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God's Forgiveness

Ps. ciii, 2, 3rd.

This Sermon was Written

originally as a letter to a cousin asking help for a Sabbath-school class, (Dover N.J., about 1868), & developed into a sermon which was burned in my fire, 1874. The material was partly suggested by an article on God's Forgiveness, in the Amer. Presb. & Theol. Review.

The sermon was rewritten Feb. 24 - Mch. 2/79, under text Psalm xxxii, 1, when that verse was the "golden text" for an International S. S. lesson; & with a new text & pp. 1-6, & the close, is now used anew.

Scripture-reading: Psalm ciii

- Hymns: - 1. O God we praise Thee & confess
 2. My God how wonderful Thou art
 3. Rock of ages cleft for me

Preached

			Dover
			Parkville
			Whippany
			Parcippany?
			New-York, Brick-ch. ch.
			Brauchville
1879	March 2, A.M.		Seranton, "Second"
1883	April 22, Evg	65	New-York, Central ch.
1885	May 31 A.M.	188	Bridgeton, "West"
1889	Nov. 24 "	188	" "

God's Forgiveness

Psalm xxxiii, 1: — Blessed is he
whose transgression is forgiven, whose
sin is covered.

— " —

The projectors of the system of
Sabbath-school lessons which we
are using, have chosen this verse
for the golden text of a study for
next Sabbath, & entitled the theme:
The Joy of Forgiveness. This opens
up to general attention a most
profitable subject of inquiry. In
the busy ways of the world, man

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prone to be forgetting that there sits
above us, ~~overlooking~~ all our One,
~~supreme~~, calm, wise, just, interest-
ed, supreme, overlooking all our af-
fairs, & all the springs & secrets
of our actions, & treasuring up
His observations to state to us
at a future day. ~~That~~ That su-
preme intelligence occupies the place
of ruler over us, & is never forget-
ful nor indifferent to his realm. If
He is pleased with what we do, it
is well; if He is offended, how may
abide the day of His coming!
Blessed be His holy Name that He
has providentially ordered to recall
our knowledge of this, as in the

God's Forgiveness

Psalm ciii, 2-3:

Bless the Lord, O my soul, &
forget not all His benefits,
Who forgiveth all thine iniqui-
ties.....

What an infinite beauty there
is about the simple declara-
tions of God's Book of inspira-
tion! The journey far over
land & sea behold the splen-
dor of human achievement: the

2 Exquisite ~~art~~ of the myriad-
pinnacled Duomo of Milan,
the unrivalled beauty of the Taj
at Agra; the ^{strange} ~~solemn~~ majesty of
the Pyramids, the scientific
~~triumph~~ of the swinging pathway
across our metropolitan river;
but we only behold, & compare,
& explain. Again, we enter
within the gorgeous ~~tangles~~
shines where a profound spi-
rit shows its power, in myste-
rious rituals, and solemn sym-
bols; but again we recognize
the human stamp, and con-
form, or dissent. But when,

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~~draw the attention~~ ~~of the~~
~~open the familiar pages of our~~
~~common Bible, and in the~~
in the modest retirement of
our common life, we open the
well-worn pages of our famil-
iar Bible, ~~to read such words~~
as these of the text, what a vi-
sion of glory rises before us! The
Lord, the Lord God, merciful & gra-
cious, long suffering, & abundant
in goodness & truth; keeping mer-
cy for thousands, forgiving iniquity
& transgression & sin, & that with
no means spare the guilty! (Ex.
xxxiv, 6, 7.) There is no work of
man, not even any discovery

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by man; matter of mystery yet
over a large part of our globe;
the work of God, the nature
of God; a revelation from above,
the one right knowledge above
all!

What the heathen have never
yet been able to find out since
their fathers abandoned it, it is
your privilege, my hearers, to
hear tonight from the Bible of
God: the nature of divine for-
cument, & even somewhat of
its method. Riel was the Pal-
mist — all night he wrote psalms,
who knew this? that God is not
an unappeasable Terror,

"throned on the circle of a pitiless sky;"
 but a God "who forgiveth all
 their iniquities"! There are at
 this moment, doubtless, thousands
 of men who would travel fur-
 ther to hear that, than to see the
 Taj of the Durums & the Pyra-
 mids, — ^{— ah! how base do these} ^{— ah! how base do these} ^{— ah! how base do these}
 things seem, while we think of
 the forgiveness of God! To seek
 the fullness of such Knowledge, men
 have faced all perils; the Nez Per-
 ces Indians in the Territory of Oregon
 once traversed the unknown wastes
 of the great American desert, & riv-
 ers & mountains, that they might
 find whether the Great Spirit has
 love for men!

