

SERMON XIX

SIN TRANSACTED REALLY UPON CHRIST

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}

I have elsewhere {as some of you know} entered upon these words, which afford divers notable, sweet, soul-refreshing truths; every word having its weight. 1. It was iniquity that the Lord laid upon Christ. 2. The Lord hath laid this upon him. This laying of our iniquity upon Christ carries a deal of life in it; it weighs down the scale by which we mount. Now, by laying iniquity, the Holy Ghost means plainly such a taking away, and bearing of it by Christ, that the believer, whose iniquity he bears, is wholly discharged of it, as if he had never committed any at all. This laying of iniquity is not a mere supposition of God, that Christ now bears sin, while the believer in deed and truth bears it himself; but it is such a real act of God transferring the sin of a believer from him unto Christ, as when a surety stands in the room of a debtor, the debtor is by this acquitted of the debt, and the surety is as really the debtor now, as the debtor himself was before. It is true, where principal and surety are in a joint bond, the debtor lies open as well as the surety, and the surety as the debtor; but if the surety will come into the room of the debtor, he is so become the debtor, that the principal is now as free as if he had owed nothing. I use it as a demonstration, because it is the Apostle's own, "by so much was Jesus made a Surety of a better testament." {Heb.7:22} I cannot insist at large upon what I have formerly delivered; the sum is this, God made him to be sin, not only by way of supposition, but really; he bore the iniquities of many; he took away the sins of the believer; in all which there is a real act. And, whereas it is objected, that this word laying is expressed by the phrase of imputing, I answer, that it is not true; for, though the word impute is often used in reference to Christ; as righteousness is imputed to us; and our sins are not imputed unto us, saith the apostle; but, in all the scripture, you shall not find sin imputed unto Christ; and, if sin be imputed unto him, it is no more but God's determining and judging Christ to bear sin, as in deed and in truth he doth bear it. But I must hasten.

I find, beloved, that there is nothing that embitters the life of a poor tender soul so much as this one thing, that they bear still their own iniquities, which lie heavy upon them; and I think that there cannot be a better service done to the poor weak members of Christ, than to show them how they are wholly eased of this most unsupportable burden of their sins. Satan knows, that now there is no other yoke of bondage to keep believers under, than to hold them under this principle, that their sins are not really already laid upon Christ, but that they themselves must bear some of them. I know the objections are very many, and, at first sight, seem to be very strong; but we will see how we can take them away.

Natural reason, I know, pleads mightily against laying iniquity upon Christ, taken really and properly.

1. It is against justice saith reason, that Christ, being innocent, should be charged with sin; as unjust as if you should take a true honest man, and charge him with felony, and execute him for it. I answer that it is no injustice to charge iniquity upon Christ, though he be innocent, not only because the scripture saith expressly, "that the Lord did lay iniquity upon him," though he never did violence himself, which is enough to satisfy any that will be ruled by scripture; but, I say, in reason itself, it is not injustice, though Christ be innocent, that yet he should bear iniquity; it is true, if God should take Christ, and force him to bear it, whether he would or no, it were injustice indeed; but Christ willingly offers himself to bear it, that God may have satisfaction, and a poor creature may have relief; he

being thus willing to take it upon himself, it is no injustice in God to lay it upon him. Observe it in reason, and it is not injustice; you have nothing in the world more common than this; suppose a man oweth an hundred pounds, if the creditor, come to another man {suppose a father} and demand payment, and arrest him for it, and make him pay it, this is injustice indeed; but if a father come to a creditor, and say, my son is a broken man, he can pay nothing, I am rich and able to pay all, lay your debt upon me, I will undertake it; upon such a tender, is it injustice for the creditor now to charge the debt upon the father that thus offers himself? There is nothing more common, it is an usual thing for a man to seal bonds for his friend, though the debt be not his own till he hath sealed, yet then he is as truly the debtor as he that had the money; and so when the time of payment comes, the money is demanded of him, and lawfully charged upon him, because he hath made himself the debtor. So God the Father doth not take Christ as a rich man, to pay whether he will or no, but upon a joint agreement between them, Christ being contented, God takes him for a surety. "In the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God." I am content, saith Christ, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." {Heb.10:7-9} Here was, I say, a joint agreement; and seeing Christ agrees to it, where is now the injustice, that the "Lord should lay iniquity upon him," when for his satisfaction, Christ was contented to do it? The apostle tells us, that it was not possible that those gifts and sacrifices that were offered before of the Jews could make those that did the service perfect. {Heb.9:9} Seeing then there was no other way to satisfy God, but Christ's own coming, and that he might be satisfied he would come, and freely tender himself, there was no injustice that he should have "iniquity laid upon him," when he was content to bear it.

