

# SERMON XXVII

## THE BLOOD OF CHRIST ALONE CLEANSETH OUR SINS

Tobias Crisp

*"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid {or, made to meet,} on him the iniquity of us all." {Is.53:6}*

To pass by things formerly delivered, the present subject in hand is, the Lord hath laid our iniquities upon him, he hath singled out Christ above all the world, to lay them on him. The main thing that we are to consider upon this is to declare what ends there may be answerable to such an unparalleled work as this. Of all that ever the Lord did, there was never such a marvellous work as this done by him, as to make Christ the sin of men; it was the greatest work he ever did, and therefore, certainly, hath the greatest ends.

1. He laid our iniquities upon Christ, as I have showed you, that so he might lay help upon one that is mighty.

2. To the end he might satisfy himself to his own content.

3. That he might satisfy Christ's great longings.

4. To show unto the world, especially his own people, the exceeding horrid loathsomeness of sin.

5. That he might commend to his people the unsearchableness of his love. There are other remarkable and useful ends, for which the Lord did this; as, that he might purify and cleanse his own people, in such a manner, that they may be comely and amiable in his eye; that he might take pleasure in them, and show the fondness {if I may so speak} of his love unto them, and make them his very familiar and bosom friends.

I beseech you, consider it well, it is impossible that any creature, and man especially, should have such beauty and comeliness in him, that God should take delight in him, but by laying of their iniquities upon Christ. "He putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?" {Job 15:15,16}

Seeing then there is in man such filthiness, how can God take pleasure in him, whilst he is thus abominable? Now it is by iniquity he is become thus filthy, loathsome, and abominable; till sin, therefore, be taken away, he cannot appear clean and comely; this is further evidenced in Eph.5:25-27. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish;" that is, he gave himself in the room of it, to stand in its place and stead; he gave himself to be sin for it, to be that which the church was before of itself; but what was his end that he drove at in all this? Namely, "to present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

So that the end of Christ's becoming sin, and bearing the sins of men, was to make them, who by nature were filthy, clean and pure, without spot or wrinkle. Had the Lord laid the iniquities of his own people any where but upon Christ alone, his church would still have remained filthy; none else could have so cleansed them, but that still there would have remained some spot; they should not have been completely holy and without blame. Beloved, it is a vain conceit, and smells too much of exalting in the creature, to think that God hath laid the iniquities of his people upon their performances, that they should take them away from them, and wash out the filthiness they are besmeared with, and so make them lovely in God's sight. As for such as are of this opinion, I must tell

them, that it is an accursed sin, and exceeding derogatory to God's glory and redemption by Jesus Christ. Suppose a man hath committed a sin; to get himself cleared, say some, let him go and humble himself, fast, pray, mourn, weep, and repent, and then he shall have a discharge presently; but let me speak freely unto you, all your performances, fastings, prayers, and tears, are never able to present you without spot or wrinkle before God; but when all is done, there will be spots and wrinkles still; there will be some sin lying upon the conscience that hath strength and life in it; nay, if I should say, there will be more spots and wrinkles than there were before, I should but say the truth. Suppose a man's face were full of spots of dirt, and this man should go to a nasty channel to wash his face with dirty water; will his face be cleaner, after he hath so washed? Will it not rather be more dirty than it was? Surely, none can imagine that thereby it will become altogether clean; nay, will it not be made altogether filthy with such filthy water?

But some may be ready to say, why will you call the righteousness of men, their performances, prayers, tears, fastings, and mournings, but channel-water to wash away sins?

I answer, beloved, I may, I will call them so; the prophet Isaiah calls them worse, in Isa.64:6, "but we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." The prophet makes no exception at all; he doth not say that some, but all our righteousnesses; take it in the largest extent, be it what it will, it is no matter what it is, it is no better than a menstruous cloth; the best righteousness, meaning not only the prayers, tears, fastings and performances of wicked men, men that are not renewed and sanctified, are filthy and menstruous things; but our righteousness, the righteousness of the best of us, yea, even of the prophet himself; nay, all our righteousnesses are filthy, and full of the highest kind of filthiness.

