

SERMON XXI

TO LAY OUR SINS ON CHRIST IS THE LORD'S PREROGATIVE ONLY

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 find no Scripture so punctually and fully revealing the riches of the grace of God to men, as this that I have now read unto you, surpassing others depending upon it; and I find no truth more clouded, to the trouble of God's people, than those truths that concern the grace of God to men; which hath exceedingly provoked me to improve that talent I have received, to communicate the mind of the Lord, as fully as I may, to them.

Of this truth, upon sundry occasions, I have spoken several things out of these words; each word containing a special observation by itself; every word hath its weight, and speaks admirable grace to the sons of men. God not only punishes Christ for men, but he lays the very iniquities of men upon him. The purity of God naturally can never take pleasure in a filthy vessel. Should Christ be punished over and over again for the sins of men; yet if, for all this, they lay upon themselves, God must abhor them. There can be no expectance of a smile from the face of God upon any creature in the world, till it be all fair; and this cannot be, till all spots of sin be taken from them; and this taking away of the filthiness of the creature is not a kind of supposed taking of it away, but is a real act of God; he makes Christ as very a sinner as the creature himself was.¹ "He was made sin for us." {II Cor.5:21} The Lord laid our very iniquities themselves upon him; this is the greatest grace the soul can have comfort in, in this life, that iniquity is done away; and therefore, it concerns all that hear such admirable tidings, to know from whence it comes, who undertakes this great work, to discharge a poor sinner, and to lay all its iniquities on Christ. Had all the creatures in the world undertaken, with all their strength, to lay them on him, it would have broke the back of them all, so much as to lift at sin to lay it upon him; therefore the grace of the Lord is evident in this, that it is he himself that laid iniquity upon him. No undertaken in heaven or earth could have brought this great work to pass, but the Lord alone. It is strange, that Christ should be enabled to undertake so much as he did; yet God did not oblige him to take and lay our iniquities upon himself, Christ learned obedience in this, and waited the pleasure of his Father to lay iniquity upon him, and doth not lay it on himself. "I came not to do my own will {saith he,} but the will of him that sent me." Nay, Christ was not the first motive to it; but the thoughts of God's own love towards poor creatures were the motives to himself to give him to bear the sins; and if Christ himself doth not lay iniquity upon himself, much less doth the righteousness of man lay it on him. It is not all the prayers, the tears, the fasting, the repentance, though ever so perfect and complete, that lays any one iniquity upon Christ; it is the Lord alone that does it; nay, none of these performances have the least moving power in them to persuade him to it; the Lord moves himself to do it; all our services are for other purposes; they have no prevalency with him at all, no, our faith itself lays not our iniquities on Christ; but, as I said, the Lord lays, Christ bears, our faith doth but see and make evident that, in time, which before was hid and not seen.

We cannot amplify the particulars so largely as necessity requires; I must proceed to what remains behind. Now, beloved, I shall show you clearly, I hope, that it is not to be imagined, that any thing in the world can possibly lay iniquity upon Christ, but only the Lord himself; for the clearing of which I desire to take some specialties into consideration.

¹ That is, by imputation, which is a real act of God, and by which all the sins of the sinner are put upon Christ, so that he, standing in his stead, is reckoned in the eye of justice as what the sinner himself is. Gill.

1. None in the world hath anything to do with iniquity, to dispose of it, but only the Lord; and therefore none can lay it upon Christ, but only he. For the better clearing of which, you must understand, that iniquity, or sin {as in I John 3:4,} "is the transgression of the law;" for where there is no law, there no transgression, as the apostle Paul speaks; the meaning is this, transgression is a swerving or going astray from the pleasure of God revealed in his law; nothing is transgression, but what is against him, and his mind revealed to men; and whereas in a subordination there may be transgression against men, one against another; yet all such transgression hath its denomination, not as man's, but as God's will is transgressed. As for instance, "thou shalt not commit adultery;" in the breach of this, here is a transgression of a man against a man; for one man to commit adultery with another man's wife is an offence against her husband; yet this were not properly a transgression, if it were not a transgression of the law of God made against it; "for where there is no law, there is no transgression." To come to the purpose in hand, transgression is only against God; for which cause, David, though he committed adultery with Uriah's wife, and slew him with the sword of his enemy, and therein transgressed against those persons; yet David riseth to the fountain of transgression, and so to the true nature of it, when he confesseth, "against thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight." {Ps.51:4}

And you shall find, when Samuel had been set up to be judge over Israel, and the people began to despise and reject him, because they would have a king, as other people had; there was a sinning against Samuel in subordination; yet the Lord saith, "they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me." {I Sam.8:7}

They sinned against God principally, and Samuel subordinately, because they sinned against God's ordinance; Samuel being substituted by God over them.

