



# The Forgiving God

An Address given by George Müller at the Conference of Christians  
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“Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; Who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.”-Psalm ciii. 3-5

We should particularly notice in this Psalm, which I read to you, the stress the Psalmist lays on praise: “Bless the Lord (or Jehovah), O my soul, and all that is within me.” His soul is engaged in the service. All! - the affections of His heart, the powers of His mind, - all! This is what we are to aim at. Not that we do not thank the Lord; - I trust we do, but that it be more of a spiritual character, that more and more the heart be engaged, all that is within be occupied with praising, ador-ing, and magnifying the Lord. Then there is a remarkable addition to this: “Bless His holy name.” This is only what believers can be engaged in. Naturally, we care not about the holiness of God. Naturally, man likes to gratify self, and would have God to be like himself. The attribute of holiness is the last, naturally, we care about. But when we are born again, when we are renewed, when we have spiritual life there is begotten in our hearts a longing after holiness, and we rejoice in the fact that God is a holy Being. Then we have a prospect of one day being like Him. Only a child of God takes a real interest in admiring the holiness of God, and rendering praise to Him for it. Then the Psalmist adds, in the second verse: “Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and forget not all His bene-fits.” We are in danger of forgetting the mercies of God. We are ready to speak about our trials, our difficulties, our bereavements, our Crosses; but are we just as ready to speak of and admire the goodness of God, and His mercies in numberless ways bestowed upon us all the days of our life? This the Psalmist was particularly anxious about. Now to our text:

“Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.” This is the first blessing the Psalmist enumerates. The first mercy of which he especially desired not to be forgetful. Notice particularly that among all the blessings this is the first. And is not this the choicest blessing we have received? Is there one single blessing to be compared to this? What are all business blessings - and they are something to be grateful for - in comparison with the forgiveness of our sins? What are all the peace and quietness in the family - and these, too, are something to be grateful for - compared with the forgiveness of our sins? What is the soundness of the health of the body - for which we should be thankful - in comparison with the forgiveness of our sins? What is the vigour and strength of mind with which we are blessed, in comparison with the forgiveness of our sins? It is as nothing in comparison with it. The Psalmist brings this blessing first because it is the choicest, the chiefest, and the most precious a human being can have.

Let me affectionately ask, - Have we all ob-tained the forgiveness of our sins? That is the point! that is the point! Are we all pardoned sinners? We are all sinners, without exception. Are we all pardoned sinners? Have we all obtained the forgiveness of our sins? That is the point! I have no doubt many hundreds here have; but at the same time I cannot help feeling that there are many who have not. Now this is the momentous point, - To which of the two classes do we belong? Pardoned sinners, - sinners with a load of guilt removed; or unpardoned sinners, unable to look up to God peacefully, calmly, -through the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ? Ask yourselves before God, - To which class do I belong? If I am not pardoned, I am without peace, I cannot look peacefully and calmly for-ward to eternity, and do not know what will be the end of my course. It is a fearful thing to go on day by day unpardoned.

This leads to the question, - How can we obtain the forgiveness of our sins? Simply through laying hold by faith on the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. God, in the riches of His grace, instead of sending us to the place of per-dition, as we deserved, laid all the punishment due to our numberless transgressions on His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Him He sent into the world, that in our room and stead He might work out a righteousness for us in fulfilling the whole law of God; so that poor guilty sinners who trust in Him shall be looked on by God as if they had lived the holy and spotless life of the Lord Jesus Christ. The believing sinner, standing before God in the righteousness of Christ, hiding himself - as he does - in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ wrought out for the poor sinner who trusts in Him, is accepted of Him. In our stead the Lord Jesus Christ bore every particle of the punishment we wicked, guilty sinners ought to have endured. Now God looks to us not to do something to complete the work of salvation, but to accept what He so graciously provides for the sinner in the person of His Son, whose righteousness He accepts for the sinner.

But when the sinner believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, a different life begins; he seeks to please Christ, he seeks to adorn His doctrine, he seeks to walk according to His mind. He does this not to be saved thereby, or to add to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. But having through faith been saved, having obtained forgiveness, and having been accepted in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ wrought out for sinners, he seeks to please God. This is the way to obtain forgiveness, - simply trusting in Jesus, thus be-lieving in Jesus. Whosoever does this obtains forgiveness.

