

SERMON XI

GOD REMEMBERS NOT OUR SINS

Tobias Crisp

*"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake,
and will not remember thy sins." {Is.43:25}*

To have an evangelist, a day-star, to be visited in lightsome times, though it be a matter of great grace; yet is it not cause of so great admiration, as to have the sun shining in a dark night is matter of wonder; and yet there was a spiritual eye among the Jews, that was able to see {in their darkest days} a glorious sun in their firmament; this eye was this evangelist Isaiah. I rather call him an evangelist than a prophet for his bringing glad tidings of good things, tidings of exceeding great joy. The Apostle Paul himself, the great doctor of the Gentiles, and the main exalter of Christ and the grace of God in him, goes not beyond this evangelist; speaking so fully, clearly, and sweetly of the freeness of God's love, even while persons are in the lowest and worst of conditions.

Besides all other expressions of his, this very text that I have read unto you is enough to make him an evangelist indeed; for here he evangelizes, or preaches the gladdest tidings that ever could come to the sons of men; for herein he proclaims liberty to the captives, and binds up the broken-hearted. This very expression of his is one of the greatest causes that "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;" as the same prophet hath it in chapter 35:10.

Now that we may see more fully the sweetness of marrow and of wine well refined on the lees, contained in this text; it will be of very great importance and concern to understand clearly and fully to whom, or of whom, the Lord by this prophet speaks these words. It is true, a pardon is a welcome thing to a condemned malefactor; but a pardon for this man, when another that goes to execution hath none, is so far from being a comfort to him that suffers, that it doth but augment his misery and torment.

If the Lord for his own sake blots out the iniquity of such and such, and not the iniquity of others, it is but the augmentation of the misery of that person that hath no share in it. In verse 4, the Lord mentions Jacob indeed, but, in the sequel, he makes it appear, that he intends not Jacob according to the flesh, but after the spirit; for this Jacob and Israel are that company and assembly of people, that are brought together from the ends of the earth; from the east, west, north, and south, as we have it expressed in verse 5, 6. But, beloved, that you may see plainly who this Jacob and Israel are, observe but one expression in verse 7, "even every one that is called by my name; for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." "Thou that are called by my name," saith the Lord; these are the persons whose iniquities the Lord blots out; what name is that? The name of "the Lord thy Saviour," verse 11. Now there is no people in the world, nor the Jews themselves; that had so plain a name of their Saviour upon them, as we have that are Gentiles, that are Christians; we have the true name of Christ a Saviour upon us, Christians from Christ.

And least people should think, that when the Lord proclaims this grace in the text, of blotting out iniquity and transgression, he looks for some qualifications and dispositions that may be amiable to win so much grace from him; do but observe, I pray, {and it is very observable indeed} the two or three verses before my text; and you shall see plainly how careful the Lord is to take off all such conceits from men, all imagination of any such expectation. There must be first graciousness, they must be first well qualified, and then their iniquities shall be blotted out, so might some think; mark

how the Lord takes it off; for in these two verses, he draws to the very life the qualifications and conditions of those whose iniquities he blots out; mark them well, "but thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities;" and then upon these words follows the text; "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." {Is.43:22-25} Mark, the words {thy transgressions} have reference to the persons spoken of before, these who had not called upon the Lord, who had been weary of him, with transgressions that had wearied him; and transgressions, that had "made me to serve with thy sins." So that the point from hence is this that the Lord, for his own sake, blots out the transgressions, and remembers not the sins, even of those that have not called upon him, that have been weary of him, and wearied him, and made him serve with their transgressions.

I make no question, but that this doctrine which I have laid down, will be received of all that will but receive clear scripture; I have not added one tittle in it more than is expressed in the words themselves; and therefore I shall be the more bold to build upon such a rock as this is. That we may the better come to the words, or rather to our comfort in them, we have these particulars very observable.

First, the grace held out to these persons; and that is expressed by two phrases. First, the "Lord blots out thy transgressions." Secondly, the Lord "will not remember thy sins."

Secondly, besides the grace held forth, let us consider the original or fountain from whence it springs; it is "I even I {saith the Lord} the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, thy Saviour;" for so you have it expressed all along the chapter.

Thirdly, you may consider here the motive that prevails with God to extend this grace that he shows to his people, and that is a remarkable passage; the motive is not in, nor from the creature; it hath its spring and rise immediately from the Lord alone; "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions; for mine own sake I do it."

