so, some of you would be astonished to see how great an army of men and women in this Tabernacle would declare that they, also, have been saved by Grace, and that they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! Unless we are all de-

ceived—and we are not, for we have the witness of the Spirit of God within us that we are not—and unless all who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished, there is forgiveness with God! This fact should make us very joyous because it is so certain. There is no need to dispute it—I hope none of you will do so. If any of you doubt it, I beg you to come and test it and try it for yourselves and, with the blessing of God, you will say with the Psalmist, “There is forgiveness.”

This fact gathers additional sweetness from another source, namely, that *the declaration is in the present tense*. “There is forgiveness.” When? Now—at this moment there is forgiveness. Possibly you are 80 years of age, but there is forgiveness. Or you may be very young—a little boy or girl, but there is forgiveness for the young as well as for the old! You tell me that you have already rejected many invitations? Yes, but there is forgiveness. It is to be had now, blessed be God, for, “behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Believe right now in Jesus Christ, God’s Son, and you have forgiveness *now*—in a moment! It takes no appreciable period of time for God to forgive sin. Swifter than the lightning flash is the glance from the eye of God that conveys peace and pardon to the soul that trusts in Jesus! You would need time to get a pardon signed and sealed by an earthly monarch, but time is out of the question with the God of Everlasting Love. A sigh, a groan, a genuine confession of sin, a believing glance of the eye to Christ on Calvary—and all is done—your sin has passed away, there is forgiveness and you have received it! Therefore, go and rejoice in it!

You must not forget to notice, however, that *this is a fact which refers to God Himself*—“There is forgiveness *with You*”—and with nobody else. I charge you to spurn, with the utmost indignation, the so-called “absolution” by a so-called “priest,” whether of the Church of England or the Church of Rome! Such absolution as that is not worth the foul breath that utters it! I marvel, sometimes, how any man can ever, apparently, delude himself and try to deceive his sinful fellow creature by daring to say, “I forgive you your sins.” I suppose it is use and habit that makes men do strange things at which an unsophisticated conscience shudders, but, to me, the blasphemer’s coarse oath that makes my blood curdle as I go down the street has not half the iniquity in it of the man who deliberately puts on certain specified vestments, claims to be a priest of the Most High God, and then says to a sinner like himself, “I absolve you.” I think the time has come when all Christians ought, in every way they can, to shake themselves from these abominable priestcraft and lies altogether! The very dress we wear, the very position we occupy in the congregation, should be a protest against this wickedness in the sight of God—for wickedness it is, of the most extreme kind—though I believe the perpetrators of it do not always know what they do, so we may pray, “Father, forgive them and open their blind eyes.”

Go, Sinner, straight to God for pardon, through Jesus Christ! But never, never, go to man! As to confessing your sins to a man—pouring the dirty sewage of your filthy nature into another man’s ear and making that ear the common cesspool of the parish—oh, that is intolerable even to ordinary decency—and much more to the purity which the Grace of God suggests! Go to Jesus, the one Mediator between God and men! Go and kiss His pierced hands and feet, and confess your sin to Him who made the propitiation for it! But go nowhere else, I charge you, at your soul’s peril—lest, like Judas, who first went and confessed to a priest and afterwards went out and hanged himself, you should be driven to despair and a similar awful suicide! O God, as “there is forgiveness with You,” deliver Your poor fallen creatures from the further dreadful degradation of bowing themselves down before sinners like themselves, confessing their sins and seeking pardon where it cannot be found! There is forgiveness, but that forgiveness is only to be obtained from God, through Jesus Christ, His Son.

Notice, next, in the text, *the unlimited character of this forgiveness*—“There is forgiveness with You.” You see, there is no word to limit it—it does not say that there is forgiveness only for a certain number—there is no such restriction as that. Nor does it say that there is forgiveness only for a certain sort of sin—there is no such limit as that. Nor is it said, “There is forgiveness up to a certain point, or forgiveness up to a certain date.” No, but the declaration, “there is forgiveness with You,” stands out in all its glorious fullness and simplicity, with no abridging or qualifying words whatever. Do not, poor Sinner, put a limit where God puts none, but build your hope of pardon and salvation on this declaration and go to God, through Jesus Christ, and you shall find that there is forgiveness for you—even for you, at this very hour! I pray that you may prove it to be so.