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What they sought & found, but
which is unknown yet to many
a ~~man~~ tribe; it is ours to know,
& familiar to dwell upon. May
we profit thereby by once
more reviewing the Bible-
revelation, of the manner in
which the great God bore Him-
self to regard & to forgive our
sinful lives.

No page 7.

Go on at old p. 8 (found text
near Ps. xxxü, 1.).

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!"

There is forgiveness with the Lord; & the Psalmist says of it, singularly, "that He may be feared." & of that terrible dread of God, offended, which only the assurance of forgiveness can relieve, were denied such an assurance, the soul of the sinner would sink down into a sullen resentment which would array him & all his life forever against God. But it is a part of the glorious revelation of the Gospel, that God can & will forgive. O precious truth! what earthly science is worth a thought, when an awak-

Every conscience ^{is} crying out:
"Wherewithal shall I come before the
Lord?" Let our text direct us,
today, in this sacred leisure, to
the inquiry of its method, that we
may all learn the joy of him whose
~~sin~~ transgression is forgiven.⁴

— The Lord Jesus ^{X^c}, in answering the request of his disciples to be taught how to pray (Luke xi, 1), bade them pray after this manner: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. vi, 12). This may lead us, while not by any means assuming that our forgiveness is ^{an} any measure of the Divine pardon, yet, to understand, in some sort, how God does forgive.

Suppose that one has offended a good man; one who loved his

offending friend, ⁹ & strives to do in
all respects as he would be done
by; & yet also, offended, cannot
but feel the pain & the insult
~~that the other has offered to him.~~
Now, so long as the offender remains
aloof; so long as he glories in the
wrong he has done, profits by what
ever advantage it may have brought
to him; so long the good man can-
not but continue to feel the
pain, & be sensible of the insult.
And yet, even then, he will not
suffer the sense of pain & insult to
awaken in his heart a disposi-
tion of malice. That, he will smite
down, as in itself unworthy. He
will not desire to revenge himself

upon his late ¹⁰ friend. He will
not cherish the insult. ~~But he~~
~~will feel himself compelled~~ He
will mourn the loss, the self-
alienation, of one whom he loved!
But still, he will feel himself com-
pelled not to act just as tho' he
had not been treated with injustice.
Justice he will not allow in him-
self; but justice within will in-
sist, that some alteration, of some
sort, be visible in the other, before
relations altogether such as before
may be resumed. He will not, as
he cannot truly, profess the same
trusting affection; the same en-
tineness of respect.

But now, suppose the friend be-

comes sensible " of his fault,
& comes, abhorring it, casting
away every advantage from it,
lamenting it, & desiring & asking
to be reinstated in the respect
& affection of the offended one?

If the wrong done has left
no permanent consequences, the
heart of the truly good man will
turn, lovingly, back toward his
late alienated friend. He cares
not so much for the effect of
the past injury, as for his
friend; & now here he has that
friend back again! If the friend
came only desiring the advan-
tages of the old friendship, & not
bewailing his offense from his

heart, then ¹² indeed the
good man would see, not his
former friend, but a trader in
affection, a base fellow—doubly
criminal; first mousing his friend,
& then seeking to steal from him
an undeserved affection! And
how many men do so seek
Eos, & his forgiveness — not for
the sake of his love, but of his
wealth! Eos nor man has for-
give ~~but~~ men for such prayers!

But suppose the offender
comes to the good man, really
& vitriously repentant, but repentant
of an offense ~~which has~~ whose
consequences cannot be undone.
A robbery of goods may be replaced.
An angry retort may be apologized

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for I only the regret remains
that it was ever so. But a
blow may have been struck which
has left a wounded limb for a
lifetime; a deception practised
which has hopelessly ruined a
fortune; or a slander spoken,
which has fled on a thousand
tongues to the uttermost reach of
public scandal. These things cannot
be undone, nor atoned for. How
do the best men forgive them?