Finally, you may consider to whom this grace is extended; "that blotteth out thy transgressions," saith the text, and will not remember thy sins; that is, to those persons mentioned before, of which I have spoken, that have wearied him with their sins; of these briefly.

First, concerning the grace that the Lord is pleased to hold forth to his people here, namely, "the blotting out their transgressions and not remembering their sins." First, let us consider what it is for the Lord to blot out transgressions; it is an usual phrase in the scripture, and imports much comfort in it; it is an allusion, or an allegorical expression; wherein the Lord is pleased to hold forth his love to man, after the manner of men; to set forth his carriage to men, according to theirs one to another. It is a phrase borrowed from the practice of men that keep their debt-books, wherein they enter, and record the several debts men owe them; that so, for the better helping of their memory, they may find what is due, and know what to demand and call for; I say, the Lord here speaking of "blotting out of transgressions," hath reference to such debt-books wherein he hath recorded the several debts, or sins, which he enters as men commit them; now the blotting out is nothing else, but that, whereas there were such and such transgressions in the record of God, he draws a blot over them. And that he here hath reference to such kind of dealing, in blotting out transgressions, you may see clearly manifested unto you in Colossians 2:14, where this phrase of blotting out is explained; "and you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;" now, mark what follows; "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." What "the hand-writing of ordinances" there is, you may plainly perceive by the words going before, namely, "all our trespasses, and all our sins." Now the taking away of sin, is called a "blotting it out," and expressed thus, "the blotting out of the hand-writing that was against us;" because they were, as it were, written down; but the Lord hath razed and blotted them out. You are

not to conceive that there are really such things with God, that he did indeed keep a book, and enter down in it all the several actions of men, and so calling men to account, will open it, and will read out the several things there written; but the phrase is only an allusion spoken for our better capacity.

And, for this cause, you shall find the Scripture frequently makes mention of such books God hath. When the seventy disciples came to Christ, rejoicing that the devils were made subject unto them, he replies, "notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." {Lk.10:20} Here is a book and the names of the disciples written in it; but, if you will mark Revelation 20:12, you will find, there is not only the book of life, but other books besides, out of which the dead, both small and great, were judged, according to their works that they had done; as if he had said, besides the book of life, there is the book of works, wherein the several actions of men are recorded, by which, at the great day, men are to be judged as they are found in them; according to the several debts that are therein, they are to receive their sentence. Mark, now, for the better apprehension of our weak capacity, the Lord hath taken up such a kind of illustration of his dealing with men; namely, by recording our debts in books; yet, he tells us for our comfort, that, though there be such books, we need not fear; though they shall be opened, yet whatsoever was written in them, in reference to us, is all crossed and blotted out; and, when we come to account, there shall be nothing reckoned unto us as a fault. {Jude 24}

For the better illustration of this, that what comes after may be the clearer, you must understand, that, though it be true in the succession of ages, the several members of Christ do severally day after day commit now some, then more, and afterwards more transgressions; though this be actually done in succession of time, yet the all-seeing eye of the Lord looks over all, that ever should be done, from all eternity; and then, as it were with himself, writes down the several actions and transgressions of men, that afterwards should be committed; he registers them at first with himself, and this is all the book that God keeps, and all the entries of actions with him. {Ps.147:5} Now, whereas the Lord in his eternal foresight took notice of every action that you and I have done, do, or shall do hereafter; he also took notice of the nature and quality of such actions; yet, when he had done, he drew a cross over them all; for though he saw these things thus done, yet he took a course that he would be another way satisfied for everything that he could demand in respect of them; and so they should remain no longer upon the heads of those persons. As for example, suppose that a man owes, upon a bill of parcels, an hundred pounds; all these parcels are written in a book under his name upon his head; after a time a surety comes and takes all this debt, and enters it upon his own head, under his own name, he being an able man; upon this the creditor is pleased to take him for his debtor, and so transcribes every parcel of the debt, from the head of the principal debtor, unto the head of this surety. Now, after all these parcels are entered to the head of the surety, by-and-by a cross is drawn over the first head, whose debt it was before, until it was brought over unto the surety; this is the "blotting out of transgression" which the Lord here speaks of; and the sense of it is no more but this; though it is true, I know it well enough what thou hast done, and all thou hast done against me, how many and how great transgressions thou hast committed, and hereafter shall commit, though they be all open before me, though thou art the doer of all these, and I know it, yet, saith the Lord, "I will blot out all;" that is, there is not any one of all these to be reckoned for upon thy head; but I have passed them all upon another, and he hath made to me, and I have acknowledged, full satisfaction; I have no more to say to thee.