If sin then be against God, against whom it is committed, then it is only in his power to dispose of it at his pleasure. Suppose a man owe a debt to another, it is not in the power of a third party to dispose of this debt as he pleaseth, but in the creditor himself only; if a creditor should arrest a debtor, and make him pay, or lie by it himself, it is not in the power of any other to take surety in the stead of this debtor; the creditor may take a surety if he will, and it is at his pleasure, whether a surety shall stand, or be accepted, or no. Every transgression of a man is a debt to the Lord; and, as it is a debt to him, so it is only in his power, and at his pleasure, to dispose of it; whether or not, persons shall lie by it till they have paid the utmost farthing themselves; or whether he will take a surety to stand in their room, and pay the debt for them. From hence are these words, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." {Rom.9:15,18} As much as to say, I will take a surety for as many as I list, and none for as many as I please; such and such, I will take a surety for; and therefore you shall find, that in this business of laying iniquity upon Christ, he goes under the notion of a mediator; Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant, or testament; as much as to say, Christ himself will not take upon him, to dispose of the sins committed against the Father; he indeed mediates with him; he is contented, if the Father please to make him a surety, he will see him paid. A mediator is one that comes between men to over-rule them if possible; so Christ deals with the Father, he will become the Surety of a better covenant or testament; and accordingly, be the Surety for such as God seeth good, and no other; and the rest they shall, they must lie by it. And therefore you shall see, that for so many as God is contented, Christ should be their surety; he is so far from disposing of their sins upon himself, that though he paid the utmost farthing, and the Father was fully satisfied with it; yet he acknowledged for all that, that this very suretyship of his, instead of others, was an act of grace, and an act of grace to himself. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." How was it a gift? Did not Christ pay well for them? Did not he lay down the price of his blood, a satisfactory price? Yea, he did; yet, "thou gavest them me," saith Christ. How so, will you say? I answer, God might have chosen whether Christ should have come to offer satisfaction, or whether he would accept of it made by him the Surety; in that he would accept of a price, there was a gift.

2. It must only be the Lord's work to dispose of the sins of men, to lay them on Christ; nothing else could do it; none but the Lord could qualify and fit Christ to bear the sins of men; none but he alone could do it. Suppose it were in the power of the creature to lay the iniquity of men up on Christ, what could this avail, except Christ, when it is laid upon him, should become able to bear it, and not sink under it, when it was laid upon him? Therefore none could lay it with effect, but God alone. There are two things that are exceeding necessary, that iniquities might be laid beneficially upon him, and all the world could do neither of them.

I. That he should have a body, wherein to bear iniquity.

II. Having a body, that he should be steeled above natural strength; that that body prepared, should not sink under such a weight.

Now this is the Lord's own work; nay, all the world could never reach it but he, to furnish Christ with both these; and you shall find both of them intimated in one expression, in Heb.10:5; "wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me;" they are both intimated in these words, "a body hast thou prepared me;" where you shall find that it is the Lord himself that furnishes him with this body.

There must be a body, that he might come to do the will of God. "A body hast thou prepared me;" that I should do thy will, O God! That is, do it in a body. And secondly note, that this body is not an ordinary one, but prepared; therefore in the margin it is, "a body hast thou fitted me;" as a man fits a case to a thing to be put into it; that builds a house, a fit habitation for himself to dwell in; or a fort for some to be fortified in it, he prepares it accordingly; so, "a body hast thou prepared for me;" that is, a body hast thou fitted for me, and steeled it, that it may be of more than natural strength to bear the sins of men. The divine nature is incapable of bearing transgression, therefore there must be a body given and prepared, that may be subject to bear; and this body, because the weight of sin is infinite, and enough to press an ordinary one into hell, must be steeled with an infinite strength above nature, that it may stand steadfastly under it, and firm to the work; therefore the Psalmist tells us, "then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty." {Ps.89:19} It is not an ordinary body, that this help must be laid upon, but must be mighty; therefore Christ tells us, in John 3:34, that he himself had received the Spirit, not by measure; there was more strength given to him, than ordinary strength, that is common to the creature.

