

# SINS FORGIVEN

## A SERMON

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“Nailing it to his cross.” Colossians 2:14

WE last Lord's day morning, as you are aware, many of you at least, went through the former part of this verse; but there is one more department that appeared to me to be of vast importance, and if the Lord should enable me to set it before you scripturally and spiritually, why, then it is sure to do us good; for the Lord said, “Does not my word do good to him that walketh uprightly?” So that when the Lord gives sincerity of heart, and the soul is thus prepared to receive the word of his loving-kindness and mercy, these are the persons unto whom the word of the Lord does present an everlasting good. You recollect we noticed this handwriting to be, in the first place, the old covenant, the Jewish dispensation, some details of which we gave, to show how the Savior blotted it out, and what he put into the place thereof. Secondly, we noticed that the handwriting may mean also the penalties of that covenant; and that as the priest blotted out the curse with bitter waters, so the Savior blotted out the curse by his bitter sufferings.

Now there is one more sense, then, in which we have to deal with this blotting out, namely, the sins of the Lord's people at large; and you will see what force all the preceding clauses have when taken in this sense. We shall this morning take the handwriting to mean that record which God has against us by our sins; then we shall see with what force every clause of this verse applies, that he has blotted out “the handwriting that was against us.” There is nothing that can be used with so much force against us as our sin; “which was contrary to us;” and there is nothing that can be by possibility so contrary to our welfare as sin; “and took it out of the way,” and there is nothing so much in the way, as we daily feel; indeed, as the apostle said, “When I would do good, evil is present with me; I find a law in my members, bringing me into captivity to the law of sin,” and making us feel what poor creatures we are; so that the various evils within us are so much in our way, that when we would think of God, and when we would pray to the Lord, and when we would love the Lord, and when we would cast all our cares upon the Lord, these evils in our nature we feel hinder us, and so we groan, being burdened, and are glad to find that it is the poor and the needy who are to praise his name; we are glad to find that the wretched and the miserable, by faith in Jesus, find acceptance with him. Now the apostle said here of Christ, that he took this handwriting out of the way; and so, to take all this away is indeed a wondrous work. Let whatever there may be against us, why, if sin be taken away, and that is no longer against us, what matter

what there is against us if sin be taken away, its record against us blotted out, and in the place thereof salvation recorded for us? Why, the apostle, in the 8th of the Romans, when he goes on reasoning upon this subject, and shows how God had taken sin away, he then goes on with the courage of a lion to face the various tribulations of which the people of God may be the subjects, and rejoices in that in which we all long to join more triumphantly, that “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us,” because that sin that stood recorded against us is blotted out. “Who,” therefore, seeing that God has blotted out the one and brought in the other, “who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” seeing that the salvation and righteousness of Jesus Christ are the things that he has recorded for his people, which are never to be blotted out. “And contrary to us.” Now, then, if this be taken away, as Watts sings,

“If sin he pardoned, I’m secure,  
Death has no sting beside.”

I shall therefore notice our subject this morning in a fourfold form. First, I shall notice this blotting out of the record of sin against us, being nailed to the cross, I shall notice it *first as a personal concern*. Secondly, *the assurances of the Lord's word that such shall be forgiven*. Third, *I shall lay before you some of the descriptions both of the character and of the nature of the forgiveness*. Fourthly and lastly, “nailing it to his cross.” We must lay as much emphasis as we can upon that pronoun, for it is very significant of many things.