Here then, is the sum of this grant of the free grace of God; "the blotting out of transgression." You know, beloved, the use of writing debts in a book, namely, that a creditor may turn-over at pleasure or leisure to them; and so, when he looks there, he may find what every person owes, and at discretion, may take the ground-work of his action that he lays against a person; and upon this action arrest him, and lay him up in prison, till he pays the debt. And so likewise, you know what the end of this "blotting out" is; namely, that when men come to look over their books they may skip over what was written; and, when the book is looked over, no notice shall be taken of such a man's name, who, though he was entered in it, yet all is blotted out again; and imports to us thus much to the thing in hand, that though the Lord, according to the usual manner of taking, notice of

actions against men, hath his time when he will take notice of these debts, when he enters the debtor, when he will arrest and clap him up for them; yet, when he shall look over his book, he shall take no notice of such persons whose parcels are crossed out. Therefore, in Jeremiah 50:20, see how the prophet alludes to this expression, and how he explains the words, "blotting out of transgression." "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." Here he seems to represent the Lord as one that begins to look over his books, to see what debts are owed unto him; as if he were making a search. Well, saith the Holy Ghost, though at such a time the sins of the people be sought for, yet there shall be none; it is true, they were all entered into the knowledge of God from all eternity, yet there shall be none; that is, though they were entered, they are blotted out again; therefore, as it is in a debt-book, though there be never so many parcels entered, entered ever so truly there, yet, when once that which was entered is blotted out, there is no more debt than if there had never been any; for all that was ever in, is blotted out. So, though the Lord be privy to what they do, and hath recorded them in his own thoughts; yet he himself draws a blot upon them, and makes them to be nothing; whereas, before, till the blot was drawn over them, they were real debts.

And this he doth not simply in respect of forgiveness. In regard of us, it is true, it is a forgiveness, yet, in respect of him, it is not merely forgiveness; for the reason and ground of blotting out of iniquity, is, there is a second head to which these debts are translated from us, that shall pay them better than those whose first they were; so that the debt being paid, God loses nothing, forasmuch as that another hath paid all.

This is one of the most admirable pieces of grace that thirsting souls can desire, if they had all they could wish themselves. Do but think seriously upon it. Suppose a man is privy to himself of murder, felony, and treason, or what else you will; suppose he knows that it is known, and that there are many witnesses to test it; nay, suppose he knew that it were done in the eye and face of the judge himself; that he saw with his own eyes what was done, and that, when all this is done he should be drawn to his trial; alas; in what perplexity of heart would this man be? How would he quake and tremble, and be even at his wit's end. He knows it was publicly done; there is no smothering of it, but that he must justly lie under condemnation for it; the witnesses come in and swear point blank against him; and, yet, suppose, after all pleadings and bitter expectation of the sentence, the judge himself should stand up, and say, I have made search, and there is not one bill of indictment found against this man; there is not one action that may justly be laid against him, and I have nothing to say to him or against him. How will this make the heart of such a prisoner leap for joy, being so acquitted and dismissed, and having no bill found against him! Just so is our case; we have committed murder, felony, treason, rebellion, and enmity, all that can be against the Lord; we did it in the face of God, that he knows it is done; but, when we come to trial, God himself brings an ignoramus; he himself, saith, here is not one bill of indictment against him; there is nothing but what is blotted out; and the reason is, as I said, because he acknowledgeth that he hath received a full satisfaction from his Son. "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom." {Job 33:24} So much for that phrase, "I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions;" it followeth "and will not remember thy sins;" here is the ignoramus that God himself makes; though the foreman of the grand jury bring in an indictment, yet, saith God, I remember no such matter. Here is a plea against this and that man; {members of Christ, you must suppose them all this while} they are accounted for such and such sinners and transgressors, but I remember no such matter, saith the Lord.