Now, beloved, except any creature in the world could thus furnish Christ, and steel him that he might not sink, to what purpose should any lay iniquity upon him; and therefore in Isa.42:1-6, you shall find, that he doth not only call us out to behold his servant whom he hath chosen, but he tells us, how he disposes of him, that he may be for our use. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him;" I "will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people." I have kept thee, as well as given thee; the Father must help Christ in this work, as well as give him; there must be furnishing with abilities to the employment, as well as a calling forth to it; to what purpose is it to call a multitude of people to resist a common enemy? What use will they be of except they be furnished with arms, and all things fitting for the service they are called out unto? If iniquity be laid upon Christ, and he not furnished to bear it, to what purpose is it? He will shrink under the burden, and we perish in his sinking. It is not of small consequence, therefore, to know that the Lord hath laid iniquity upon him.

3. None but the Lord alone can lay iniquity upon Christ; in that, none but he hath so much power over, and interest in Christ, to prevail with him to be content to bear it; all the world could never have won Christ to put his shoulders to undergo such a burden, but only the power of the Lord prevailed with him. Beloved, it is not such a light weight, to be under the weight of all the sins of all the elect at once, that Christ should make so light of it, as to take it upon himself. This one complaint of Christ may resolve us of the weight of transgression that was upon him; "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" and he sweat drops of blood as water, because of that agony his soul was in, by reason of sin that was then upon him; and it made him cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" So heavy was it upon him. Who in the world ever had, hath, or ever shall have, so much interest in Christ, to prevail with him to take the sins of his people upon himself, if they could

lay them upon him? Though the elect of God reap an unsearchable fruit from hence, yet it is not they, nor their ease, which is the prime motive which prevailed with Christ to bear them; but that which chiefly prevailed with him, was the pleasuring of his Father. Christ knew well enough how hot the heart of God was set upon this, that the iniquities of men should be borne by him, and carried away from them, and they discharged; now, for the pleasuring of him, he was content to do it; and you shall find much of Christ's discourse, and of the prophets that spake of him, tending to this; that the eye of Christ was principally upon the pleasuring of his Father in bearing the sins of men. In Isa.53:10,11,12, three times you shall find it expressed, "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand;" "he shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied;" and "it pleased the Lord to bruise him." Still you see the eye of Christ was upon the satisfying of his Father, and pleasuring of him in that he did; that his pleasure should prosper in the work, therefore the hand of Christ takes it; that the Father be satisfied with this, he is content to be in travail in his soul, and to bear iniquity; in that it pleased the Lord to bruise him, therefore was he content to be broken. All the world could never prevail with Christ to undergo it, had it not been that he might give his Father content. It is worth your observation, what is recorded in Heb.10:5,6,7; mark it well, I pray; for when Christ comes into the world, he saith, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me; in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come {in the volume of the book it is written of me,} to do thy will, O God." Observe his motive to come into the world, namely, to do that which burnt offerings and sacrifices could not do. "There was a remembrance of sin {saith the apostle} every year," since the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin; therefore the Lord was not pleased and contented with burnt-offerings and sacrifices; upon this, saith Christ, "Lo, I come;" as if he had said, seeing they cannot give thee content, that thou mayest have pleasure, lo, I come to do the work thoroughly, that thou mayest be satisfied.

4. None but the Lord could lay iniquity upon Christ, because, none but he could give him a fit and proportional reward for bearing it. It is fit that every one should have consideration for the work he doth; and it is most certain, Christ in undertaking to bear the sins of his people, hath an eye to a proportional consideration for it; now none but the Lord could give him it; therefore, none else could win him to lay iniquity upon him. In Heb.12:2, it is plain that Christ had an eye to some good consideration. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Christ did not only suffer, but also despised the shame that sin brought upon him; for he being made sin, became also a shame, and he despised that; and what was that which moved him to it? It was joy; and what was that joy? Christ sits at the right hand of God his Father; and who could thus reward Christ but the Lord? And, beloved, you shall find that God, when he puts him on to bear the sins of men, he proposes rewards to him for his encouragement. In Psa.2:6-8, where he speaks of anointing of Christ to be his "king upon my holy hill of Zion." "Ask of me, {saith he,} and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Here is that which God will give to Christ, and wherefore doth he make this deed of gift to him, but that it may be a reward to him for his sufferings, and so encourage him to the work? And for this purpose, let us consider that passage in Phil.2:6-11; "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Mark what follows, "wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Here you see expressly, how the Lord rewards him for this very thing, that he "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," while "he thought it no robbery to be equal with God."