First, then, I notice this matter of the blotting out of sin as a *personal concern*. It is a great thing, friends, to understand sin and its real character. All the difference, I shall not err when I say it, between Cain and Abel lay in this one thing. Cain did not see what sin was in the sight of God; Cain did not see the majesty of God’s holiness; Cain did not see the inflexibility of God’s justice; Cain did not see the infallibility of the divine integrity; he therefore thought that the little there was the matter between him and his Maker could be very simply and easily settled, and so he made light of it; he brought the fruits of the ground, and settled it in a very easy way. And, friends, has it not been so from that day to this? Until the Lord takes a sinner in hand, he thinks this great matter of sin, of his state as a sinner, can be easily settled. Hence the Roman Catholic priests and the Pope, they undertake to settle it, and the Puseyites undertake to settle it, and others undertake to settle the matter by their own doings and by their own works. Now, then, it is an infinite mercy to be delivered from all these, and to see that all the difference between Cain and Abel, between Isaac and Ishmael, between Jacob and Esau, and indeed between the untaught of God and the taught of God in all ages, lies in this great subject. Now Abel did know, therefore we find the force of the things which Cain did not know. And when we see, therefore, that God’s nature is such, and that his counsels and decisions are such, that whatever an infinite God could have done, we have not to do with what he could have done, we have to do with what he has done, and does do, and will do; and we see now the utter, the literal, I cannot give too much emphasis to the thought, the utter, the literal impossibility of a single sin, a sinful thought, a sinful inclination, a sinful word, or a sinful deed escaping his almighty vengeance, for he that offends in one point is guilty of the whole; so that we must be subjected to everlasting ruin, everlasting chains, darkness, and destruction, not from being, but from his presence, and from the glory of his power, unless these our sins are blotted out, taken out of the way, and nailed to his cross. Let us see, then, what the feeling of the man that has this personal concern is; and before I enter into a description of it I would say that it is one of the most, yes, it is the most, capital, that is, essential blessing the Lord bestows, to make us

concerned about our state as sinners. Hence it is said of the Savior as the very first feature, and, indeed, that includes all, that he came, into the world to save sinners, fairly implying, you see there, their lost condition, that he came to seek and to save that which was lost. And now, then, if some of you are saying, "I wonder if the Lord has begun that work in my heart that will lead me ultimately to the realization of the pardon of sin?" let me address myself to you. Many of you are blessed with a sweet assurance and enjoyment of it, and you must therefore bear with me while I pass by you and look to some of the little ones, that hardly know whether they belong to the Lord or not, and are exercised with many doubts and fears as to how matters are really with them. Now I only say this, that the language of every soul born of God is recorded in the Bible; and if you can take up the language, and use it in the same spirit in which it is there used, then, if you have not yet realized mercy, but if it be a personal concern with you, and you shall become so enlightened as to see that this is an infinitely greater matter than you ever thought it was, that it is a matter of infinitely more importance than you once thought it was, as I hope presently more particularly to show. Now what is the language? The language is this: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving-kindness." You will see here, friends, here is nothing pleaded of the creature, "according to your loving-kindness." Lord, as though David should say, for David was well acquainted with Jesus Christ, perhaps no Old Testament prophet has spoken more largely of the sufferings or of the exaltation and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, as though David should say, Lord, I see this loving kindness in the gift of this great High Priest, Melchizedek; I see this loving-kindness in your beloved Son; for in the second Psalm, "The Lord has said unto me," David wrote that, no doubt, "You are my Son, this day have I begotten you." There is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore I read thus of your love, your great and everlasting love to man, demonstrated in the gift of your dear Son, demonstrated in what he is, in his complex person; for he took our nature for that very purpose, that he might make reconciliation for the sins of the people, and he lived, and died, and ascended to glory for that very purpose. "Have mercy upon me according to your loving-kindness, according to the multitude," knowing that his sins were multitudinous, that they were in number like the sands of the sea, or the stars of the skies; he at the same time knew that the mercies of the Lord could outnumber those sins, and therefore, "according to the multitude of your tender mercies blot out my transgressions." And they are blotted out by the death of Christ, nailed to the cross there, as we said of the old covenant and its penalties, there that old covenant and its penalties died; and so by Jesus Christ being nailed to the cross sin was nailed to the cross, and there sin lost its life, there the leviathan died, there the dragon was slain, there sin lost its power ever to condemn one for whom the Redeemer died. "According to the multitude of your tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Now, mind, this prayer must be by faith in Jesus Christ, for when David prayed, it may perhaps seem to you as though David did not refer so especially to Jesus Christ as the way in which he sought the blotting out of his sins; it may seem so to you; but if there be any little ones here this morning that seem a little confused on that matter, you say, David seems to go direct to God, and he says, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving-kindness; according to the multitude of your tender mercies blot out my transgressions;" he does not seem to make any special reference to Jesus Christ, and you may very properly ask me how I get over that seeming difficulty. Now I will help you out of it as easily as possible; I will make it so plain to you that you shall never be able to dispute it again, if you have eyes to see what I am going to say as to the meaning, of it. And it stands in this way, the Old Testament saints, friends, and that will explain to us the apparent direct appeal to God in the abstract, were apparently without a mediator. Now the Old Testament saints never, you have not an instance of it all through the Old Testament, they never called upon God as the God of Adam;