Let me also add that *the forgiveness which God gives to a sinner is complete*. He blots out all sin. It is also *sincere*. He really does forgive when He says that He does. It is lasting, too. God does not forgive us today and accuse us again tomorrow. No, let me give you a better word than lasting—God’s forgiveness is *everlasting*. He who is once forgiven is

forgiven to all eternity! Forgiveness is one of the gifts of God that are without change—He never gives it and then regrets that He has done so. If you get forgiveness from God, you have the first link in an endless chain of mercies. You shall become God's child—His beloved. He will teach you, care for you, keep you, sanctify you, bless you, perfect you and, in due time, bring you to Heaven! Oh, the heap of blessedness which lie in this one gracious gift of God—the forgiveness of sins! I wish that, by any power of *mine*, I could induce all of you to seek this forgiveness. No, I retract that expression—I do not wish that any power of mine should do it, lest I should have the honor of it—but I do pray that *God's* power may do it for all of you—that you may be made conscious of sin, believe in Jesus Christ and so find that perfect pardon which God is waiting and willing to give to all who trust His Son!

II. Now I pass on to the second part of our subject which is A MOST ADMIRABLE DESIGN—There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” How does forgiveness cause men to fear God?

First, *it is clear that God's design in proclaiming forgiveness is the opposite of what some men have said and thought.* We have known many who have said, “There is forgiveness, so let us keep on sinning.” Others, not quite so base, have said, “There is forgiveness, so we can have it whenever we please.” Holding this idea, they have trifled with sin and they have delayed to seek forgiveness, drawing—oh, I am ashamed to say it of my fellow men!—drawing the infamous inference that, as God is merciful, they may live in sin as long as they like and then find mercy at the last! I would like any man who has adopted that strangely cruel and wicked way of dealing with God's mercy to look straight at it for a minute. I think that if I had a friend whom I had grieved and I knew that he was ready to forgive me, I would not, therefore, put off the reconciliation and so grieve him still more! I would be very base, indeed, if I acted like that! Or if I were a child and I had vexed my father, but he was very gentle and forgiving, I think that if I were to say, “It does not matter much—father will forgive me whenever I ask him, so I shall not ask him for months, or perhaps years.” If I did talk so, it would be very base on my part. I ask you, Brothers and Sisters, not to talk so and not to act so. It is not fair and just treatment of our gracious God! It is not even worthy of man. Why, if even a beast is treated kindly, it will scarcely return a kick for kindness. Some perverse animals will do that, but most will generally, at length, yield to kindness. And the long-suffering of God ought much more to lead you to repentance and not induce you to continue in your sins.

This design of God is quite contrary to what some other men have said would naturally arise out of the Doctrine of Free and Full Forgiveness. So-called “priests” have said, “If men can have pardon by simply believing in Jesus, they will cast off all restraint, so, let us keep them under our thumb—tell them that there are certain ‘sacraments’ that they must attend and that they must look up to us and then we will get them into Purgatory. And then, when sufficient money is paid to us, we will get them out.” But pardon—free pardon, perfect pardon, pardon given on the spot to simple faith—they tell us that this would tend to demoralize people! Well, that is a subject on which they can speak, for nobody has demoralized people more than so-called “priests” have done! But it is evident that God does not agree with them. It is written here, by the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, “There is forgiveness with You, *that You may be feared,*” so that, instead of destroying any man's fear, or reverence, or religion, the gift of a free pardon is to be the very means of producing such a condition of heart and life! Let us look at this point for a minute or two.