And indeed, beloved, no marvel that the Lord will propose such a reward to Christ, to make him satisfaction for the taking upon him the sins of men; for consider men as they were to bear their own transgressions themselves, and as some are yet to bear them; alas! What payment was the Lord

likely to have! Payment like that of broken debtors; he must have given time, to all eternity, before he could have his debt paid; whereas Christ, coming into the world, makes round, present, and ready payment; he pays all at once; and is not this a good reparation? When as a debtor is broke, and the creditor has to stay many years for his money, and take it by piece-meal too, would it not be thank-worthy for one to come now, and pay down the full sum upon the nail, ready money? When Christ came into the world he paid down all at once; God hath all from him {as they say} in ready cash. From hence there is a translation of the debt from us, broken debtors, to one that is mighty; he bears the burden, and pays the debt for us; the Lord is satisfied to his content, and he requites him for it. Now if all that we ever did, or can do, be not a requital of him, how can we expect that we should lay our iniquities upon Christ?

Now for application. If it be the Lord himself that lays our iniquities upon Christ, it is but meet and right that he should have "the praise of the glory of his own grace;" and that nothing in the world should go away with the praise of it from him. I remember a complaint of the poet, who it seems, had made some verses that carried some credit with them, and some falsifier had taken it upon himself; "I have made the verses, and another hath the honour of them; as the bee makes honey, and another hath the fruit of it." Beloved, it may be the just complaint of the Lord to the sons of men; I have laid the iniquities of you all upon Christ, and every thing almost runs away with the honour of it; as if something else did ease you of the burden of them, and I am neglected. Now so long as you have these vain conceits in you, that any thing you do becomes your ease, and the lightening of the burden of your sins, they will go away with the praise that is due to God. To whomsoever we apprehend ourselves beholding, as we say, for such a courtesy, such a one shall go away with the praise of it. I remember how Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, Saul's son, came to David with the stolen goods of his master, and pretended that it was his own courtesy to David that he had brought so many mules, and a large quantity of provision; David asked for his master, he belies his master, and tells him that he abides at Jerusalem, hoping that Israel would set the crown upon his head; but mark it well, whilst that David is convinced that Ziba is he that hath done him a courtesy, he shall go away with the glory of it, and Mephibosheth shall be neglected; and David gives all the land of Mephibosheth to Ziba upon this mistake, and so he carried away all the praise of the courtesy from Mephibosheth. {II Sam.16:1-2} And so it is most true, beloved, as long as we reckon our own holy duties, repentance, and enlargement in prayer, &c., as the bringers of refreshment to our spirits, and the un-loaders of our hearts from our transgressions, that are the burden of the soul; so long these are exalted above measure. Hence these strange epithets and expressions are fixed to them. Oh; the omnipotency of repentance; and of meeting with God in fasting and humiliation! Oh; the prevalency of tears to wash away sin! They supposing that these ease us of the weight of sin, go away with the glory. Oh! Who is omnipotent but the God of heaven! What washes away the sins of men but the blood of Christ? Shall we give the glory to Ziba that is due to Mephibosheth alone? In II Sam.19:24 &c., you shall hear how Mephibosheth makes his apology for himself, and pleads his sincerity to the king, and declares how his servant had abused him; and then David restored half his lands again to him; but yet Ziba must share with him still.

Oh! beloved, I desire you to deal more equally with God; let him have all the praise; let not Ziba and Mephibosheth divide the land; let not your performances share with God in the praise of his grace, in laying iniquities upon Christ.

It is God alone that lays your iniquities upon Christ, and your performances cozen you, while they tell you, that they ease you of your burden, and lay it upon him. Oh; turn them out, and let them not share with the Lord in the praise due to his name!