Also that which the apostle speaks, Phil.3:6, is full to this purpose, where he saith expressly of himself, "that concerning the righteousness of the law he was blameless;" but mark what follows immediately; "but, {saith he,} what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."

But it may be objected by some, that he here speaks of his blamelessness before his calling, and not of his righteousness after it, and therefore this text serves not the purpose.

But mark what he saith afterwards, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." {vs.8} Where he speaks of the esteem he had of his own righteousness, even after his conversion; he accounted that to be but dung, and desired not to be found in it; for herein he comprehendeth everything, save only the righteousness of God by faith.

Mistake me not, beloved, it is not our tears and humiliation that can fetch out one, even the least stain in the heart of any person; the best tears in the world are but muddy, and full of sinfulness; for if there be no filthiness in your tears, then there is no need of Christ; but if there be filthiness in them, then how can that which is filthy make clean from filthiness?

Beloved, mistake me not, I do not absolutely say, that tears, considered in their own nature, are filthy; but that as they are shed by us, there is so much filthiness in them as to besmear a clean face; and, if so, then certainly they are not able to wash and make clean a dirty one. Suppose thou hast sinned, and also hast sighed and poured out thy soul in tears before the Lord, thereby to be cleansed of thy sin; I ask thee this question, is there not more filthiness added to thy former sin; and is not there need of something to wash away the sinfulness of these tears? But suppose there might be some tears that have not pollution in them, yet in all this thou hast done but thy duty; herein thou deserves nothing at all at God's hands for the taking away of former sins.

But, beloved, there is so much filthiness in the best of tears, that if thou wast clear from the charge of any sin before; if thou hadst done thy duty without making any addition to former sins, yet the very failing in thy tears is enough to undo thee for ever, and to make thee loathsome and hateful in the eyes of God; so far are they from making thee clean from sin; so that if the Lord should have laid iniquity upon performances, to be carried away by them, instead of making the performers clean,

they would have made them but more filthy than they were before. No, no, beloved, it is only "the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, which cleanseth us from all sin." {I Jn.1:7} I say, in the sight of God, that we might be presented clean and spotless before him. The Lord hath set open a fountain for all sin and uncleanness for you to wash in, and be purged from them, even the blood of his Son; and there is no other that can do it.

It was the mistake of Naaman the Syrian, when he thought that the waters of Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, were as useful, and had as much virtue in them to cleanse the leprosy, and take it away, as the waters of Jordan. {II Kings 5:11,12} That which God hath given a cleansing and purifying nature unto, to cleanse a leprous soul from sin, is nothing else but the blood of Christ.

When a man seeth another labouring by fasting, and prayer, and tears, one would think that that should make him clean; but all the tears in the world are not able to do it. God hath not appointed our services and performances, our fasting, prayers, and tears, to make clean the heart, he hath appointed and ordained the waters of the sanctuary, the blood of Christ alone, to do it; and nothing else but that can do it. "Now ye are clean {saith our Saviour to his disciples} through the word which I have spoken unto you." {Jn.15:3} What word was that which he speaking, made them clean? It was this, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." {Is.43:25} This is that which must make a person perfect before the Lord, the blood of Christ believed on. This was that the apostle desired to be found in, namely, Christ, not having his own righteousness upon him; well knowing there was no other way to become clean and accepted of God. In Is.1:16, the Lord proposes this course to his people. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Where note, first, there must be washing made, a making clean, before there can be coming to God; there can be no communion with him until a soul be cleansed; and whereas, many are apt to think their own performances will wash and make them clean, it is but a vain conceit; for {saith God} "I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." {Ez.36:25-27} This is the tenure of the New Covenant, so that there shall be no more any ground of difference, nor breach between you and me. Again, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." {Is.43:25} But how doth he this? Only, as I said before, by the blood of Jesus Christ, as you have it in that observable place, "when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live." "Behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk." {Ez.16:6, 8-10} It is therefore a high presumption for the creature to take that upon himself, which is peculiar to God; he only cleanseth men, and that only by the blood of Christ; it is that which makes them clean and pure in his sight. It is a thing of infinite concern to us that God should lay our iniquity upon Christ, to make us a clean people for himself; for he is of infinite purity, that he cannot endure that person where the least spot of sin is found; he must for ever loath and detest him. It is the mistake of some that God should bear with some, and not with other sins; this is to alter, and to destroy his justice, and so him, himself, to maintain that he bears with the sins of infirmity, small and trivial, but not with scandalous sins. God abhors infirmities, as well as enormities; and if Christ by his blood doth not cleanse a man as well from the one, as the other, they will cause God to spew such a person out of his mouth. David saith, "for thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell

with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity." {Ps.5:4,5} There cannot be any "communion between light and darkness." {II Cor.6:14} If there be darkness in men, there cannot be communion with God, the Father of lights; if there be the least sin in men in his sight, un-discharged, there can be no coming to him, nor thinking of him with comfort, until that be taken away by Christ; and therefore in Hos.14:2, you see what course the church takes, that she may be delightful in the eyes of God, "take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously;" mark it well, there must be a taking away of all iniquity, before there can be a receiving graciously. And then, from this occasion, is offered, what follows, the calves of the lips, that is, the praising of the name of the Lord; "so will we render the calves of our lips." The church doth not take upon herself the business of taking away iniquity, but commits it to the Lord; so that cleansing of the soul from sin, is only his work, and he must take all our iniquities from us, before he delights in us, that we may be received graciously, be dandled upon his knees. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded;" and then "draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." {James 4:8}

There is no coming near to God, while sin is in the hearts and hands of men; there is no drawing nigh of him to us, so long as there is any filthiness upon us. Now beloved, would you be a clean people, that the Lord may delight in to have fellowship, and make his abode with? Know that you can never be made thus clean by your own doings; it is the blood of Christ must do it. It is true indeed, that doth not take away the actual inhabitation, and doing of sin in this life, but it takes away the filthiness of it out of God's sight; so that, though we sin, the filthiness of it is taken away by it from God's eye, that he delights in us. Christ's bearing iniquity carries away all the distastefulness of sin; he hath taken away everything in it, that might occasion discontent between God and us, and by this means God comes to take pleasure in us. In regard of the filthiness of our sin, we should have been far from God, {as we are considered in our natural estate without him,} had not Christ taken and washed it away in his blood. Christ's coming into the world, would have been in vain, if not to take away sinfulness itself. Sin, where it is, is the most loathsome thing to the Lord that can be, and makes the person so; but the coming of Christ into the world, and bearing of sin, carries away all loathsomeness of it in men, and by this means the Lord comes to have pleasure in them; which he could never have done, if there had remained any of the loathsomeness of sin in them.

Now nothing takes it away, but the blood of Christ, that we may see herein the exceeding displeasure of God against it. The truth is, beloved, the breath of man stinks so abominably in the nostrils of God, that he cannot abide him; wherefore our Saviour hath provided so great a quantity of incense that takes away the evil scent of sin, and the Lord's displeasure. It is in this case with him, as it is with a mother sometimes; when she washes the face of her children; if the face of the child be washed, she will kiss it; but if it be dirty, she will not touch it; so if the face of a person be clean washed from sin, the Lord will kiss him; but if not, there is no coming near him. In Mal.4:2, the prophet tells us of the Sun of Righteousness that shall arise with healing in his wings. You know that it is only the sun in the firmament, that makes the air, in which we live, clean and purges it from fogs, and draws up to itself those gross and noxious vapours, and so makes it pure and wholesome for man to take pleasure in living in it. In the night and winter, the air is full of thick mists and gross vapours, which ascend up out of the earth, but when the sun ariseth, it draws them away. Certainly beloved, this is true spiritually of the Sun of Righteousness, and none but he; he exhales the impurity in which men live, and pollute themselves, and so takes away the sins of the world; only Christ can draw away the noxious vapours, the filth of sin, that men may have communion with the Lord, and live graciously and comfortably one with another, and not infect or be noisome to, or offend one another. None but the Sun of Righteousness can draw the corrupt vapours out of our hearts, that God himself may not be offended with us, but come near unto us, and delight in us; and till then, he will not, nor have any fellowship with us. It is said that God knoweth the wicked afar off. {Psalm 138:6} As it is with those that are infected with the plague, men will not come near them, be in the place where they are, or in the air where they breathe; so man being infected with the plague of sin, must be purged, and made clean and pure, that so God may not be offended with him, but may take so much pleasure in him, as to come near unto him, as Christ said to the spouse, "thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in

thee;" mark the fruit of it, "thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck." {Song 4:7-9}