It is a great thing, to forgive
them. Most men will not. They
will leave the sad offender
miserably awaiting their most
without, while they, ~~cherish~~ for-
getting the old friendship, cherish

the sense of ¹⁴ ill ~~done them~~
endured, five hundred to mali-
cious thoughts, & multiply their
pain a hundred fold in the
vain ~~desire~~ endeavor to wreak
an inadequate vengeance that
at the best could curse with-
ing & give no peace.

The best of men will try to
forgive. ^{add pp. 14A, 14B.} They will shut determi-
nedly down, all malicious
thoughts, will ~~recall the wrongs~~
recall the alienated friendship
with yearning & recognize, in
the repentant offender, a beloved
friend. But alas! the best that
even so noble a forgiving spir-
it can do is to share them, with

The best men will try to forgive;
& in the exercise of that moral
strength which distinguishes them
above their fellows, they will
forgive even enduring wrongs.

Endowed by timely culture of
heroic traits, the day of mere
trial will be to them the day of
glory; for ~~what~~ like the use of
a mechanic's toughened arm
where the unaccustomed one,
however willing, cannot bear
the strain of a sudden demand
in emergency, so a long, habit-
ual, devout restraint of the
passions & discipline of the

heart will enable a good man,
 even in the dark hour of pain
 & loss, to command his feel-
 ings, to assert his nobility, & to
 forgive one who injures him.
 So the generous creditor forgives
 the man whose folly or sin
 has laid a life-long poverty upon
 himself, & his too-helpful friend.
 So poor Prescott, our American
 historian of Spanish life, forgave
 the classmate whose thoughtless
 blow struck out forever his precious
 eyesight, so essential above all to
 his labor of study & production.

Evon, p. 14, mid

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the self-tortured, ^{repentant} murderer, the
unceasing pain of an irremediable
ill. So poor Prescott forgive the
~~classmate whose~~ thoughtless blunder
struck out forever his precious
so essential to the historian's studies & productions;
eyesight, ~~and~~ do the generous cred-
itor forgive the man whose folly
or sin has laid a life-long bur-
den of poverty on both. The bur-
den, the pain, of the mur-
derer, remains, in these human
forgivings; the joy of forgiveness is
obscured by the bitter memory
which it constantly recalls.

Thus far only, then, can our
forgiving our debtors, at its
best estate, guide us to under-
stand the forgiveness of God.

He has assured us that His
 heart never forgets to yearn
 over us, in all our sins, ~~and~~
~~we may be forgetting Him~~ &
 remember that He made us.
 He has no pleasure in the
 death of the wicked, ~~He has~~
~~no pleasure~~ ~~in an~~ ~~earth~~ (Ezek. xviii,
 23, 32), not willing that any sh.
 perish but that all sh.
 come to repentance (I Tim. ii, 4; II Peter
 iii, 9 — see also Lam. iii, 33). He
 is willing to forgive, for He longs
 to see His dear ones repent of
 their abominable ingratitude &
 sin & return to Him. "How shall
 I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall
~~delivered~~ ~~thee~~, Israel?" He cries by Ho.

sea (xi, 8). '7 But can He
relieve of the painful memories
of sin? can He undo the evil
done?

~~Our text answers this ques-
tion in the affirmative, & in the
most powerful manner; nor does
the individual history which
it recalls, stand alone in Scripture
as a practical illustration of the
power & glory of Jehovah in
His forgiving.~~

~~that we are wronged, by those
in the case which we have
been supposing, when the poor
man is wronged, there is an in-
stinctive demand ^{in his heart} for justice aft-
er the wrong. If he has been wronged~~

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ered, he not only feels him-
self outraged; but society is out-
raged, endangered; the spirit of
slander must be rebuked. And when
when the slanderer has returned to
him saying: "I repent," still there
often remains a fear lest the
offense, even tho' now repented
of; may be repeated. He feels the need
of guarding agt. the innate wickedness
of human nature. And tho' a good
man ~~will~~ may not refrain from
receiving a repentant offender
back to his friendship on this ac-
count, & certainly will not refuse
to entertain kindly feelings again
toward him, still there may be
always a sense of imperfection, of
insecurity, remaining behind.