2. It is further objected; saith reason, that it is a contradiction to say, Christ is innocent and yet bears iniquity. Innocence is nothing but full freedom from all crime and fault; how can Christ be said to be innocent, and yet to have fault upon him? It is a contradiction in reason. I answer, it is no contradiction to say that Christ is innocent, and yet bears fault, being laid upon him; for it is true, if these propositions were affirmed in every respect alike, it were a contradiction indeed; but it is commonly known, those things that are in their own nature contradictory, yet if they be spoken of in divers respects, are not so; Christ is innocent in respect of his own personal act; he bears fault as he stands a common person. Christ therefore is considered two ways. 1. Personally. 2. Representatively, as a common person. In respect of his own person, he is innocent; as he is a common person, he bears the fault of many.

3. Yet further, iniquity cannot be laid upon Christ, saith reason; for if he should really bear iniquity, he himself, for it, must be separated from God; and if so, how can he make those that were sometimes afar off; near? The prophet saith, "your iniquities have separated between you and your God." Was Christ separated from God, will you say? If he were not, how could he bear iniquity. I answer, this objection makes it most manifest, that Christ did really bear iniquity, in that it is the cause of separation from God; it is certainly true, wherever iniquity is, it separates; nay, from this I affirm, as Christ did bear it, so for that he was separated from God; this peradventure will need some strong proof, therefore you shall have the strongest that can be given for the demonstration of it; that Christ was separated from God, it is his own testimony, and just at that instant, when sin lay heavy upon him; I pray construe well those words of Christ, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What do you call this forsaking here? Was it not a separation between God and him? When friends, after they have gone hand in hand together, the one forsakes the other, what is that? He separates himself from him. God was here separated from Christ, or else Christ speaks untruth, for he complains and cries out, in the bitterness of his spirit; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

You will say, it may be this forsaking was but for a little moment. To this I answer, it was as long as sin was upon him; had not Christ breathed out the sins of men that were upon him, he had never seen God again; he having taken sin upon him, he must first unload himself of it, before he can be brought near to God; therefore, beloved, you shall find that passage of the Psalmist, "thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," is expounded by the Apostle of the resurrection of Christ; as if the Lord did then beget his Son anew, as it were. There was a separation and a forsaking when Christ

died, but at his rising there was a meeting again, a kind of renewing of his sonship with God.¹ "This day have I begotten thee." Therefore in Rom.8:34, the Apostle tells us that "it is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God." What doth he infer from thence? Who shall therefore lay anything to his charge? As much as to say, till Christ himself came off from men's sins, they were in danger of being charged with sin still. It is Christ that died, made satisfaction; nay rather, that is risen again, then he comes off; and the coming off of Christ himself from the sins he bore, was that which gives discharge unto believers, that now nothing can be laid to them; but still he is risen, is as much as to say, Christ is now come off himself, but he was not before he was risen; and by this he being secured from sin, we are secure in him.

Now let us come to some application, to see how near we can bring this home, to satisfy and bring rest to a weary laden spirit.

The use that I shall make of this point of God's laying, and the reality of passing over iniquity upon Christ, and desire every one of you to make with me, shall be this; only to press upon you a necessary and infallible inference that follows upon it; and that is this, if the Lord hath laid iniquity upon Christ, then whosoever thou art to whom the Lord will be pleased to give the believing of this truth, that thine iniquity is laid upon him, that is an absolute and full discharge to thee; so that there neither is, nor can be, any for the present, or hereafter, laid to thy charge, let the person be who he will; if the Lord, I say again, give to any to believe this truth, that it is his iniquity he hath laid upon Christ, God himself cannot charge any one sin upon him.