It was the sin of the Jews, when they had gotten a prey, they presently thought it was their own nets and drags that got it; and therefore {saith the prophet} that they sacrificed to their own nets, and offered incense to their own drags. Beloved, you will incense to your performances, as long as you go to them to be your deliverers. The deliverance from the weight of your sin, is not from the virtue of anything that you do; it is the Lord alone that lays iniquity upon Christ; and, therefore, let him alone carry away the praise and glory of it; let nothing rob him of it. In paradise the Lord made a

large grant to the sons of men in Adam; "of all the trees in the garden thou shalt eat, save only the tree of knowledge of good and evil." The Lord reserved that one tree to himself; and but that one; he gave him of his bounty to eat of every one besides; and yet such was his itching inclination, that of all others, fain would he be meddling there, till he brought ruin on his own head. In the gospel, all our grants are large. "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." {I Cor.3:21-23} "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" {Rom.8:32} Nay more, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." {Heb.8:10} The Lord thinks not much to give his Son, nor himself, to his people; but there is but one thing he keeps to himself. "I am the LORD; that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another." {Is.42:8} "I will not give my glory unto another." {Is.48:11} "For the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." {Ex.34:14} All that the Lord reserves to himself is but "the praise and glory of his own grace." Oh! Pilfer not that from God, which, when you have it, will do you no good in the world! And seeing he will have only this, do not grudge it him. It is not out of niggardliness that God keeps this to himself, for in Isa.42:6,7, you shall find that he is bountiful enough, for all that; "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison," and that will do us more good; and, that he may do us good, his own Son shall be given for a covenant; but "my glory, that shall not be given to another," as it follows presently after in the 8th verse. Oh; therefore, let not your performances, be they ever so exact, aspire so high, as to usurp that glory that is due to the Lord alone!

But some will be ready to say, though our performances do not lay our iniquities upon Christ, and therefore, ought not to have the glory of it; yet, surely, the Lord requires these duties, that he may lay our iniquities upon Christ, and so honour our services as the motives by which he is pleased to lay them upon him.

Do not mistake, beloved, performances are not only not the principal efficient, but they are not so much as the instruments, or means, of laying the iniquities of men upon Christ; nay, not as motives; and it is a gross mistake, {I would the truth might shine more clear, that I might undeceive men;} that men run away with vain imaginations, that the renewing of faith and repentance is a new laying of iniquities upon Christ; or that the Lord anew lays it on him, when we renew these duties; I say, this is a gross mistake; for God doth not lay iniquity upon Christ upon the performance of them; nay, these have no stroke in it. I would fain know this one thing, Christ being now in heaven, whether he now, before the throne of his Father, actually bears the iniquities of men? Doth Christ stand as a sinner before the face of God in glory? Certainly no unclean thing shall enter into the heavenly Jerusalem; and if, upon the renewing our repentance and faith, our sins that we commit are carried from us, and laid upon him in heaven, then he stands besmeared with the sins of men as in heaven, in glory. One sin is committed at this instant by the believer, another at that, and another at a third; and so, from the first moment, to the end of the world, there is a continual succession of acts of sin by believers. Well, what do men do? They believe and repent; and what do these do? When men believe and repent, {you say,} they lay iniquity upon Christ, and then it is upon him.

How can it possibly enter into the heart of any man, that he that is set down in glory with the Father, having done his work, finished transgression, and put an end to sin, by one sacrifice upon the cross, should yet still bear the iniquities of men upon him, before him?

Besides, beloved, I beseech you consider this one thing, if Christ hath iniquity laid upon him now, and hereafter, as men believe and repent, what course must he take to rid himself of it? If there be iniquity upon him, there must be a way for him to rid himself of it, and it must be taken off most certainly; but when the Lord laid iniquity upon Christ, he, by one offering, did so perfect the work, that he sits down, {saith the Apostle in Heb.10:12,} forever at the right hand of God; and there remaineth now no more sacrifice for sin. Without shedding of blood, there is no remission. {Heb.9:22} Wherever sin is found, there must be shedding of blood, or else there is no remission; and if sin be laid upon Christ, there must be a new shedding of blood before it can be taken away.

And therefore you must consider, that this laying of sin upon Christ, is a business that God hath done long ago, and not now to be done; for the text saith not that God lays, or will lay, iniquity upon him; but hath laid it on him; therefore, saith the apostle in Heb.9:28, "so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Christ himself must appear without sin, that he might have power to prevail with the Lord; and it is observable, that while sin lay upon him, and he was forced to bear it, he himself was forsaken of the Father.