Behold now the amazing
 wisdom from Divine Friend!
~~God~~ ~~implanted~~ That instinctive
 solicitude for justice, in our hearts,
 is the image of God's nature. He
 has implanted within in a spark
 of the essential & universal love
 for abstract righteousness; & in His
 dealing with men, His forgiveness,
 He will secure it.

God can forgive men their sins,
 because He has secured to the
 law of righteousness, an adequate
 punishment. He has laid on His
 beloved Son our Savior, the iniqui-
 ties of us all; & with His stripes we
 are healed, the chastisement of
 our peace being upon Him. When

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we come, trem-
& fear on acct of our sins agt God;
sensible that, once done, they
cannot be ~~do~~ undone, & feeling
worthy of punishment; it is our
precious privilege to learn, at the
Gospel, that while we were yet
sinners, X^c died for us, that we
might be forgiven, & live! He
has consented to give that satisfac-
tion to justice, by His sufferings
& death, which our own consci-
ences demand from; & the Gospel is
nothing ~~more~~ less than this,
the notification to us from our
Maker, that X^c's sufferings are ac-
cepted in place of ours which we
deserved, & that God is ready & willing
to forgive us.

But - it - may be objected
 this accomplishes a punishment,
 it is true, but it leaves the offender
 just as liable as before to recom-
 mit the offences. How is he to lay
 aside the fear of repeating them?
 or how is God to be secure of
 his gross ingratitude & repetition of
 offence?

Oh! brethren! were we, in our
 ex. life, sensible only that God had
 condoned our past sins, & for
 the time ^{only} until we should sin
 again, ~~only~~ reconciled with us; how
 terrible would be our lot! Better,
 almost, it would seem, to be in-
 sensible to the enormity of our
 sins, than, realizing their enormity,

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an every ~~th~~ must to be
living in constant dread of again
grieving that divine Friend
toward whom our hearts would
be ^{more} doubly endeared!

It is the great glory of the Gospel,
that it brings to light the non-
dram, blessed ~~power~~ of mission
& power of the Holy Spirit. He did
not merely buy our forgiveness, with
His blood; He bought also our
sanctification. ~~"If I do not say"~~

"It is expedient for you," He said
to the Eleven, "that I go away;
... for if I depart, I will send
the Comforter to you." God's plan
of forgiveness soars infinitely above
all human methods, & makes use
of divine means to ~~permitted~~

redeem & wholly change the
 hearts of repentant sinners. He puts
 within the soul a new princi-
 ple; so that it is said to be "born
 again", "a new creature". By His
 almighty power He divests us,
~~from~~ repentant & forgiven, of the
 old love & leaning to sin, & produ-
 ces a complete change in our
 natures. And we, recognizing in
 ourselves after a time this great
 change, — namely, that what we once
 loved to do, we now hate; what we
 once chose, & craved, is now become
 a thing to be feared; what was once
 our ruling disposition, has now be-
 come at the best rather a con-
 queror even tho' still struggling pro-

pensity, — resp. rising this
 change in ourselves, we rejoice in
 the Lord, & joy in the East for
 salvation. We become sensible
 that we are not merely forgiven,
 not merely in favor, not merely well-
 endowed, but that we are saved;
 saved from sin, not merely from
 its consequences; sanctified, made ho-
 ly; new-born in X^c; beginning to
 understand & desire the immortal-
 ity of a pure, holy life, instead of
 the mere possession of earth.

My brethren, to have these eno-
 bles, is a blessed privilege. Bel-
sed is the man whose transgres-
 sion is forgiven & whose sin is
covered.

It is a special grace of our lov-

ing Lord, that ²⁵ gives us living,
pulsating instances of this bles-
sedness. In order to do it, He has to
lay bare the dark secrets of two
lives of His dearest ones, who but
for that revelation might have
been reputed the greatest & grand-
est of men. Yea, He has to conde-
scend to the very lowest depths
of human iniquity, & dwell upon
scenes which it is a pain to
read, as well as, bitterly, to the
sinner saints who have recorded of
themselves.