Mark well, I beseech you, beloved, Rom.8:33, and ponder it a little, and see whether God himself can charge iniquity upon any, when once laid upon Christ. He begins with triumph, with a great deal of magnanimity of spirit. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Who, may some say, he against whom the elect have transgressed? No, {saith the Apostle,} "it is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" I pray mark it a little; understand rightly what it is for God to justify; to justify a person is to discharge him from such a fault, or crime, that may be objected against him. Suppose a man actually to be arraigned, it may be for twenty bills of indictment; upon the examination, of all these, peradventure nineteen of them are manifestly false, the man is clear of all of them; but the twentieth he is found guilty of, and upon examination he is found to be faulty; whether now doth the judge justify or pronounce this person just, or no, where there is one fault that can be charged upon him? He must be clear of every fault, before he can be pronounced just. When the Lord justifies any person whatsoever, his justification is pronouncing his innocence; if he be a criminal, he is not just, and if he be just, he is not criminal. To say that a person is just, and yet to say he is now a criminal when he is just, is a contradiction; to pronounce a person just, is to pronounce him wholly innocent and clear from crime. Now then, if to justify a person, is to pronounce him clear from any crime, where is the iniquity that can be laid to thy charge, being a just person, as every believer is? Doth God now charge anything upon thy spirit? If he doth, he doth in this pronounce thee an unjust person; and if he pronounce thee unjust, he doth not justify thee; for to justify, and yet to charge with a fault, is a contradiction; so that from the time the Lord justifies any person, he charges no sin ever after that upon him; except you will say, he once justifies men, and then unjustifies them again. How many justifications must we then make in the life of a believer, if sins committed be charged upon the spirit of the man himself? As often as sin is committed anew, there is

¹ {Note: At the resurrection of Christ there was indeed a fresh declaration of his sonship; his almighty power being exerted in the raising himself. Rom.1:4. And so the begetting of Christ as a Son is applied to his resurrection, Acts 13:33; as it may be, to any time, act, or instance, in which his divine power as the Son of God is displayed; but that there was any reintegration, or renewing of his Sonship, or a begetting him anew as a Son, cannot be safely said. Christ, indeed, during his state of humiliation was in the form of a servant, and so was considered by his Father, and his Divine Sonship was little seen by men; yea by some he was charged with blasphemy for asserting it, and was put to death for it; the reproach of which blasphemy was wiped off by his resurrection; but his Divine Father always considered him as his Son, and more than once, in that state, declared him to be so; and Christ in his last moments commended his spirit into the hands of God as his Father; wherefore if the Doctor's meaning is, as some take it, that he was for a time abdicated by his Father, and as it were disowned as his Son, and upon his resurrection embraced again as such, I think he must be mistaken. Gill.}

a revocation of a former justification, and a turning of that into an un-justification of him again; for though it be generally received, that sanctification is a successive act, that is, God sanctifies us again and again, more and more; yet, that justification is an act of God at once, and the application, or giving of Christ to a person, is the justification of him. A man's justification therefore, being but one act of God, how can it be successive? How much less can it be revoked, and a justified person stand afterwards unjustified? The apostle makes it so clear, that there can be no question made against it. "It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn?" As much as to say, the same God that justifies will not pass sentence of condemnation upon one that hath received the sentence of absolution already. No, you will say, God doth not condemn; but yet he will let sin be charged upon the spirit of a man; doth not he then sentence him to be unjust?

There be divers condemnations; condemnation in sentence, and in execution. Condemnation in sentence is a pronouncing of such a person guilty. You know, it is an ordinary course at the trial of a man at the bar that he is condemned when he is pronounced guilty. Now the other condemnation, which is the execution of punishment deserved for guilt, is but the effect of condemnation rather than that itself. So far as God charges fault upon a person, so far he condemns him; so, that if God should charge a man as faulty, how can you believe still that he is pronounced just by him?

I beseech you beloved, stop your ears against all these quirks of Satan, and of your own deceived hearts by him, clamoring still to you, that sin lies yet upon you, and upon your own spirits. It is but the voice of a lying spirit in your own hearts, that saith, that you that are believers have yet sin wasting your consciences, and lying as a burden too heavy for you to bear.² I say, all the weight, the burden, the very sin itself is long ago laid upon Christ; and that laying of it upon him is a full discharge and a general acquittance unto thee, that there is not any one sin now to be charged upon thee. How can these two propositions stand together, thy sin is laid upon Christ, and yet lies upon thee? If God himself say it lies upon thee, and withal says, he before laid it upon Christ, how much is this better than a contradiction? But many will be ready to object, and this seems to be a very strong one.