When the people of God are all fair, and without spot, then God falls in love with them, I mean, in the expression of it; and the church saith, "let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." {Song.1:2} All proceeds from hence, the church is all fair, and without spot, having no imperfection nor blemish at all in her; which can only come unto her by the comeliness of her husband.

Now do but consider seriously, and weigh in your thoughts, what a privilege of privileges this is, that iniquity is laid upon Christ. If anything else should have been set about this work, it would have left scatterings, nay all, or more behind; but Christ carries it away clean, "the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world." {Jn.1:29} Christ, as I have often told you, is that scapegoat that carries them away into a land of forgetfulness, insomuch that God himself shall not remember them anymore. "In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve." {Jer.50:20} Christ carries them so away, that they are gone, and no notice taken of them.

God laid our iniquities upon Christ that his people might have strong consolation, and their hearts might not faint, nor be discouraged. Consider this especially, this very day, this fearful time; this is that which must lift up our hearts and heads in this very day of extremity, when people are at their wits end. Whatever becomes of your outward carcasses, yet here is joy unspeakable and glorious, there is peace for you in Christ; this is that to which only is ascribed fulness of joy in scripture. Look into Isaiah 35:10, "and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." I hope the Lord will, in this time of extremity, fasten this truth upon your spirits. I will give you a hint of the consolation that is hidden in this text; it may be, you may not apprehend it at first sight. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return with songs, and with joy upon their heads;" consider what kind of joy it is, "everlasting joy;" joy that shall not fade, nor die; it shall have no end, ebbing and flowing; it may have of itself, but it shall never be abolished, nor vanish away; contrary to all other joys besides. In them there is an interruption, they are not everlasting; no other joys are of continuance; but the ransomed of the Lord shall have everlasting joy, that is, joy without mixture; sorrow there may be, but there shall be no occasion of sorrow any more.

But it may be you will object and say, who are these, and when shall it be? It will be in heaven, it cannot be here upon earth. Nay, but mark the time when the Lord says this joy shall be, "the ransomed of the Lord shall return to Zion with joy." There can be no joy till a man be the ransomed of the Lord. Suppose an inhabitant of this city is taken captive in the Turks gallies, he cannot return home, nor be joyful till he be ransomed, till the money for his ransom be paid down. Now the joy of God's people flows from hence, namely, the ransom that Christ hath paid down for them. You know what a ransom is, it is nothing else but when a person comes and lays down a sum of money to redeem one from under bondage, {under which he that is to be ransomed lives,} and gives full satisfaction to him, by whom he is thus held; and when the payment is made, and satisfaction given, the person is set at liberty. This it is to be ransomed; in this condition we were all of us slaves, and held in bondage under sin, hell, wrath, and the justice of God. Now Christ hath set us at liberty; we are the ransomed of the Lord for whom Christ hath satisfied God, and given him full content. God holds us no longer prisoners, he having borne our sins; and carried them away. Thus then are we discharged by Christ, and redeemed from bondage, and brought unto Zion; and therefore, even now, we may return with songs, and with everlasting joy upon our heads. This Zion is not heaven, but the church of God upon earth; the truth is, as soon as the price is paid, men may begin to have fulness of joy; thereby they come to be discharged of all their debts; they are set at liberty, and then when God hath by his Spirit, given them to believe this, and by faith to see this in particular concerning themselves, then they return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. In Luke 2:10,11, you find the Lord sends an angel from heaven, on purpose, to disconsolate shepherds, upon this admirable message; and "the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Why, what is that, that should be such ground of joy unto them? "For

unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Thus the words run, "a Saviour," what is that? The Holy Ghost expounds it in Matt.1:21, "and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." So then this is glad tidings, when people can hear that Christ is come to save them from their sins; therefore, when our Saviour would cheer the poor man that came to him to be cured, though he did not come for, nor expect such glad tidings from him, yet Christ well knew what would most raise his heart, and therefore he applies that, as the best of cheer of all unto him; he saith not, "Be of good cheer," for I will heal the infirmities of thy body; but "thy sins are forgiven thee." {Matt.9:2} And indeed, this is that, that joys the hearts of the people of God.