David, the man of God, the
man after God's own heart, the
sweet psalmist of Israel — the
man who should have been the

holiest & purest of men
 - fell into the worst of sins.
 How bitterly did he bewail it,
 when, like the prodigal, he came
 to himself! How impossible did
 it seem to him that God could
 forgive him, or that he could
 be redeemed! Yet it is he who
 has given us, out of the sanctified
 experiences thro' which the Lord God
 brought him, that precious ^{just, noted,} text, &
 the whole instructive psalm, of
 which it is the first sentence:
 What a sanctified, safe character
 is shown in its breathings! He
 shudders at the thought of con-
 cealment of sin; he cannot forget
 the darkness of God's face in that
 time. The memory of the forgive-

PSALM XXXII.

The benefit of remission of sins.

A Psalm of David, Maschil.

BLESSED *is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*

2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit *there is no guile.*

3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

6 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

7 Thou *art* my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.

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ness being bound up with his
confession, is evidently a lasting
power for his life. He appreci-
ates, as never before, the inestima-
ble value to him, of prayer. He
perceives that God is his only
strength, & he looks up to Him
as confidently as a little child
to its father; & in the fullness of his
holy, God-given confidence, he
shouts for joy, in uprightness of
heart. Who, what, could make
a conscience-stricken sinner
rest thus, but the Almighty
God only?

But some might say: This was
a great sin indeed, but not the
greatest. David did not deny his
God, nor was he an infidel. How can

one be forgiven even of a forgiv-
 ing God, for blasphemy & ineli-
 sion, & how can it be possible that
 which an one can ever be re-
 stored the joy of a free spirit?

Well: — God has put the story of
 Saul of Tarsus into the Bible, to
 encourage even a repentant in-
 fidel to find peace in X^r Jesus.
 Saul was a thoroughly educated Jew,
 a shrewd man of the world too,
 in the best possible condition to
 have perceived & appreciated the
 truth in Jesus X^r. He can hardly
 read the story of St. Stephen's martyr-
 dom without emotion; he saw
 it, & was cool enough even to be
 sitting, unoccupied, while he died,
 without acknowledging the power of

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God. The Adversary of ~~our souls~~ ^{our souls} tempt-
ed him, & he fell into the most
dreadful sins. He not only hated
the doctrine of our blessed Sa-
vior, but compelled men to be-
lieve him; as Dr. May says in his
own words: "not only ~~having~~
committing sin himself, but
having pleasure in ~~those~~ who
did it". How awful a sinner!
But when Saul bowed, repentant,
before the call of the Lord, God
saw to him such a redemption
from both the guilt & the power
of sin, that in his last days he
was able to speak, with an assu-
rance which has been the cumula-
tion of generations of Kings, of the

certainty he ^{so} felt that God
had chosen him to eternal bly-
sedness. (1 Tim. i, 12): "I thank God who

~~Are not such men blessed, in-
deed? Greater by far, is ^{the assurance} ~~the~~ ^{of}
of a forgiving, favoring God, than
any other possible good. Blessed
is he whose transgression is for-
given, whose sin is covered."~~

And Jesus our Lord who hath enabled
me, for that he counted me faithful,
putting me into the ministry who
was before a blasphemer & a perse-
cutor & injurious; "I have fought a
good fight, I have finished my
course, I have kept the faith; hence-
forth there is laid up for me a
crown of ~~glory~~ ^{righteousness}" (1 Tim. iv, 8).

Such, friends, is the forgiveness of
 God. He is not implacable. He is
 not less kind - disposed toward
 you, than the noblest of men. The
 kindheartedness with which men
 forgive wrongs done them, does
 not equal His kindheartedness
 toward you; for He has reason-
 es at command which they
 have not, which He has put into
 order ~~to~~ justify & render the
 rough efficient His love. What
 men might forgive, but could
 not alter, He can alter. He did
 this for Hebron's David. He did

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it for blaspheming, persecuting
Saul; & wherever you stand on
the line of sinful men, from ~~the~~
just Abel to blaspheming Saul,
His love has already noted you, la-
bored for you, made ready to for-
give, to save, to sanctify you. O
will you love Him in return?