Was not David a justified person, and did not he bear his own sin, though he was justified? "My sins are gone over my head, they are a burden too heavy for me to bear;" and so many of God's people make the like complaint; by this it seemeth, though a person be justified, though his sins be laid upon Christ, yet he himself bears the weight of them.

I answer, I am not ignorant, beloved, that this objection seems to some to be unanswerable, and no marvel, till light breaks out of darkness to clear the truth.

First, I would fain know, whether now, under the times of the Gospel, there be not many tender-hearted religious people that cry out of their own sins, and of the weight and burden of them upon their spirits, as well as David? I must tell you, all that he speaks here is from himself, and all that he spoke from himself was not truth.³ Take that passage of his, "will the Lord cast off forever; and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone forever; doth his promise fail for

² {Note: This is a passage that is objected to, but without just cause. It is true, indeed, sin sometimes lies upon the conscience of a believer, as a burden too heavy for him to bear, as on David, and sadly wastes the conscience, that is, destroys the peace of it; but to what is this owing? To unbelief, which is no other than the voice of a lying spirit, it gives God the lie, and deceives the hearts of his people, I John 5:10, Heb.3:12; it is so when it tells believers their sins are upon themselves, and must be bore by them, though long ago, as the Doctor observes, laid on Christ with all their weight; and that the wrath of God is upon them, and they ought to suffer distress and anguish in their souls for them, though their consciences have been purged by the blood of Christ. Gill.}

³ {Note: Here a great charge is brought, but without reason; for everything that a good man says of himself, and of the dealings of God with him, is not at all times true, as he only speaks according to his present apprehension of things, through misguided conscience, and the power of unbelief, as David, Ps.31:22; and so Asaph, whom the Doctor through mistake calls David, and who himself acknowledges it was his infirmity to say what he did, Ps.77:7-10, and 73:13-15; and as the church, Is.40:27, and 49:14-16. And under a like mistake David seems to be in the passage under consideration; for it is plain he thought God was rebuking him in his wrath, and chastening him in his sore displeasure, which he deprecates; and what the Doctor afterwards observes, that there was something peculiar in his case, agreeable to the then dispensation of things, which required he should bear his sins till a sacrifice was offered, is not to be despised. Gill.}

evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious; hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" "I have washed my hands in vain," saith David. Did David speak well in these passages, to charge God that he had forsaken him forever, and that he will never be gracious more, and that he had washed his hands in innocency, and in vain? Did David {I say} speak well to charge God thus? If a weak believer complain, that makes not everything a truth he complains of. David might mistake, that God should charge his sin upon him; and, it may be, he might charge his sin upon himself, without any warrant or commission from God.

But we will go a little further; suppose we grant David did indeed bear the weight of his own transgressions, and it was according to the will and pleasure of God, he having sinned, that he himself should bear it; and suppose we grant, that while, he did bear it he was a justified person, according to the covenant of grace, God made with him; yet it will not follow from hence that this instance of David should be a precedent to believers under the times of the gospel. I will clear a mystery unto you, though I have spoken elsewhere something of it; and I will clear it from the Apostle himself in the Epistle to the Hebrews. There is a great deal of difference between the times of David, and of the Gospel, and that in particular of a man hearing his own sin. David was under a covenant of grace, and Christ was the substance of it; and so he had remission of sins, but with such a great difference, that the case is marvelously altered by Christ himself; it is true, when David sinned there was a sacrifice for his sin; and it is as true, there was no remission to be found, till the performance of it; "and the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him." {Num.15:28} Here is forgiveness of sins, but they must bear their sins till their sacrifice was offered; now the sin of David might lie upon himself till he had performed his sacrifice, because there was no remission to be found till that was offered; now it is too probable that David, concealing his sin so long as he did, made no great haste to bring a sacrifice for it, and till that was offered there was no remission.