Another important point is the knowledge of our forgiveness. We are not to wait for this knowledge till we die, far less are we to wait for it for the judgment-day. The blessing is to be had now, is to be known now, is something to be enjoyed now. He who is without it cannot be very happy for any length of time. It is this which brings the peace and joy of the Holy Ghost into the heart, - the knowledge that, wicked and guilty as we are, our sins are forgiven. My beloved Christian friends, do we all enjoy the forgiveness of our sins? I trust none say it cannot be had. Assuredly it can. This was the blessing enjoyed by the first Christians. They knew in whom they believed; that in Him they had "redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." They had that statement brought before them concerning the Lord Jesus Christ: "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." So that every poor sinner believing in Jesus obtains the forgiveness of sins. This verily is a blessing to be had now. If any of you are without this blessing, do not give rest to the Lord till you know that your sins are forgiven. It is verily to be had and enjoyed now, for salvation brings with it present blessing. This is one of the blessings connected with our believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, - to obtain the knowledge of forgiveness.

Notice further the statement of the Psalmist,- not, "Who forgiveth some of thine iniquities, but ALL." That is so precious. It is not that five hundred of our sins are forgiven, or five thousand, but every one; so that though they be innumerable, every one is forgiven. Just think - vile, guilty as we are, every sin of every one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is forgiven. Do you enjoy it? I do enjoy the forgiveness of my sins. Not because I have very strong feelings. I do not rest on feelings. I take God at His word. I rest on His word: "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." I believe in Jesus, therefore I have been pardoned. I have had no dream or vision about it. Some people think that unless by some strange vision or other they see Jesus suspended on the cross in some corner of the room they must remain in doubt. I have had no such vision. For fifty years I have never had a single minute's doubt about the forgiveness of my sins. For these years I have been a believer, and all this time the word I have referred to, and on which I rest, has been written in the Book, and by it I know my sins. are forgiven. Every believer who is willing to take God at His word has a right to look

on himself as a pardoned sinner, as a forgiven sinner. This is a blessing, a great blessing, to know that all our sins are forgiven. Suppose now our sins were just 9090, and suppose we had the forgiveness of 9089 - just one single sin unforgiven. What then? This one single sin would bring us to the place of perdition. There is no trifling with sin. We must be perfectly without sin, hiding ourselves in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, and fully pardoned; or we are unclean, and cannot come into His presence. Therefore see the blessedness of this statement of the Psalmist: "Who forgiveth ALL thine iniquities." All gone! Oh, the blessedness of this! Every one gone! Sins of action, sins of word, sins of thought, sins of feeling, sins of desire, sins of purpose, sins of inclination, - all gone, as assuredly as we put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls.

Now comes a point to which I particularly wish to refer, for the instruction of Christians, and especially of young believers. We read, "Who FORGIVETH." This shows that forgiveness is something going on now. Christians may say, Sometimes we have statements in the New Testament as if our sins were all forgiven, and some-times as if we needed to obtain forgiveness; and this passage, "Who forgiveth," seems as if forgiveness were going on. The explanation is this. In the position in which we stand as sinners, naturally being guilty criminals, the moment we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we obtain the forgiveness of all our sins; and in the matter of our salvation, the thing is done once for all. But then we pass out of the old relationship of guilty criminals towards the righteous Judge, into the position of children; and in this relationship of children, though the matter of our salvation is settled, yet in the relation of children, whenever we fail, - as is more or less the case day by day, - and the Holy Ghost makes us conscious of our failure, we have to own before God, in childlike simplicity, that in such a way we have not behaved ourselves, that this thing we have left undone, or that thing we have done improperly. In childlike simplicity we are to make confession before the Lord; then comes in that word: - "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" and there is a necessity of the High-Priestly office of the Lord Jesus Christ. So far as regards the matter of our salvation, when He died He could say, "It is finished;" and He then ascended as the great High Priest, still to point in the sinner's behalf to the efficacy of His blood. It is in this latter sense - in our position of children - that we need to make confession whenever we err or fail, to get the Fatherly forgiveness granted us; and this will be as assuredly as we confess, I trust this will be the explanation to my dear Christian friends.

"Who healeth all thy diseases." This is the next blessing of which the Psalmist desired to be mindful. Here we do not mean to say that the diseases of the body are excluded; for if any one is cured of any bodily disease, it is not by the skill of the doctor, or by the powerful character of the medicine, but by the blessing of God on the skill of the doctor. Still I judge that the especial point referred to here is spiritual disease. You remember what Isaiah said in the beginning of his prophecies: "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." We all know that that did not refer to the bodies of the Israelites, that they were not in that loathsome state as regarded the body, but that the reference was to their spiritual diseases. That is the case with regard to all sinners, at all times, and under all circumstances. If we are pure spiritually, it must come from the Lord. Now we have here particularly to remember that the poor sinner who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ, the moment he does so is unconsciously, as it were, putting himself under the infinitely wise and gracious Physician. That blessed One takes him up and puts him into His own hospital, His own infirmary, and will not let him go till he is perfectly cured. And as you all know, there is no such thing as a discharge out of that hospital or infirmary on account of incurable disease, as is commonly the case among men; but the patient is cared for till he is perfectly free from spiritual disease. The moment we are there the cure is going on. This very meeting is intended by the blessing of Jesus to do