So, Acts 13:38, 39. "Be it known unto you, {saith the apostle,} men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Well, what was the issue and fruit of all this? Mark it well, beloved; though the Jews grudged at this doctrine; and opposed it with might, yet in verse 48, you shall see how welcome this message was to the Gentiles. "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

You see the believing Gentiles received these tidings with gladness, and were filled with joy at the hearing of this doctrine; namely, the discharge of their sins, that they were not imputed unto them, but fully forgiven them.

Now brethren, look upon the present time, you may see what sadness fills the hearts and faces of men, even of God's own people; their lives are this day, as it were, in their hands; they are ready to sink, their spirits are ready to fail them; they look every hour when they shall be cut off by the sword; what bitterness is this wherein they are! What now will stay up? What, the hope that our lives and estates shall be spared? No, there is no certainty of that; but here is that which will do it, when all is lost and gone, and the worst is come, Christ hath all mine iniquity laid upon him; here is that which will fill your hearts with joy when other joys forsake you. God, in Christ, is become my friend; he is at peace with me, reconciled, and will be good unto me; and still you shalt have ground to say, "however it be, yet God is good to Israel, to them that are of a pure heart;" that is, have their hearts purified by the blood of Christ. You shall never have joy of heart and settledness of spirit, {especially in times of extremity,} but in this one truth, that God himself is reconciled unto you, that your sins are all blotted out, that you are the beloved of the Lord, that he hath not one sin to charge upon you, and that he will not deal in wrath with you. There is no bitterness of spirit, nor cause of any, in the worst afflictions and calamities that can come upon a person, if sin be taken away.

It is sin and only sin that makes affliction bitter and heavy to men; take away sin, and afflictions are flea-bitings; you will rejoice in them, trample on them, see the love of God embracing you in them, and carrying you through them. Look upon the apostles and disciples of our Lord, and consider how they underwent their afflictions and the carriage of their spirits in them; when Paul and Silas were whipped and covered with their own blood, and ready to perish with their stripes, yet they were filled with joy, and sang in prison. Why so; {may some say;} surely the reason was this, they saw the Lord, he smiled upon them, and embraced them in his arms, their sins being taken away from between God and them; and hence was their joy, else their afflictions would have sunk and swallowed them up.

O; beloved, come life, come death, if Christ be yours, if your iniquities be laid upon him, it is well with you; both life and death will be gain unto you; even death itself shall turn to your advantage. Observe the resolution of Paul, who being assured that Christ was his, "to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." {Phil.1:21} Neither life nor death could come amiss to him; it is no matter which, for whether I live or die, I am the Lord's; therefore, if death come, it shall be welcome, and if life be still spared, it shall be welcome. Upon this consideration, that Christ was his, in another place he saith, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him;" and therefore, he desired to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, that so he might have the full fruition of him, and enjoy the nearest communion with him. What is the reason that children

tremble to come into the presence of their father, but because they are afraid to be beaten, thinking their father is displeased with them? If they knew that he were satisfied for all the faults that they had done, they would come cheerfully into his presence; even so a person will never come cheerfully into the presence of the Lord, till he knows he is pleased with him, and that his iniquities {that make variance} are taken away, and laid upon Christ. This is joy unspeakable and glorious!

The Lord hath laid the iniquities of his people upon Christ, that they may be able to serve the Lord more sincerely and freely, and more uninterruptedly and cheerfully.