Again, suppose his particular sacrifice was offered, yet that could not make those that came to it perfect. In Hebrews 10:6 and 9:9, speaking of those sacrifices, the Apostle saith, that they were but a "figure for the present;" and that it was impossible that those gifts and sacrifices should make perfect the comers thereunto; to wit, they that did the service could not thereby be made perfect. The truth is, though there was some remission, and so consequently some peace upon the offering of those sacrifices, yet something was left behind, for which there was a yearly sacrifice to take away; even among the people of the Jews, under their covenant of grace which they had; which, though it were such a covenant; yet had not the large grants and charters that we have, now that Christ is come; though they had remission of sins, yet it was successive, and admitted of intermissions and stops; sins committed before the sacrifice was offered, were remitted by it; but no sins committed after it, had any remission by the former sacrifice, but must stay for it till another succeeded; and from hence it appears, since there was a reiterating of sin, they had always some sin or other still lying upon their persons, because there was a successive offering up of new sacrifices. David complains of bearing his own sins; the reason is this, all the sacrifice he could make use of could not make his conscience perfect; as it is plain in Hebrews 9:9, it "could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;" so that though sin did lie upon David till such sacrifice took them away, yet it doth not follow under the gospel, since Christ's coming, that sin should lie any time upon the spirit of a believer in Christ. Why so; will you say? I answer, the Apostle tells us, concerning Christ himself, that he is "become the Mediator of a better covenant." Wherein better, will you say? I answer briefly, in this regard, that Christ "is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him;" as you have it in Heb.7:25. Mark it, there is the difference; the sacrifices wherein the remission of sins was received could not make the comers thereto perfect, but Christ being come, he saves to the uttermost them that come to God by him. Look into Heb.10:14, and there you shall find wherein the main difference lies, "by one sacrifice," saith the Apostle, {speaking of Christ offering himself} "he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." The difference is this, Christ being once come, the sacrifice of his own body had such a fulness of satisfaction in it, that there never needed any more to

be done to the end of the world, for the taking away of any sin; but all manner of sins, of all believers, to the end of the world, were at once taken away by that sacrifice, and that forever.

So that now a believer is not to wait till a new sacrifice be performed, that he might be discharged from such and such a sin; but as soon as ever he hath committed it, he hath "the Lamb of God" in his eye "that takes away the sins of the world;" that hath already taken away this very sin, at this very instant committed. Beloved, consider well of it, for either Christ hath taken away all sin already, or one of these two things must needs follow; either the believer himself is to bear his own sin, or Christ is to come again, and do something more to take away that which remains behind. I say, if all sin be not taken away by what is done already, there must be somewhat more done to take it away; but, saith the apostle, in Heb.10:26, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." In vain do men now look for something else, to come to take away this and that transgression; for there remains no more sacrifice for sin; that one sacrifice did all that was ever to be done, and therefore there is no more to follow. If therefore all be done by Christ that is to be done to make perfect the comers unto him, and to save them to the uttermost; then all the sins that believers now commit, or hereafter shall commit, nay, all the sins that all the believers, to the end of the world shall commit, are already laid upon Christ, he hath nailed them to his cross. Therefore, saith the apostle, in I John 1:7, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

And whereas some may be ready to say that this passage, that the Lord hath laid the iniquity of us all upon Christ, is not peculiar unto these times now, after Christ's coming; for it seems the prophet Isaiah did proclaim the mind of the Lord in particular, before Christ himself came in person.

To this I answer, that all the passages of the prophets concerning the fulness of grace to come by Christ, though they were spoken by them in their time; yet had reference to future times, after Christ's coming, and had not reference, in respect of their fulness, to those times wherein they spake. For the clearing of this, I shall desire you to consult a few words that Peter hath, being most full and clear to this purpose as can be desired. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Here he speaks of the perfect fulness that comes by Christ, that is, salvation; "of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom {that is unto the prophets} it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." {I Pet.1:9-12} The Apostle says plainly that "they diligently searched" into the times wherein those things they then prophesied of should come to pass; and that they did not preach them to themselves, and that they did not administer these things unto themselves, but to us. I say therefore, still Christ was the foundation of the covenant they had, and remission of sins was a fruit of it; but their covenant took not all their sins away; some were upon them for the time, which was the cause of their complaint; but Christ now hath taken all our sins away, that we are become incomparably perfect; and not only perfect in respect of sin to be charged on us, being passed from us upon Christ, but also our very consciences are acquitted; for, saith the Apostle, speaking of the consciences of God's people under the Gospel in respect of the full discharge from sin. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." {Heb.10:22} Therefore {having spoken so largely of the remission of sins, upon which there remains no more sacrifice} we may come with boldness to the throne of grace with a true heart, and full assurance of faith. Upon what ground? Having our hearts purged or sprinkled from an evil conscience.

O let not therefore, beloved, I beseech you, any objection or objectors in the world, take you off from standing fast in that liberty wherein Christ hath made you free, and do not again entangle yourselves with such yokes of bondage, that neither you, nor your fathers were able to bear.