But what is it for God not to remember the transgressions of men in this kind, will some say? I answer, beloved, here the Lord speaks after the manner of men, as he did before; books, you know, are the registers of memory or records for the help of memory rather; when a man comes to his book, to his bills and bonds, and there reads what such and such a man owes, he thereby remembers what debts are due unto him, and from whom; but if he comes to his book, and there can read nothing owing unto him from such a person; he is said not to remember it, so that memory itself fails; can this man now remember his debts that cannot find that he hath any such, that cannot read them? If a

man look over his debt-book, and finds there, that though such debts were written, yet now they are so obliterated that no man can read them, and that this blotting was made not casually, but upon consideration of a sufficient satisfaction; how then can he remember these now as debts? Thus the Lord represents himself to us, he remembers not our sins; that is the transgressions of the members of Christ come not into the thoughts of God, so as now to think that such and such a man stands guilty before him of such a transgression; I say, the Lord hath not in his thought any such thing concerning any member of Christ. Beloved, you shall find it a frequent expression of the Holy Ghost, manifesting the grace of God to his own people; namely that "God doth not remember their sins." David, in Psalm 25:7, prays thus, Lord, "remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD." Remember not the sins of my youth, but look into the covenant of grace, wherein God engages himself to be the God of his people; this is the closure and shutting up of it all; in Jeremiah 31:31, and so on; "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD," in these days, and at that time that "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD; but this shall be the covenant that I will make with them, &c.;" and then the shutting up of the new covenant is in these words, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." {vs.34}

So the Apostle in Hebrews 8:12, repeats the self-same thing, repeating the covenant word for word, and ends it with the same closure, "for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." And in Hebrews 10:16,17, though the Apostle abridges the covenant, and leaves out many branches of it, yet he forgets not the last clause of it, "and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

So it stands for a truth, the people of God are so received into the grace and favour of God, that God doth not, nay he will not remember their sins any more from the time that they are become members of Christ, and actually in covenant with him; from that time for ever more, there is not once a bringing to remembrance with God any one of their transgressions.

But some will say, this seems to be strange; what, God not remember the sins of believers? Suppose he forgives them, yet he must remember them, seeing they are committed every day so clearly and conspicuously in his sight; how is it possible he should not remember them? I answer, beloved, let flesh and blood reason and say what it will; I ask you this question, is it the Lord himself that says, he doth not remember the sins of his people? If he himself speaks it, who art thou, O man, that darrest question whether he remembers them or no? Shalt thou say, he remembers their sins, when he himself saith, he will not remember them? The Apostle Paul tells us that "no man knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God;" {I Cor.2:11;} doth not the Spirit of God tell us this, that "he doth not remember their sins;" and can any man know the things of God better than the Spirit? Thou sayest that God remembers them, when he saith, he doth not remember them.

But some will be ready to say further, how can this possibly be, that God should know every sin that the believer commits, and the believer himself knows the sins he commits, and yet God should not remember them?

I answer, first, suppose I could not untie this knot, or resolve this riddle to you; you must know, beloved, there are deep things of God, that none but he himself can dive into, that none but he is able to resolve; yet, though it could not be resolved, let God be true, and all the world be liars; let not the world's saying, God remembers the sins of his people prevail against his saying, "I will not remember their sins;" let sense, argument, reason, and all stoop to faith, even for the testimony of God's sake alone, though none will speak the same thing, but merely the voice God himself.

But, secondly, let us see whether we can untie this knot or no; how is it possible that the Lord should not remember their sins, seeing they are so plain to him every moment? There is one word in the text, that is not much heeded, and it is that which must resolve this great and difficult question; and that is this, "I will not remember your sins," I will not remember them as your sins, putting the emphasis upon the word your; and will not remember thy sins, or your sins. It is most certainly true

that God remembers all the actions that ever men have done, do, or shall do; he remembers the nature and quality of all actions as they are; he remembers such actions, as done at such times; and he knows they are thus and thus in the nature of them; and yet so it is, that "he remembers not thy transgressions;" that is, though he remembers the things thou hast done, yet he doth not remember them as they are thine; he remembers the things, it is true, but not that they are thine; for he remembers perfectly that they are none of thine; he remembers whose they are, he himself hath passed them over, he decreed that they should become the sins of Christ; and when he passed them over to him, they ceased to be thine any longer.

You know that text in Isaiah 53:6, "the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" and you know that place in II Corinthians 5:21, "for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Now I ask this question, whose are the sins that believers commit? When Christ became their sin, are they not his? And if they are his, are they any longer theirs that did commit them? II Corinthians 5:19, shows plainly, that the Lord reckons them no longer theirs, when he hath made them once to be Christ's. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" as much as to say, I will never reckon them thine anymore; I will never impute them to thee; all that I look for in respect of thy sins, I look for at the hands of Christ; "for he was made sin for us," saith the text.