you never read that; you have not an instance of it; but they always called upon God as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob ; therefore they called upon him by the term *Elohim*, “the Sworn One,” or, as some Hebrew scholars maintain it will bear translating, it being a plural word, the Jews have another reason they assign why the word is plural ; but some of our best Hebrew scholars say that it would be right to translate the word *Elohim*, “the Sworn Ones.” Now, then the God of Abraham meant a God who had sworn, and would not repent, that Christ, the antitypical Melchizedek, should be a priest forever. That is one thing they meant by calling upon the God of Abraham. You therefore see that by their calling not upon God as the God of Adam, the God merely of creation, but calling upon God as the God of Abraham, they thereby called upon him by that great High Priest that you read so clearly of in the New Testament. They called upon him also as the God of Isaac. Now he constituted Isaac sovereignly a child of promise. So that you see they called upon him first in the strength of his oath, that Christ should be a priest forever; second, they called upon him in the strength of his promise, for he made Isaac the child of promise, and that promise is yea and amen; third, they called upon him as the God of Jacob, and therefore called upon him in the strength of his love. So that you will see that calling upon God as the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, is the same in substance as calling upon him in the name of Jesus Christ. If you look at the Savior as he appears in the New Testament, you will see how he answers to all these three. Is he not that High Priest that was to come, of whom the Lord swore that he should be a priest forever, and upon which the apostle dilates in the 7th of the Hebrews with so much pleasure? And is he not the God of a yea and amen promise? is he not the God of everlasting love? Now all these are in Christ. When we come in the name of Christ, we come in the strength of his priesthood, and the strength of Jehovah’s immutable oath; we come in the strength of his yea and amen promise; we come in the strength of his love. “Have mercy upon me, O *Elohim!* the Sworn One, according to your loving-kindness,” and they well knew that that loving-kindness would be by the coming Messiah, they well knew that that loving-kindness was after the order of a new covenant, “and according to the multitude of your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.” And where are these tender mercies but in Christ Jesus the Lord? All his mercies are there, for in him it pleased the “Father that all fulness should dwell.” Thus, then, is it a matter with you of personal concern? If so, your sense of guilt, and your fears, will hang about you; you cannot get rid of them until you find Jesus Christ. When you find Jesus Christ in what he has done, having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; and then, in connection with that, find the immutable oath of God; and then, in connection with that, find the eternal and immutable love of God, and here I ought to linger for a moment, because this is an essential matter. Oh, how many in our day are content with an ignorant faith in Christ! “I believe in Christ;” there they stop: they seem to go on to no acquaintance with the real character of his priesthood; they seem to go on to no acquaintance with God’s sacred and immutable oath; and yet the Bible declares that he is willing abundantly to show to the heirs of promise this very immutable counsel, that so many thousands are content to remain ignorant of; and they seem to have no acquaintance with the way in which the promise is yea and amen, nor any delight in the freeness, greatness, eternity, and immutability of his love. Now, then, where real faith is there will be enlightenment of mind; and if you are sincere about your state, you will look on the right hand and on the left; you will look back, you will look forward, you will look up, and you will look everyway, and you shall find that refuge shall fail you, and you see no way in which your sins can be blotted out until you understand what Christ has done, and understand after what order he has done the same. Now, then where there is a personal concern there will be a restlessness. You may be hearing a dead Church minister, I do not say that to mean that ail Church ministers are spiritually dead, because they are not, I say, you