{1} The Lord laid our iniquities upon Christ, that we might serve him with more sincerity; men commonly think the consideration of this to be the highway to make men careless in serving God; but there is no better way to draw men's spirits forth unto upright, sincere, and single-hearted service, than this. You know this principle is grounded in the heart of all men, that charity begins at home; every man seeks to serve himself first, and then, at leisure, he will serve another. As long as you apprehend your own turn is not yet served, your care shall be to serve yourselves; there will be no service done to God; he shall have none of you, but so far as therein you may serve yourselves, God must wait till your own turns be served. For example, suppose that you fast, pray, and mourn, or do any other religious service; if you apprehend your own turns are not yet served, there will be altogether a selfishness in the performance of these duties; selfish ends and motives shall be the loadstones, and they shall draw up your spirits in them. When you labour by fasting, prayer, and seeking the Lord to prevail with him to take away his displeasure and wrath, and such judgments that are upon us, or hang over our heads, and to procure such good unto us, do you serve God or no? Do you not serve yourselves? Nay, you serve not God, but yourselves; when only yourselves put you upon the performance of the duty.

But you will say, my sins trouble me, I must fast and pray, to get them pardoned; except I repent, mourn, and humble myself I shall die in them; therefore I must repent, mourn, and do this and that to put away sins, "before I am gone from hence, and be no more seen;" that I may have my discharge from them.

I answer; beloved, it is true, that as long as men think that their sins are upon themselves, they cannot be at rest, but still the consideration of them must needs draw them out on these services, till some way be sought out to clear themselves of them. Where is now that sincerity and singleness of heart that a man ought to have, in the service of the Lord? If he could but once be resolved that all this business is already dispatched to his hands, then all this selfishness would quickly die; if he could but once receive this, that Christ hath so disposed of all his sins, and made an end of all transgression, that there need not be tears, prayers, fastings, and mournings to cleanse it away; then the doing of duties, for this end, would quickly end; then your end in them would be the glorifying of God; you would serve him sincerely, and see that your prayers, tears, fastings, and performances, were not appointed to rob him of his service, by serving yourselves, and Christ of his glory, by putting your services in the place of his, which only taketh away sin; but only to glorify God, and to show forth his goodness, from whom we expect these things, and to make use of them only as ordinances wherein the Lord hath promised to manifest himself to us; but while men eye themselves, and their own good in duties, they are their own servants; they cannot be said to serve God in them; but, when a man knoweth that the Lord hath perfectly saved him from his sins, then he is for God's glory, and his eye is upon that in all he doth; then he is the Lord's servant, and not his own, as saith the apostle, "for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." {Rom.14:8}

If, in duties, there be self-ends, you only live to yourselves, not to God at all in them. Now, you would never live to yourselves, if you did but see all finished by Christ, that there can be nothing added to what he hath done for your perfect good and happiness; you would then mind nothing else, but to set forth the glory of that grace that hath so freely saved you; and show unto the world that you are the servants of the Lord, and at his beck, and that you are directly for him in all you do; it is only this that puts men upon sincere service.

{2} The Lord laid our iniquities upon Christ that we might serve him more uninterruptedly. What is it which causeth men to make so many stops in performance of duties? One while the soul is upon the wing in it, another while it is like a stock. The ground is this; one while he is persuaded his iniquities are forgiven him, and this makes him run with enthusiasm; another time he is in fears and doubts, his spirit is troubled; he fears his sins lie still upon him, and that he shall be called to account for them; he looks upon God as wrathful and displeased with him for them; now he is bound up, he cannot stir one foot; but because he conceives that God frowns upon him, he dares not come near him. Now beloved, what an interruption is here in duty, while it goes thus with him? But if he had this assurance, that all his iniquities are laid upon Christ, and he discharged for ever, he would go on without let or stop, then though sin be committed through infirmity, yet if he be once persuaded, that God will not charge it; and though he be under afflictions, yet he fears no punishment; nor can affliction come upon him, as the desert of sin, seeing he knows it was all laid upon Christ; then he goeth on constantly and cheerfully; for he that hath Christ once, hath him as a buckler to bear off indignation; though he commits such and such a sin, he lies upon Christ as such, that can defend off every blow, that none of this sin, or the desert of it, wounds and hurts him; so that he shall be as able to work, in duties, as ever he was before sin was committed; he is strong and active, and ready to all that God calls him unto, as before. So far as he can find every stroke of God, for his sins, did light upon Christ, so far he shall be fresh, run, and make haste; and hence it comes to pass, that "they that trust in the Lord, shall mount upon wings like eagles, shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint;" because there is nothing, now remains to tire and weary them, to wound and take off their spirits and their strength.