In the first place, *if there were no pardon, it is quite certain that nobody would fear God at all.* There is no forgiveness for the devil and all his legions—and there is not a devil that has any reverence or love or adoration for God. No, they abide in sullen despair. They know that there is no hope for them and, being shut up to despair because their sin is unpardonable, they rage and rave against the God of Heaven! You never read of a devil on his knees in prayer. Whoever heard of a devil saying, “Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications”? And why do the devils not pray like that? Why, because, among other reasons, there is no forgiveness for devils and, therefore, none of the right kind of fear of God! They tremble, I grant you. They have a certain sort of dread and, without pardon, there may be a dread and horror of God. But that is not what our text means, for the fear of God, in Scripture, does not signify *dread*—it signifies true religion, holy reverence and awe—“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” And, unless there is pardon of sin, it is clear that its absence drives the sinners to despair and prevents them from worshipping God.

Again, *if there were no pardon, there would be nobody to fear God,* for, Brothers and Sisters, if God had not had mercy upon us, He would long ago have swept us away! It is mercy—even if it is not *pardon*ing mercy, it is mercy—

which permits us to live! If God had no pardon for any of the whole human race, there would be no necessity for reprieving men at all—the tree of humanity would long since have been cut down as a cumberer of the ground.

Now turn to the positive side of this subject. When the Gospel is faithfully preached and attentively heard, the very hearing of it, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, *breeds faith in the soul*, for “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” But, Brothers, suppose we had no pardon to preach—would there be any faith? Could there be any faith then? Have you ever heard of a man who believed in an unpardoning god? Did anybody ever yet hear of a sinner believing in a god who manifests no mercy and bestows no forgiveness? Only the heathen trust to such gods, which are no gods! The very fact that pardon is proclaimed and carried to the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, produces faith in the soul—and faith is the root and foundation of all true fear of God.

After faith comes *repentance*, or, rather, repentance is faith’s twin brother and is born at the same time. Nobody ever repented until he heard of pardon. Let a man be certain that he cannot be pardoned and you may be quite sure that he will not repent. He may feel remorse. He may regret and lament his sin because of the penalty which follows it, but that gentle softening of the soul which makes us hate sin because it is committed against such a good and gracious God is not possible until, first of all, the heart has believed that there is forgiveness with God. Evangelical repentance is one of the fruits of the Gospel of forgiveness and no other tree can produce it. So, you see, Beloved, that because there is forgiveness, men exercise faith and they also experience repentance—and these two Divine Graces are a very large part of what is meant by the Scriptural term, “the fear of the Lord.”

It is also the good news of pardon that inclines the heart to *prayer*. You would never have heard of a man praying for mercy if there had been no mercy to be obtained! If Jesus had never died and the Gospel had never been sent into the world—if there had been no proclamation of pardon, it would never have been said of Saul of Tarsus, “Behold, he prays.” No, prayer arises in the soul as a result of the telling of the glad tidings that pardon is to be had. And prayer, like faith and repentance, is a large part of “the fear of the Lord.” The man who truly prays is certainly one who fears God.

When a man really receives the pardon of all his sins, he is the man who fears the Lord. This is clearly the case, for pardon breeds *love* in the soul and the more a man is forgiven, the more he loves. Where great sin has been blotted out, there comes to be great love. Well, is not love the very core of the true fear of God? If a man really loves God, has he not discovered the very essence of true religion? But how could he love God if there was no pardon to be had?

Pardon also breeds *obedience*. A man says, “Have I been forgiven? Then I will seek to avoid all sin in the future. Out of love to God I will labor to do that which He bids me do.” And, surely, obedience is a very large part of the fear of God.

And, oftentimes, this forgiving love of God breeds in the soul *deep devotion and intense consecration to Him*. There have lived and there are living now, men and women who have given their whole selves to Jesus, many of whom are laboring for Him even beyond their strength—yes, and many such men and women have died, for His sake, the most cruel deaths, without shrinking back or seeking to escape that terrible cross. Where came such a fear of God as that? Why, it could never have come into their hearts if they had not received the forgiveness of their sins for Christ’s sake, but, having been forgiven, they came to love and fear—not with a servile fear, but with a holy awe—the Blessed One through whose precious blood they have been cleansed! Thus forgiveness of sin is essential to true fear of God—and wherever it is enjoyed, it is the main motive which moves them to fear God and brings them into that blessed condition. Is not that clear to all of you?