may be hearing a dead Church minister, and go through all the formalities, and wonder how it is you still remain guilty and wretched. You may go among the Wesleyans, and wonder how it is you still remain guilty and wretched; You may get among the low-doctrine people, the halfway Calvinists, and wonder how it is that, while they say so many things that seem suited, they say so many things that you cannot reach; you wonder how it is, till by-and-bye you are forced out to where the publican was, and sum the whole up in a small compass, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Now, my hearer, I leave you to judge what you know of this personal concern, and what you know of every false refuge failing, and what you know of feeling that if ever you see God's face with joy it must be by the Lord Jesus Christ, by what he has done; and that you will not, I say, rest until you understand these things; you will see your ignorance, you will feel your wretchedness, and your prayer will be, "What I see not, do you teach me." And David had such confidence too in the efficacy of the atonement of Christ that he says, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." What a sweet expression is that! Snow, we all know, is the whitest thing in nature. We have seen sometimes, I have, forgive my naming it, I have seen sometimes out in the snow a lady with the whitest dress she could get; I suppose it is not a very general thing for a lady to wear a white dress in snowy weather, but still I have seen it; and at any other time the dress would look very white, indeed very nice, but when brought in contact with the snow it makes it look very sadly indeed. So, it is said of the Savior's raiment that it was so white that no fuller on earth could make it. I think, therefore, it is expressive of David's confidence in, and apprehension of, the blessedness of the cleansing blood of Christ. "I shall be whiter than snow." And then David again prays, "Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities." This, then, is the personal concern. Now, then, how sweetly this accords shall I say, with the mind of God. Was it not the great concern of our God from everlasting, how he should get rid of the sins of the people? Was it not his concern all through the Old Testament to keep before his people of that age how he should get rid of the sins of the people? Was it not the great concern of the Savior in his life, was it not his tremendous work in his death, and is it not the special work now of the Holy Spirit? Is the Holy Spirit unconcerned? No; it is because God is concerned about it that he makes us concerned about the same thing, and makes us apprehend that for which he himself apprehends us. If, therefore, this forgiveness of sin, if this blotting out of sin, if this reconciliation to God, if this be revealed to us as the first of all essentials, as being, what it is, such a solemn matter that it could be settled only by the wondrous life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, if we are brought thus far, we shall not be lost. There was never a sinner thus convinced, and thus enlightened, and thus made concerned, and yet disappointed. No; "he that seeks shall find;" that is, seeking in this order of things, in the right way; "and to him that thus knocks, as a poor sinner, needing mercy, it shall be opened; and he that thus asks, to him it shall be given." Thus, then, friends, if we are a part of that infinitely happy number that shall appear without fault, un-reprovable and un-blamable in his sight, we must not be strangers to this personal concern which I have described.

The second thing I notice is the assurances of forgiveness. I will take it for granted that you are thus concerned about your state, that you are so enlightened as to see that this awful breach between God and man could be made up only by the life and death of Jesus Christ, and that that life must bring in a righteousness that is divine and eternal, and that that death must work out a redemption that is eternal, that that death must establish a salvation that is eternal, a perfection that is eternal, I will suppose that you are got thus far, that you understand it, that you really and sincerely believe it, so that you hold it fast, and feel you could not part with it. Now, then, we have this scripture for