If the ceremonies of the Jews were so weighty and such yokes of bondage; what are the sins of people lying upon them? Beloved, you may search and enquire into many ways to find rest to your

souls while they are disquieted; but if your hearts are rightly enlightened, and really tender, all the ways in the world shall never give rest to the sole of your foot, nor the least comfort to your spirits, till you find rest upon this one principle, that the Lord hath discharged all your sins, and will remember no one sin against you; till, I say, you can behold a general release, all the whole score crossed, and God discharging you from every filthiness, there can be no rest to your spirits. Is there one sin upon you? That one sin will prove so heavy a pressure on you, that you shall never be able to endure it, especially when the Lord shall let you see what the fearful weight of any one sin is; but if you can receive this principle, that every sin you have committed, or shall commit, is cast upon the Lord Christ, and carried away; that you shall never hear again of any of them, in regard of accusation from God, or in regard of just accusation from your own spirits, then shall your souls return to their rest; but if you be not fully settled upon this principle, that the Lord hath so taken away every sin of every believer, that there is not any one sin remaining, nor any one shall remain for God to charge upon you, you can have none. Give me leave to bring in a few passages of scripture that will be so evident, that except persons will willfully resist the truth, they cannot but sit down with this resolution of spirit, that all their sins are manifestly taken from them, and they perfectly discharged of them.

In Psalm 51:7, David complains, and makes his address to God, "purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." "Wash me," saith he, and what is the fruit of God's washing? "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." That God, when he first enters into covenant with persons, washes them, is as clear as the light. Mark that in Ezek.16:8-10, "now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, 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 throughly washed away thy blood from thee." I say, when God enters into covenant with his people, he washes them; and, how doth he wash them? Doth he leave some spots, blemishes, and stains behind? No; "wash me, {saith the Psalmist,} and I shall be whiter than snow." What blots can you find upon snow itself? There is nothing clearer than snow; yea, saith the prophet, "I shall be whiter than snow." "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." {Is.1:18}

Look into Cant.4:7, and see what an absolute discharge there is to everyone that is a member of Christ, and that is a present one too; for it is not for hereafter; "thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." It is not, thou shalt be all fair, or have no spot in thee; but thou art even now so; so soon as thou art my spouse, thou art fair; nay, "thou art all fair;" nay, "there is not any one spot in thee." Is this the voice of Christ, or not? Look into Isa.43:25, and you shall see what a full discharge is given, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

Beloved, suppose a person before a judge be arraigned for felony, and he that accuses him appeals to the judge himself, saying, do not you know that this man committed such a thing? The judge saith, I remember no such thing; now if no other evidence comes in, is not the judge's not remembering any such thing, a sufficient discharge for him? The Lord saith, "I will not remember their sins;" how then can he charge them upon them, when he will not remember them? Shall I come and witness against a man and say, he did steal, and is guilty of theft, and yet I never remember it? The Lord doth not remember, therefore he doth not charge; nay, saith he, "I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions." Now, what is it to blot out a thing? Suppose there be a deed, or a bond wherein a debt is chargeable upon a man, and every line or letter of it are blotted out; how can it be charged upon him, especially when the creditor himself hath blotted it out? Where can this be charged? "I, even I, am he {saith the Lord} that blotteth out." If any other besides the creditor should blot out a debt, there were some cause left of fear; but if the creditor himself shall do it, what need the debtor make any question of it? So if any creature in the world should undertake to blot out sin but God, this might not hold good; but when he himself comes and blots it out, where is any charge that can be laid upon him? He cannot recall his own act again.

In Ezek.36:25, you shall see what a full discharge is given to believers. "Then will 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;" mark, what is that the Lord cleanses from? "All filthiness;" even then, when he enters into covenant, gives a new heart, becomes the God of a people, then he sprinkles with clean water, and they are clean from all their filthiness.