And whereas people think it strange, for as much as believers themselves do remember their sins, that God should not remember them; I answer, if any believers or members of Christ remember their sins any otherwise than God remembers them, their memory fails them, and they are mistaken in their remembrance; if when believers have sinned, they have a conceit that their sins shall be charged upon them; the truth is, they have other conceits of themselves than God hath of them; but if they will remember their sins, as he remembers them, they must remember them, and know them by the light of God's Spirit, that shall lead them into all truth. The Spirit of God will remember them of them indeed, and lay before them such and such actions, and tell them, that they have these pollutions in them, and will convince them of the abhorrency of them; but the same Spirit will remember them withal, that the Lamb of God hath taken away all these sins of theirs; and that the scape-goat hath carried them away into a land of forgetfulness; thus, I say, the Holy Ghost, as it brings their sins to their remembrance, so it will suggest to them also, to whom their sins are sent.

Beloved, it is a matter of admirable grace, full of wonder, yea, even of amazing consolation, that a poor condemned soul by Satan, nay, it may be, by his own conscience, should at last hear the Lord speak, and the last words of God himself to be this, "I remember no such thing." Now, if God himself doth not remember your transgressions, you that are the members of Christ, it is no matter who remembers them; and, therefore, as the Apostle saith in another case, so you may say with comfort in your own spirits, "but with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self." {I Cor.4:3} Beloved, he that said it will stand to it, he will never remember your sins anymore; though they be never so many and never so great, he will never call one of them to remembrance. It may be, in affliction, and when the rod of God is fallen upon thee, thy heart will be ready to raise such thoughts as these in thee; "now God will be even with me; now shall I smart for my transgressions;" but know this, that at that instant when God brings affliction upon thee, he doth not remember any sin of thine; they are not in his thoughts; for the text saith not only of the present instant, that God doth not remember them, but of the future also; nay, of the everlasting future; "your sins, and your iniquities, I will remember no more."

I beseech you, consider this one thing, you that think that God plagues and punishes you, being believers, for such and such sins of yours, and say, doth he not now remember these sins of mine? Doth he punish such and such sins in others, and take vengeance for them, and doth he not remember them? Doth he use to do things hand over head? Doth he lay his rod and his scourge upon them, and never think of the cause of it? And if these afflictions be the judgment of God for these sins, certainly God must remember them, and so know them as motives and provocations, to inflict such vengeance upon them; and if he punishes them for them, certainly he now remembers them; and what of all this? Is it a truth that God hath spoken that "your iniquities and your sins will I

remember no more?" Then surely, whatsoever things befall the children of God, are not punishments for sin, nor remembrances of sin; the Lord must be true and faithful in his covenant; and therefore, if men shall cavil against this free-grace of God, yet let me request this of you, let the evidence of the Holy Ghost so prevail with your spirits, that if any creature in heaven or earth, men or angels, shall endeavour to contradict this, let them be accounted as they deserve; let all give way to this truth; if anything in the world can make it appear to the contrary, then let it go away with it; but, if the Spirit of God speaks it so clearly, that nothing can be objected against it; let not anything cause thee to live in so much darkness and uncomfortableness, as thou must do, till thou receive this grace of the Lord.

And so, beloved, I have done with the second thing. There is one thing more very considerable, and that is what the motive is, that prevails with God, that thy sins and iniquities should be blotted out, and that he should not remember them; what is it that moves him to do this? I find that the channel of men's hearts runs usually this way; Oh! When God beholds my mourning, weeping, and reforming, and knows I am returned unto him by true repentance, and seeth what moan I make, and what a pitiful wretch I am, when he beholds my groanings and my meltings; oh; this cannot but move him to pity me, and to pardon my sins! Oh beloved! Know the Lord hath other manner of motives to prevail with him than all the rhetoric of misery in the creature can possibly be to persuade him to this grace; I say peremptorily, it is not all the sighings, groanings, mournings, fastings, prayers, and self-denial; nor all the righteousness that men can return to God, that can prevail with him, to blot out their sins and to remember them no more; but the motive is this, "I, even I, for mine own sake do this;" and the Holy Ghost frequently expresses it in such terms, as this, {Ezek.36:32,} after he had laid down the covenant of grace, he concludes with this caution; "not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you; be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel." Mark it, there is nothing in the creature that moves God to show compassion upon him; but merely for his own sake doth he this to his people.

But how is it that for his own name sake to do it? I answer, it imports two things; first, the Lord doth it for his own sake; that is, he is solely moved to it, by and from himself; and there is no creature in the world doth so much as move him to it; I say, the Lord, when he blots out the transgressions of his people, he is not so much as moved to it, and sought unto for it; there is nothing in the creature to move God to it; but simply of his own mere motion he does it; and this the Apostle expresses in abundant fulness, where, {speaking of redemption,} he tells expressly, that the Lord did all according to his own "good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself." {Eph.1:9}

But some will say, you will grant this, that Christ moved God to blot out transgressions. To this I answer, that though Christ moved God to blot them out, yet this stands firm still, that we do not move him to do it.