I finish my discourse by asking and trying to answer this question—*As there is forgiveness to be had, why should YOU not have it?* I may not be able to point “you” out, though, often, God does direct my finger, or eye, or word, to the very person for whom there is forgiveness. So I ask again—As there is forgiveness to be had, why should *you* not have it? Young man under the gallery, why should you not have it? Young woman down in that area, why should *you* not have it? Suppose you should never get it? Suppose you should die without being forgiven? Oh, that would greatly aggravate all the ordinary pains of death! If you die unpardoned, your doom will be the more terrible because there is forgiveness with God, yet it is of no use to you!

One of my predecessors, Dr. Rippon, had considerable influence with the government of his day. Those were what some foolish people call, “the good old days,” when they used to hang people on a Monday morning, as a regular thing, and take little notice of it. It so happened that one who was related to a former member of this church was condemned to

die. It was believed that he was innocent, so there was much intercession offered on his behalf to the government—and a pardon was granted and signed by King George III. Very Providentially, it happened that one of the members of the church, going to the prison, said to the governor, “I hear that you have eight prisoners to hang tomorrow.” He answered, “I have nine for tomorrow.” “No,” said the other, “there were nine, but one of them has been pardoned.” “I know nothing about that,” said the governor, “I have received no pardon and, unless I do receive one, I shall hang him tomorrow morning.”

The news came to Dr. Rippon, and he took the post chaise [a closed, four-wheeled, horse-drawn carriage, formerly used to transport mail and passengers]—in those times, that was the only way of travelling—and rode down to Windsor. He went to the castle and, by dint of that modesty which is always becoming in a minister of the Gospel, if it is not carried too far, he pushed himself in and demanded to see the king! He managed, at last, to get to the ante-room, next to the one where His Majesty was sleeping. Hearing a noise, the king asked, “What is that?” His attendant answered, “Here is a Dr. Rippon who says he must see Your Majesty.” “Show him in, then,” he said, and Dr. Rippon saw the king in bed and said to him, “Your Majesty gave a pardon to such-and-such a man.” “Yes, I know I did.” “But they have not got it at the prison and the man is going to be hanged in the morning if I do not get back to London in time.” So the king posted the good doctor back with another pardon—and the man was saved!

Suppose he had been hanged? What would his parents have said? Well, they might have said, “There was forgiveness, yet he was hanged.” I think that would have been the bitterest ingredient in their grief—that they had obtained forgiveness for him and yet, after all, that he was hanged. Happily, it was not so, but, Sirs, as there is pardon to be had—if you will not ask for it—as there is pardon to be had by confessing your sin and believing in Jesus, yet you will not seek it—why, then, when you are lost, you will say to yourself, “Oh, what a fool I was! There was forgiveness, but I neglected to seek it! There was forgiveness, but I did not realize that I needed it, so I have perished by my own folly.” I charge you, men and women, to remember that if you are lost, your doom will be far more terrible than that of those who have never heard the Gospel because you have had the way of salvation plainly set before you and I have again exhorted you, as best I can, to walk in it! Oh, how I wish I could exhort you with more earnestness, and in more persuasive words, but, perhaps even then there would be an equal failure! I implore you, do not put eternal life away from you! Do not refuse the pardon that the Lord Jesus Christ presents to all who trust Him! Trust Him, I pray you, trust Him now! And the pardon shall be yours.

“But,” says someone, “I am afraid of what I may do in the future. If I were forgiven now, I am afraid I should again act just as I have done before.” Well, then, take the text as a whole—“There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” If you receive the forgiveness of God, you will have the fear of God put into your heart at the same time, for this is a part of the ancient Covenant—“I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” Poor Sinner, here is a wonder of Grace for you—the past forgiven and the future guaranteed by a wondrous miracle of mercy worked within your heart—making you a new creature in Christ Jesus!