you, “Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man” the man Christ Jesus, wherein the Lord has appeared, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who has thus glorified his Son Jesus, “that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe.” Now, says one, I have not the peace and the pardon yet. But you have the faith that is inseparably connected with it, because if you have the faith, if it is but as a grain of mustard-seed, that faith shall not leave you, you shall continue to believe, and continue to hold fast, and continue to stand firm. “Be it known unto you that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” Now mark, it is through this man, the man Christ Jesus, “and by him all that believe” so you have the faith; now you want two more things, the forgiveness and the justification, “By him all that believe are justified from all things.” If that scripture be true, which it is, that you are by Christ’s righteousness justified from all things, I am sure there is not one of you that is taught of God will say that those all things are a few things; I am reproaching none; I say it to all of you without exception. You will say, I have ten thousand things in which God could never justify me, and in which I cannot justify myself; and by him, by him to be justified, not *in*, but *from*, all things, oh, what a mercy that is! That from which I could not be justified by the law of Moses; if I conformed to the law of Moses, I would then, by that conformity, be justified from the penalties of that temporal covenant, but I could not, by conformity to the law of Moses, be exempted from hell, exempted from judgment, exempted from the damning power of sin, nor from the curse of the law. I could, by conformity to the law of Moses, be justified from the penalties of that law; but there is another law, the law of holiness and justice divine, and it is by Jesus Christ alone that we can be justified from all things. Well, now, I say of myself, if I have never tasted that the Lord is gracious; if I have never rejoiced in pardoning mercy; if I have never, as it were, reveled in his loving-kindness; if I have never stretched my wings, and ranged sweetly in the open firmament of the everlasting covenant; if I have never been thus favored, here I am, with life to feel, light to see, faith to believe, and if I perish, I will perish at Immanuel’s feet; I reject all other ways; and none ever did perish there yet, and none ever will. Oh, how many times, when the enemy has come in and said, Ah, your past experiences, they were not real; you thought it was pardon, you thought it was deliverance, you thought it was salvation, you imagined it was mercy, but you may depend upon it you were deceived. Then I have said, If I have been deceived in the past I will look more carefully to the future; and if I have never received mercy, Lord have mercy upon me now; and if I have never received pardon, Lord seal it home now. So that I bless the Lord the enemy cannot get me away. Hence poor Joshua, when poor Joshua stood before the angel, clothed in filthy garments, Satan no doubt worried Joshua very much, discouraged him, tormented him, reproached and harassed him, reviled him, and said all sorts of things, but he could not get Joshua away. So I say to you, those of you that know the way in which the great matter of sin is settled, still stand fast, for the forgiveness and the justification from all things is unto him that believeth, and if you believe that Christ can, the Lord keep you waiting and looking and if you do not realize it till you come into the very center of Jordan, you shall there; and if you do not realize it in the center of Jordan, you shalt as you enter into the realms of bliss, for faith will bring you there; if you have not the faith of triumph, the faith of peace, and the faith of assurance, yet if you have this faith of adherence, this living faith in Christ, then these blessings are for you, and some day, some happy day, they will be from the eternal shores imported into your possession, and you shall sing with David, that he crowns you with loving kindnesses and tender mercies, that he satisfies your mouth with good things, and that he renews your youth like the eagle’s.

The next scripture I refer to is the 43rd of Isaiah, "I have blotted out your transgressions, and will not remember your sin;" blotted out from the book of remembrance, they are not to be remembered; so that, as we sometimes say, really one hardly knows which is the sweeter of the two, the fact of forgiving mercy or the manner after which it is done. It is done justly, because by the work of Christ, and it is done lovingly, done entirely, it is done so kindly; "I will not remember your sins." What a wonderful scripture is this I not even remember them. And hence. how many scriptures there are which half tempt me at this moment! but I must not be tempted to name them; how many scriptures there are carrying out this idea that the Lord will not remember our sins! how many scriptures there are to show that the people of God ultimately shall not be ashamed! "You shalt not be ashamed." My people "shall never be ashamed." Now sin is our shame; but when I get to heaven, if you were to come to me and say, "Don't you feel ashamed that you are such a sinner?" No, that experience is gone. I was when I was in that world and had sin about me, but I have nothing to be ashamed of now. I had not anything to be ashamed of then in Christ, I had not anything then to be ashamed of in God, nor in the truth, I had something in myself to be ashamed of. But when we arrive there, we shall have nothing in self to be ashamed of,

"Bold shall I stand in that great day."