In Daniel 9:24, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, 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." Mark, I pray ye, these "seventy weeks" were expired when Christ was upon the cross, then sin was finished, and therefore Christ said, "it is finished." Therefore, the laying of iniquity upon Christ, is not a new thing, now to be done; neither is it your faith and repentance that lay it upon him, but it is a thing done long ago. Therefore cast off gross conceit, as if God did daily lay your sins upon Christ, as you daily renew your faith and repentance.

But what do they then serve for, will you say?

I answer, they serve for this purpose; the Lord is pleased when he hath freely, and of his own accord, pardoned the sins of men, having laid them upon Christ, to reveal himself in this his grace, and manifest to them that which he hath done long before, when they meet with him in prayer, fasting, and ordinances; he is pleased to manifest in them to us, what he hath already done, and not that they are yet to be done, much less that these things do them.

Well, is it the Lord that lays iniquity upon Christ? Then behold matter of admirable consolation; none in the world like this, the Lord hath laid it; and if anything else had, but he alone, men were undone forever. God is unchangeable. "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." {Mal.3:6} That which the Lord doth is forever, not to be revoked and altered again; that which the creature doth is changeable, but God changes not.

But I must hasten. In the last place, is it then the Lord that lays iniquity upon Christ; then take it off from him who dare, and bring it back again to the poor soul, from whom the Lord hath taken it, and laid it upon him. Who art thou that darest to dispute against God? Hath not the potter power over the clay, to make of one lump a vessel of honor, and another of dishonor? If the Lord is pleased of his good will and free grace, to make thee a vessel unto honor, by purging thee thoroughly from sin, and laying it upon Christ, wilt thou dispute with God, and say thy iniquities are not laid upon him?

In Genesis, chapter 48, Joseph brings his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh to Jacob his father, to be blessed by him before he died; he brings Manasseh, and sets on Jacob's right hand, and Ephraim on his left hand; but Jacob, when he began to bless them, changed his hand, and put his left hand upon Manasseh the eldest, and his right hand upon Ephraim the youngest. Mark, what saith Joseph then? "Not so, my father; for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head;" yea, "I know it, {saith Jacob,} my son, I know it." That is not the purpose, for Manasseh "shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations." {vs.18,19} Joseph would needs correct his father, thinking he did not prudently in that he did, and that his hand was not placed right, and therefore he would be mending it. Just so we judge of God's proceedings in the dispensation of his grace to men; we think that he deals imprudently, when he lays his right hand of mercy upon the head of a notorious sinner, an enemy; and his left hand of severity upon an elder brother, a sincere man, one that walks uprightly. Not so, my father, say men, that is a wicked man, a notorious sinner; this is an honest, righteous, and godly man; this is the elder, lay thy right hand of grace upon him; I know very well, {saith God,} what they are; it is my pleasure; the youngest shall have the blessing, and the eldest go without it. You are righteous in your generation, {saith Christ,} but the publicans and harlots shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, and yourselves shall be shut out. "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." {Mt.21:31} Beloved, let the Lord lay his hand where he please, and let him dispose of

iniquity as he seeth good, and lay whose sins he please upon Christ. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." {Rom.5:10} Let no man therefore look upon human prudence, nor discourse according to reason; but let us look upon the act of God in dispensing of his grace, as he who is wisdom itself, orders it; and know that he which cannot err, disposeth of iniquity, and layeth it upon Christ; and whom he blesseth, is, and shall be blessed.

I may speak of the act of God in laying men's sins upon Christ once passed, and set forth the unchangeableness of it, by that act of Isaac blessing Jacob, though Jacob got the blessing by deceit from his father, making him to believe, that he was his eldest son; and Esau coming in afterwards for the blessing, saith Isaac, "I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed." Shall Isaac, a man, stand to what he hath done, though gotten from him by a mere cheat; and shall the Lord change in what he hath done; having laid iniquity upon Christ, shall he take it off again? "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it; or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" {Num.23:19} And therefore, beloved, you may take up that glorious challenge of the apostle in Romans, chapter 8. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." {vs.33,34} There is the ground of all; so say to you, to your spirits, who shall call me to account for my sins? Who shall lay them to my charge? Who will make me bear them on my own back? It is God himself hath taken them off, and discharged me. "It is God that justifieth me;" if man had justified me, he might have been mistaken; had he pronounced me innocent, I might have borne my sins still. "Christ died, or is rather risen again;" wherefore, who shall lay anything to our charge? And so you may trample over all the accusations of Satan upon this very consideration, that God "hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."