Look into Daniel 9:23,24, and you shall find that the Lord whispers a secret in the ears of Daniel, which he would make him know was a fruit of the greatness of his love unto him. "I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved; therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision;" or mystery. What is that secret that God will impart unto him, as the greatest expression of his love? It is this; "seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city;" and what is it that follows upon these seventy weeks? Mark the words I pray; "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy." Neither transgression, nor sin were finished, nor iniquity come to an end, nor everlasting righteousness brought in, until the seventy weeks were ended; but upon the determination of them, then came sin to be finished. Mark the words well, iniquity then came to an end, and then came in everlasting righteousness. And Christ seems to touch upon this very prophecy, when it was accomplished upon the cross, "it is finished," saith Christ. What is the meaning? What is finished? Sin is finished; for the speech hath reference unto the prophecy of Daniel; not that his suffering, but that sin was finished; for he lay in the grave till the third day afterward, and was under death, but sin was finished according to that prophecy. Now the seventy weeks being fulfilled, what transgressions can you have upon your consciences? Wherefore do you complain of so much of the burden of them, seeing that sin is finished? If thy present transgressions be not finished, at the seventy weeks end, by that suffering of Christ, there is no truth in that of Daniel, sin is finished; for a thing is not finished, when there remains anything to be done about it; if there remains some sins to be taken away, then sin is not finished; but at the end of seventy weeks, sin was finished by Christ, and came to an end.

I could instance in many other passages of scripture; it were infinite to name them all; and such they are, as are more worth, and more glorious, than all the treasures of the world. Any one of all these is a general discharge to every believer in the world. But you will say, do not believers commit sin now? I answer, they commit transgression, but long before they did it, it was paid for, and taken away; all the score is crossed, even from the time that Christ bore the sins of many upon the cross. It is true, the Lord leaves the sins that believers act, legible still, though crossed; as when a man hath crossed his book, one may read every particular sum, or debt, that was formerly written; and though he may read them, yet it doth not follow that they are debts, for the crossing of it take away the nature of the debt; God crossed the score when Christ died, and then it was no more debt; all our sins, as a debt, were then finished; only God will leave that, which was before a debt, fairly written still, that we may read them, and see how many there are, and what great sums they amount to; that so we might have hereby the clearer occasion, diligently to set forth the praise of the glory of that grace, that hath crossed such a score.

But some will be ready to say, yet once more, this kind of doctrine opens a wide gap to all manner of licentiousness. Licentiousness! How so? You will say, if a person know, before he hath committed his sin, that whatsoever he shall commit afterwards, are already laid upon Christ, and there is no fear he shall receive any damage by them; who will not break out into all manner of sins, that are so pleasing to men's corrupt natures, when they know they can have no hurt by them.

1. I answer, did not the Lord himself know what corrupt inferences men would draw from grace revealed, and made to appear? Is it dangerous to preach the free grace of God lest men should draw licentious inferences from it? Where was the wisdom of God that could not conceal these truths that are so dangerous to be published? Did the Lord, and was he pleased, whatever danger might follow, to reveal the truth so graciously, and shall we say, we must mince it, or depress it, because some abuse it, and corrupt inferences are made of it.

2. I answer, if it be truth that the Lord hath revealed, that we may, and should publish it abroad unto men; then we must preach it, let the consequences be what they will. But I answer further, there is no such danger from those whom this free grace is given, that they should make such corrupt inferences. I do not deny, beloved, but that such as are rejected and given up of God, may make licentious uses of the doctrines of grace, and the fulness of pardon by Christ; but whoever said that this fulness of grace or any part thereof belongs to such that are rejected? Do now we not say that believers are the only persons on whom the Lord confers, and to whom he gives to receive it? Not that believing, in the act of it, is the efficient, or confirmation, but the manifestation of it to them, that it belongs to them; as for others that are not believers, we do not say their part is in it; it may be in it, though they be not now believers; yet we cannot for the present say they have their part in it, till they believe though they do not now believe, they may afterwards; and whenever they do, that which before was hid, appears by believing.