Secondly, I answer, when we say, that Christ moves God to blot out transgression, I do not separate him from Christ; "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" what he doth in grace to the poor creature, he doth in Christ; and he doth nothing of grace to sinners, absolutely considered in himself, abstractedly from Christ, but as in him.

But, thirdly, take Christ for Mediator, and as he is distinguished from the Father, and then, I say, that he, as Mediator, did not first move God to blot out transgressions; but the motion within himself, from eternity, was the root and fountain of all; yea, even of Christ himself as Mediator; and from this fountain was he raised up to accomplish these things that first were in his breast; for Christ is the Mediator; that is, he is the means between God and us, to compose this great thing of blotting out our transgression. Now know, that the means are raised up for the bringing about the thing intended; and in nature are after the thing intended as the end; the school-men have a speech, "the end of things is always the first in intention, though it be last in execution." If a man builds a house, he first proposeth to himself to what purpose it is; it is to dwell in; the habitation is first in his thoughts, and then the structure as a means is raised afterwards to that end; so the Lord sits down, and consults with himself, how he may show himself in grace to the creature thus; the creature will sin, and I will blot out their transgressions; but how shall it be done? Well, saith God, I will send Christ into the world; he shall be born of a woman, and die for their sins, having them laid upon him, and

shall purchase their redemption; now Christ is the means, he is made a Mediator; but God's determination, concerning the blotting out of transgression, was of his own motion, before there was such a thing as Christ, I mean in both his natures; and Christ, therefore came, because God had determined in his own thoughts, that such a thing should be done by him.

Secondly, God doth this for his own sake, not only of his own mere motion, but for his own end too, for himself. We are apt to think that he blots out our transgressions, that he might do good to us, that we might be made happy by it; it is true, the Lord blotted out transgressions that we might be happy, but yet this is but the subordinate end to him, and stands in subordination to a supreme and higher end; for God aims at his own glory principally; he did not therefore blot out transgressions that we might be the better for it principally; but that he might attain the thing that concerned himself in it.

And therefore, whereas the Holy Ghost speaks in the text of "blotting out transgressions for his own name sake," he adds these words to it, {fore-showing that God aimed at himself more than anything concerning the good of his creatures,} "for the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake; because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people." {I Sam.12:22} "What wilt thou do unto thy great name;" {Jos.7:9;} if thy people should sin? He speaking of it then in that business of the men of Israel's falling before the men of Ai. The great argument of Joshua, to prevail with God, was the great name of God. "Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known." {Ps.106:8} "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake." {Ps.79:9} The meaning is this; the Lord blots out transgressions for his own sake, that is, he therefore blots them out that his own name and glory might be the more magnified and exalted in the world; so that for his own praise sake, he doth the great things he doth. Therefore the Apostle, in Ephesians 1:6, speaking of redemption, tells us what the great end of it was, namely, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." "Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory; remember, break not thy covenant with us." {Jer.14:21}

Now you see what it is for God to blot out transgressions for his own sake; namely, that he might have the praise of the glory of his own grace in doing such marvelous things as he doth; so that you run in a vain course to think that you move God by your importunity and humbling yourselves before him; for he will not be moved with all these to blot out your transgressions; if ever, therefore, you would find a motive whereon to rest indeed satisfied that God will and doth blot them out, run to this, the free thoughts of God, and the bowels in God himself {without regard to what is in you, or done by you, to move him to do it, or to provoke him not to do it} have put him upon this great work for you.

Look into Romans, chapter 9, and you shall there see, that in this business of love, and blotting out sin, the Lord will there manifest himself in grace, while Jacob is in the womb, before ever he could sigh and groan to him; he did it then, that it might appear "not according to works, but according to the purpose of election," that it might stand altogether "not of works, but of grace;" and so, when souls partake of this grace of the blotting out of iniquity, they may cry out, as the Psalmist did in another case, "not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." {Ps.115:1} And it is certain, that the Apostle tells us that we are justified by the grace of God, not of works, lest any man should boast; and therefore, the Lord will have all the ordering of the work of grace, that the creature shall have no stroke; that when that grace is manifested and he partakes of it, {the creature having no hand in it,} he that glorieth will "glory in the Lord."