Blessed Spirit, apply this message to the Lord’s own chosen ones and save many precious souls through it, for the Redeemer’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

PSALMS 32; 130.

Psalm 32:1. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* No man knows the blessedness of pardoned sin but the man who has felt the weight of guilt upon his conscience. If you have ever been burdened and crushed under a load of sin, it will be a joy worth more than ten thousand worlds for you to get the burden lifted from your shoulders! “Blessed”—blessed beyond description—“is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”

2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* He has no need to dissemble, for his sin is forgiven. David had tried to tamper with his conscience after his great sin. He invented all sorts of excuses and schemes to try to hide his guilt, but when, at last, he was fully convinced of the awful sinfulness of his sin, and when God had put it away forever—then—when the guilt was gone, the guile went, too.

3, 4. *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* As if he was parched and scorched with inward grief. The agony of his soul kept him from sleeping, prevented him from taking his necessary food and made him seem like a prematurely old man.

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.* O blessed termination of a terrible condition of heart! Confession pulled up the floodgates of his soul and God caused the black stream to flow away and disappear! Friend, are you trying to conceal any sin or to excuse yourself in any wrong course? Then your soul will fret and worry more and more. But make a clean breast of it before God—in the humblest and most honest language you can use—and then you shall receive the Lord’s full and free forgiveness!

6. *For this shall everyone who is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found. Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him.* A man who can pray shall see even the ocean driven back, as Moses did! If you get near to God and stay near to Him, the floods of great waters shall never get near to you.

7. *You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.* The world is full of music to the man to whom God has said, “I forgive you.” Do not rest, dear Friend, till you really know that you are forgiven, for if you do, you will rest short of all true happiness. But if you have sought God’s mercy and had your sin forgiven, you are already at the gates of Heaven!

8. *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go: I will guide you with My eye.* When God forgives, He also sanctifies. When He has brought back the sheep that wandered off into the wrong road, He afterwards leads it in the right track. Notice how the Lord says, “I will guide you with My eye.” A look from the Lord ought to be enough to guide us—we should not need a blow, nor even a word, but be ready to be directed by the very gentlest monition of God’s gracious Spirit.

9. *Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.* Do not be difficult to manage. Be not hard-mouthed. Be ready to be guided by the eye of God. Be not like stubborn beasts that must be held in with bit and bridle—and that often need the whip, too.

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.* Wicked man, that is the portion that is to come to you—and it will surely come to you if you continue in your present evil course. This is the title deed of your future inheritance—do you like the prospect of such a possession as that? “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.”

10, 11. *But he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous, and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.* Let your joy be demonstrative! Do not be ashamed to let others see how happy you are. The Lord has done great things for you—therefore, “be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous, and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.” Be so jubilant that others shall be compelled to glorify God with you and to ask, “May not we also share this great blessing with you?”

Psalm 130:1. *Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O LORD.* “Sinking, sinking, sinking—drowning, dying—hope all but gone, almost everything gone—yet I have cried unto You with much fear and little hope. ‘Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord.’”

2, 3. *Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* Judged by ourselves, on the ground of absolute justice, none of us can hope to stand before His Judgment Seat without being condemned. I trust that we all know and feel that this is true.

4, 5. *But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His word do I hope.* Never yet has any poor soul perished that could use such language as this! It may be a long while before you get the full comfort of all the Lord’s promises, but you are sure to have it, sooner or later, if you can but hope “in His Word.” Well did good John Newton sing—

*“Rejoice, Believer, in the Lord,
Who makes your cause His own!
The hope that’s built upon His Word
Can never be overthrown!”*

6-8. *My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And*

He shall redeem Israel from all her iniquities. Children of God, plead that precious promise—“He shall redeem Israel from all her iniquities.” And never rest till you are fully freed from the bondage of sin, for God will work a perfect work in you and then He will take you Home to be with Him forevermore!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—202, 556, 559.

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