something towards that cure, to help us out of the diseased state. And this is the prospect of the weakest: that as assuredly as he believes in Jesus, as assuredly as he is not wilfully living in sin, so assuredly will he be brought finally into that state in which he will be altogether free from sin. We have been apprehended of God to be conformed to the image of His Son, to be at last altogether like Him, altogether holy; altogether free from spiritual disease. Pride will be gone completely; irritability, covetousness, worldly mindedness, will be all gone. We shall be gentle and lovely, pure and holy, - just like Jesus. Oh the blessed prospect! that Jesus will not give us up till we are altogether free from our spiritual diseases. Then shall this be fulfilled: "Who healeth all thy diseases." Such is His discipline and care, that day by day there shall be done something towards this complete cure, and we should say to ourselves, Have I made some progress today? Am I a little freer from disease today than I was yesterday? Am I something more conformed to Jesus today? At the new year we should say, Have I made more progress during the last year than the previous one? for the will of the Lord regarding us is that we should be like Jesus at the last; and that the will of God only needing to be presented to us, and instantaneously in our inmost souls we should be ready to do it. The Psalmist desired to be grateful to God that He was carrying on this cure.

"Who redeemeth thy life from destruction." This is true in a variety of ways. In regard to natural life, - If God did not watch over us, what would become of us? We are constantly exposed to the loss of our life. This is particularly so in the case of little children. When you look at little children in the neighbourhood of the Tabernacle, by the dozen, and the carts and carriages going by, who does not see that God watches over them. How true as to natural life: "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction." Then when we go a journey, how exposed is our life to danger. And though we go no journey, but lie on our beds, we are continually exposed to the loss of our life. How often a stack of chimneys has fallen, and people have been crushed instantaneously! But there is more in it than this. Our whole life was to be for the glory of God. Now, unless we had believed in Jesus, either as to the Messiah who was to come, or in Him who had come, this life given to us would have been spent in hell. Our life has indeed been redeemed from destruction. But in reference to those who are not yet believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, their life given to them for the glory of Christ, and to be enjoyed throughout eternity, is yet liable to be spent in hell. See to it that your life be redeemed from destruction; for unless you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not fully true yet that your life is redeemed from destruction. Further: we who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who desire to live for Christ, suppose we had been left to ourselves since we believed - -we should have gone back. We owe it to the grace and mercy and faithfulness of God that we are this day on the Lord's side, and that we have not gone back again into the world. Therefore, how deeply important it is to feel grateful that we have been upheld, and have the word, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ," and that He will never leave nor forsake us. How blessed, how glorious this prospect!

"Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies." This was the next mercy for which the Psalmist desired to be especially grateful. We should have a clear understanding of the figure here used. Whenever a figure is employed in the Scriptures we should seek to have a clear understanding of it, so as to be able to know what is the meaning of the spiritual truth couched under it. The figure here is "crowning." We all know with regard to crowning, that not a dozen persons in a country are crowned, nor half a dozen, but that one individual is singled out, on whose head as a mark of honour and power is put the crown. But this individual singled out, taken out from the rest, is placed in this position of honour and power by the crown put on the head. Precisely thus our heavenly Father deals with us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are not a particle better than the vilest. We are just as wicked as the poor prisoners on the Cut, or in the Bridewell, or at Lawford's Gate. We are just as bad in

ourselves as these are, just as bad as the vilest in the city. When we see drunkards or prisoners carried off by the police-officers, we should say, - But for the grace of God I should now be a drunkard. But for the grace of God I should be in the hands of those policemen. And this we never should lose sight of to the last, - that the heart may be filled with love and gratitude to God more and more, and to the Lord Jesus Christ more and more, more and more; for had we been left to ourselves we should have been wallowing in sin, and in a far worse state. And it is this particular point to which the Psalmist refers when he says, "Crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies," - lovingkindness meaning grace. In the Old Testament, coming to the Hebrew, it means grace. It is the grace and mercy of God to which we are indebted. But for the grace and mercy of God we should be like the vilest of the vile. All this we should be mindful of to keep us from high-mindedness and not thinking ourselves better than others, but that the heart may remain filled with love and gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now there is one more mercy remaining for which the Psalmist desired to be grateful.

Precious Lord Jesus Christ, now use the mouth of Thy servant; direct by Thy Spirit Thy poor servant to bring out those very points the beloved disciples especially need to help them. Help Thy servant, and let the Word come, not in word only but in the power of the Holy Ghost, that it shall not be forgotten to the end of the life of these dear disciples here. And Thy servant asks it for Thy dear name's sake.

"Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." Notice the figure again, - the old eagles cast-ing their feathers; and this being done, their strength verily renewed, and they become strong and powerful again. With those advanced in years this was the case. Thus the Psalmist looking on himself, admired what the Lord had done for him. He does not refer to food, though that is included; and for every crumb of bread and drop of water we should be exceedingly grateful, for the body is strong and vigorous through the food given us. The Psalmist meant to say that his mouth was satisfied with good things, like that of the eagle's was, through the instrumentality of good food. But more than this; he referred to spiritual food, through which his spiritual strength was renewed. Now, beloved Christian friends, this is the momentous point. There is no necessity for aged believers to get more and more lifeless and careless and worldly-minded. As the Psalmist got old he did not get very worldly-minded, he did not get lifeless and cold and carnal, but his spiritual strength was renewed. Thus it may be with us. It is a mistake to suppose that for two or three years after conversion we may be in a healthy and lively state; and after we have known the Lord five or ten years, may expect to become cold and dead and formal, and go back again little by little. Far otherwise it may be, far otherwise it ought to be; and if not, we are not living to the praise and glory of God. The Psalmist in his advanced years was more happy in the Lord, more spirit-ually-minded; he had more spiritual power and vigour at the end than he had at the beginning. Oh! my beloved younger brethren and sisters, you have before you, not the prospect of dull and miserable days but of brighter and happier days.

And here I bear, for the honour and glory of God, my own testimony. I am happier now, after being a believer nearly fifty-one years, than I was fifty years ago; happier far than I was forty years ago, than I was thirty years ago, than I was twenty years ago, than I was ten years ago. As the time has gone on, my peace and joy and happiness in the Lord have increased more and more, instead of going more and more. Why do I refer to this? Not to boast, for it is all by the grace of God; but to encourage my younger fellow-believers to expect greater things from the Lord, who delights in giving abundantly. And as you sing sometimes, "More and more, more and more," there is yet more to come. Let us look out

for it, for God delights to give more grace. It is the joy and delight of His heart to give more and more. Why should it not be? Why should we not in the last part of the life have the best things? Has God changed? Far from it! Is the Bible changed? No! we have the same blessed word. Is the power of the Holy Ghost less? Far different from that; nothing of the kind! The Lord Jesus Christ is ever ready to bless. The word we now have is the whole revelation. And our heavenly Father has the same heart toward His children. Therefore there is nothing to hinder our being happier as time goes with us. If we are not happier, what is the reason? There must be a reason, and we should ask ourselves why we are not getting happier and happier.

Now in brotherly love and affection I would give a few hints to my younger fellow-believers as to the way in which to keep up spiritual enjoyment. It is absolutely needful, in order that happiness in the Lord may continue, that the Scriptures be regularly read. These are God's appointed means for the nourishment of the inner man. If the Word of God is neg-lected, you are not making progress, but you are spiritual babes, and remain so. That is not all. You will become spiritual dwarfs! you will become spiritual dwarfs! spiritual dwarfs! In-stead of living to the glory of God you will be living to dishonour Him. You see we are left here after conversion to live for the benefit of the world. Only a few of the children of God are taken to heaven directly after their conver-sion, but they are left to live for awhile here for the glory of God. This cannot be unless we regularly give ourselves to the Word of God, unless we come to it day by day and pray over it. We should consider it, and ponder over it, in reference to our own wants. But especially we should read regularly through the Scriptures, consecutively, and not pick out here and there a chapter. If we do we remain spiritual dwarfs. I tell you so affectionately. For the first four years after my conversion I made no progress, because I neglected the Bible. But when I regularly read on through the whole with refer-ence to my own heart and soul, I directly made progress. Then my peace and joy continued more and more. Now I have been doing this for forty-seven years. I have read through the whole Bible about one hundred times, and I always find it fresh when I begin it again. Thus my peace and joy have increased more and more. Now think of it, you beloved younger brethren and sisters in particular, and say, Let me live to the glory of God. And if you have arrived to middle age, and have neglected thus to read the Word of God, begin it now with earnestness; and if you thus read with prayer and application to your own heart, and seek to practise what you find, your peace and joy will increase more and more, more and more; and it will be said of you, "Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." Thus the prospects of eternity how bright, when we lay hold of the precious Word! May the Lord grant that we may individually be able to do so!

But are there any dear friends here who have not yet obtained forgiveness? If there are, let them now pass sentence on themselves, let them now condemn themselves as guilty sinners, and put their whole trust for salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom alone it is to be obtained.

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