I draw to an end, and say again, for believers, that the revelation of the fulness of grace, and acquittance from sin, are so far from opening a gap unto licentiousness of life; that the truth is, there is nothing in the world that raises up such a glorious sanctified life, as to know the full deliverance of the soul from sin. Mark but what Zachariah saith, in Luke 1:74,75, "that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." It imports thus much unto us, that the serving of God, without fear, is the fruit of a saint's deliverance from his enemies, from sin; and the more we believe that sin is already passed and carried away, the more shall we serve him without fear; therefore, Solomon speaks excellently, "the righteous are bold as a lion;" {Pv.28:1;} those that are once sure, in respect of God and their own souls, adventure upon anything he calls them out unto; miscarry, or not miscarry, it is all one with them, for all stands right between God and them. While men know not whether their sins are passed away and themselves discharged, and that there is no danger in respect of them, how many duties that God calls them to, do they baulk; and how many sufferings for the cause of God are they ready to shrink from, before they have the assurance of the pardon of their sins? The apostle tells us, "that the grace of God," his loving-kindness and favour, "that brings salvation, hath appeared;" and what is the fruit thereof? Are we saved by grace? Then may we live as we list; as some may say? No; "for the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." {Tit.2:11,12} However others may turn the grace of God into wantonness, yet believers, who have received this mercy, and assurance thereof, to have all their sins cast upon Christ, cannot sin in this kind; and why not? "They are born of God, {saith St. John,} and they cannot sin, because the seed of God abides in them;" {I Jn.3:9;} or as the Apostle expresses it more fully thus, we "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." {I Pet.1:5} It is most certainly true, indeed, corrupt nature, having no bridle to restrain it from sin, but only the sour sauce that follows, take away that, corrupt nature will break out. But beloved, take the believer saved by grace, and delivered from all his sins, he hath another principle over-ruling in his spirit, and that is the seed of God in him; and this so over-rules him, that he hath not that maw {as we use to say} as he had when corrupt nature had power over him. "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." {Gal.5:17}

But, you will say, then is this ground of presumption; now many thousands will run into it, upon this doctrine delivered? I answer, understand presumption well; consider what it is, and then you shall see how vain the objection is. What is it? It is no more but this, promising to myself any great thing without any good ground. If I promise myself, such a man will give me an hundred pounds, and he never said so, and I have no ground to think so, this is presumption; but, if a man engages himself to give me so much, is it presumption in me to expect it, though I pay nothing for it? So here, if so be that the discharge from all sin at once were without any ground, it were presumption to build upon it; but if the Lord hath, as you have heard, published all this to the world, of his grace to

his own people, what presumption is it to build upon so sure a foundation as the word of grace? God himself must change before this bottom, whereupon the foot of a believer stands, shall sink.

But, you will say, though there be this free grace and full discharge of sin, Christ taking sin upon himself, yet it doth not belong to licentious persons, therefore it should not be published so generally as men preach it. I answer, who is it for? Is it for the righteous, or for the wicked? "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," saith our Savior; that is, to turn and come to me. It is not for the whole, they need not the physician, but the sick. In brief, beloved, mark but the tenor of the gospel, and you shall see who they are to whom the free grace of God is tendered. "If while we were enemies, {saith Paul,} Christ died for us, how much more shall we be saved by his life?" Now, I will ask, whether is the free grace of God delivered to the enemies of Christ, considered as such, or no? "And 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;" {Ez.16:6,8;} and all this in blood, "then washed I thee with water." When? After he had sworn and entered into covenant, and spread his skirt over them. To whom beloved, doth this entrance into the free covenant belong? Why, to persons in their blood before their washing; for washing follows entering into covenant. "In due time," saith the Apostle, "Christ died for the ungodly;" and in Rom.4:5, it is expressed thus; "but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." It is the ungodly that God justifieth, and who is he? The ungodly that doth not work. "Not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Now, then, to whom should we preach the free grace of God, and discharge from all sin, but to those to whom the Lord reaches it out? But you will say, doth it belong to all? I answer, it belongeth not to all, but to every ungodly man under heaven, to whom God will give to believe and receive this truth. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." {Jn.1:11-13} The truth is, it is a secret in the bosom of the Lord himself, to whom the grace belongs; for "the secret things belong unto the LORD our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." {Deut.29:29} Wherefore we are to publish it to particular persons; and to every one to whom the Lord gives to believe, this grace belongs; for, when he believes it, it is manifest to him that his full portion is in it, let his conversation be what it will before.

I speak not this to bolster any man in any manner of wickedness; for, when the Lord gives faith, he will certainly change the heart, and that will work by love; this, I say, that when God is pleased to make a person so to see his own sin and emptiness, as to reach after the grace of God in Christ, there is not a soul that believes in Christ, and reaches after him, that possibly can miscarry; "him that comes to me, I will not cast off;" no one that believeth. There is not one soul under heaven; but if the Lord gives him to come, and receive this grace, and not reject it, {let his sins be what they will} there is a present participation; nay more, there is a present manifestation to him in special, that all the grace of the Gospel is his. And so much for this time.