"I will not remember your sins." And the Lord says in another place, "They shall be as though I had not cast them off." Honor to his dear and blessed name! I am sure of it, friends, that the more we know of our covenant God the more we shall love him. I do not much wonder at seeing the existence of this noble building. really, if I were asked, What has built it? Pardoning mercy. Why have the people done this? Why, because they have loved much; because much has been forgiven; they have therefore loved much. Let the Lord have the glory, and we can say, or you can say, that "the love of Christ constrains us." Let men reproach the truths of the gospel where they may, we, God keeping us, will go on to glory in his mercy, in his salvation, and to rejoice in the delightful truth that he is merciful to our unrighteousness, and that our sins and our iniquities will he remember no more; they are blotted out, gone, and that for ever and ever. My natural temperament would not allow me to serve in a cold religion; I like a living, vital godliness. And when some of our ministers tell us that the living creatures in Ezekiel are angels, some tell us they are one thing, and some another, why, when I go to Ezekiel, I say, There are the living creatures, I am one of them; like lightning, I am one of them; they are fiery, I am one of them; they are in the circles of eternity, I am one of them; they move in the circles of eternity, I am one of them; the Father is there, I am one of them; the Spirit is in the wheels, I am there; the High Priest is there, I am there; the rainbow of the covenant is there, I am there. Here is a living God, a living Priest, a living Spirit, living circles of eternity, living creatures, and they are all alive together; that is what I like, I like it most dearly. Are they not our happiest times when, ere we are aware, our souls make us like the chariots of Ammi-nadib? I hope the Lord, will preserve me with my body as elastic as it is now. I would live without food at all if I could serve God in doing so, God knows I would; I would undergo anything under the heavens to preserve my body in a state that would enable me constantly, with increased delight, to serve the Lord my God. We never, no, never, can do anything unto him as he has done unto us. Cold are our warmest thoughts, and poor our greatest services; yet who can know his name, and see, and feel, and rejoice in the eternal abolition of sin, deliverance from the lowest hell, made heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, and yet crawl along in the ways of the Lord as though his gospel was not worth having? I would rather die ten thousand times over first. Now, again, the Lord says to all that thus believe, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud,"

ah, Lord, thick enough! It is a thick cloud, Lord, an awful cloud, a tempestuous cloud, a deadly cloud, a dreadful cloud, dark as it might be; yet, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins. Return unto me come unto me; where else will you find such mercy? where else will you find such loving-kindness? where else will you fare so well? where else will you be done so well by? Therefore "return unto me, for I have redeemed you." Redeemed me, Lord? Yes, I have bought you from under the law, and from under the curse, and from your sins; you have sold yourselves for nothing, and I have bought you at an infinite price. One moment there: we sold ourselves for nothing; we put no value upon our souls: we sold ourselves for nothing; but God has put an infinite value upon our souls; has redeemed from that into which we have sold them, at an infinite cost; sold under sin,

"Redeemed, by Jesu's blood redeemed."

"Return unto me, I have redeemed you." There is the sweet assurance, then, of this pardoning mercy. First, the personal concern; second, the encouragement, if we have a grain of faith, and have not yet obtained the blessing, the blessing will come; and third, the manner after which it is done, blotted out, and not remembered, and sweetly associated also with fellowship with God, and that eternal redemption which forever sets us free. There is another scripture that comes to the same, 50th of Jeremiah, "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." We imagine something like this: Satan says, There was a long, dark account against that man; if I can among my papers find it I will just bring it into court against him. A long catalogue against that man, and among my papers, and my old books, and so on; for Satan has been book-keeping against the people of God for these six thousand years, and I do not know how many more it will be to the end of the world; so that he must have a good pile of books somewhere by this time; if I can find something against that man I will bring it into court against him. He hunts about, and hunts about, and wonders how in the world it is, cannot find it. Ah, somebody must have put some chemical mixture or something into the ink, and the list has faded away, become obliterated, and I cannot find it; I cannot write a new one, and I cannot find the old one. And so, while the devil is trying and trying to find the faults, the soul gets to heaven, and he sees it is no use: "They shall not be found." Ah, so it shall be ultimately as it was in the days of old, "they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death." It is a sweet feeling, friends, pardoning mercy. Do not be angry with me if I tell you that you need this pardoning mercy every moment. Is not this included in that scripture, "I will water it every moment"? Is it not pardoning mercy that waters the soul, that renews the work, that keeps us alive, that carries us on?