{3} The consideration of iniquity being laid upon Christ, enlarges the spirit in service; he that hath the strength of the Lord to serve by, can serve without fear; he is more able, and doth things far better than he that hath his own strength only. If Christ is yours, God is yours, all things are yours, and his power is yours, engaged to your help. Oh; then, what a mighty strength must you have, in comparison of those that walk in their own strength, and do duty by it! But if you be not resolved that your iniquities are laid upon Christ, you cannot be resolved that he is yours; and then you cannot go forth in his strength; and then how weak must you needs be in all your services, when you have but your own strength to carry you on! No Spirit, God, nor Christ, to assist you! But when you have him, his Spirit, and power, how mightily shall your spirits be eased in prayer, and in all duties of religion! How strong are you in the Lord, and the power of his might, to resist the devil and all temptations! But, if the strength of Christ be wanting, alas; how exceeding weak are we to contend against such mighty enemies that we are continually exercised with! How unable to resist the least temptation! Now, if your iniquities be laid upon Christ, then his strength is yours, and, through that interest you have in him, you may boldly and cheerfully go on in the power of his might.

The Lord laid our iniquities upon Christ that at the appointed time of the Father, the people of the Lord might enjoy the promised inheritance. Beloved, there is no soul under heaven, shall see it; there is no entrance into the heavenly Jerusalem, the inheritance of the saints in light, but by laying our iniquities upon Christ; this is a certain truth; heaven and earth shall pass away, before it shall be nullified; that "no unclean thing shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." {Rev.21:27}

Beloved, you must not expect to live a moment in this world, wherein some sin will not be committed by you; and what can take it away, but it being laid upon Christ? Let me tell you, that if God had not laid the iniquities of men upon Christ, never a soul had entered into heaven; none could have confidence at death, that they should enter there; for there is no refuge to fly to, no hope of drawing near to the everlasting kingdom, till the Lord Jesus Christ cleanse you thoroughly from all sin and filthiness, and so you appear before God perfect in holiness; it is his white raiment that makes persons worthy to walk with him in light; wherefore the Lord counsels the church of Laodicea, to buy of him white raiment, that her nakedness might not appear in the sight of God himself. It is true, indeed, the Lord is pleased to make mention of the good things that his people have done, at the day of judgment, "then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungred, and ye

gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink, &c." {Matt.25:34, 35} But observe, not any of all this gives entrance into everlasting glory, no, not in any one clause; though he makes mention of what good things the people of God did here, yet this kingdom is not attributed unto that good, no, not so much as prepared for it; for before you had done any good at all, the kingdom was prepared, not for the good you should do, but of the Father's good will and pleasure, from the beginning; before ever thou wast born, and couldest do anything, he provided a mansion for thee, only out of mere grace and loving kindness; now, beloved, all this considered should stir you up to cry out as the martyr did, "None but Christ, none but Christ."

Oh, forget everything that seems worthy in you, or done by you; and let all your triumphing and glorying be in the free grace of God, in Christ, and look upon yourselves only in that and all things coming to you, receive as flowing from that fountain only; and if you have more ability than others in doing, let it not come into your thoughts as an inducement to think better of yourselves, as if you were more accepted of God, or pleasing in his sight. Are you sinful, in respect of the prevalency of corruptions? Are the temptations of Satan mighty? Think not that you are worse or less than others; for iniquity shall not part Christ and thee, if thou be once joined to him. Be not discouraged, Christ is more ready to receive thee, than thou art to fly to him; come to him, therefore, and cast your conditions upon him; for the greatest of sinners, usually, are the persons that partake of the greatest mercies; publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven, while the Zealots and Pharisees are shut out. If you once close with the Lord, in the freeness of his grace, and cast your souls upon this rock of your salvation, the Lord Christ, you are past all danger; venture thy soul therefore upon him; he himself shall miscarry, when thy soul shall miscarry that is committed unto him.