

SERMON XXIV

HELP LAID ON CHRIST, MIGHTY TO SAVE.

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}

Every word in this text, as I have showed before, carries a special emphasis in it, and contains a peculiar privilege of evangelic glory. We have observed already out of it. 1. That it is iniquity itself that is charged upon Christ, as well as the punishment of it; Christ did not bear only indignation, but was clad with sin; "he was made sin for us," said the apostle; and there is no possible way in the world for persons to be discharged of their sins, but by Christ, bearing sin itself.

2. This iniquity was really laid upon him; Christ was as really the bearer of the sins of God's people, as a surety is really the debtor, when he willingly puts himself in the room of the principal; insomuch, that God cannot expect the debt anywhere, but of him. Christ gives his bond, and by that, makes himself the debtor; God accepts of this, and upon it discharges the poor sinners themselves; and if he will have payment, he must have it, where he himself hath laid the debt. {II Cor.5:19-21}

3. It is the Lord that hath laid iniquity on him; which is the greatest burden in the world, and might have sunk us forever in the gulph of misery, if Christ had not put his shoulders under it.

4. None can dispose of iniquity to the comfort and safety of the people of the Lord, but he himself. Beloved, do not mistake yourselves any longer; you do but beat the air, whilst you think your prayers, tears, mourning and fasting can lay it on Christ, it is the Lord alone. Your duties, indeed, are appointed for excellent uses, but never for this, to lay iniquity upon Christ; it is the Lord alone that does it.

5. The Lord hath laid iniquity upon Christ; this is one of the comfortablest truths you can hear, or have published unto you, the transaction of sin from you to Christ is not a business now to be done, as if God were upon terms and conditions with you; I will lay your iniquities upon Christ, if you will do thus and thus. The text saith not, that the Lord will lay upon him; and yet if it did, it imports not, that he requires conditions and performances of you; but it saith, he hath laid iniquity, it is done already; your pardon is not only enacted in heaven, but it is also sealed upon earth. It is worth your observation, that which the apostle speaks in Rom.10:6-8. In the beginning of the chapter, he taxeth those froward Jews, enemies to their own peace, with the establishing of their own righteousness, or rather going about to do it, and submit not to the righteousness of God; and what is that righteousness? "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven; that is, to bring Christ down from above; or, Who shall descend into the deep; that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead? But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart." The meaning is that the gospel is not now so remote from us, that we must mount up to heaven, to fetch it down, or go down into the bottom to fetch it up, but it is within thy heart, and in thy mouth; it is come down from heaven to thee; it is not reserved there for thy fetching of it; he hath done it.

I have mentioned this again to you that you may see what comfort is in this, namely, that the Lord hath done it. It said to the king of Syria, "let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." It is the day of victory, that is the day of comfort, joy and gladness; the days before it comes, are days of fear and doubting; but when it is attained there is rejoicing. When a prisoner is condemned to die, and a friend gone to court to get his pardon, all the while it is agitating, his heart is full of tremblings, fears, and achings; but when his friend hath brought a pardon, under hand and seal, and delivered it into his hand, then he leaps and rejoices; so all the fear and bitterness

of your spirits proceed from hence, namely, oh it is yet to be done! I am afraid it may miscarry; nay, it is nigh you, in your hearts, and in your mouths; it is come to you, the Lord hath done it to your hand.

But, when did the Lord do this? From eternity, in respect of obligation; but in respect of execution, when Christ was upon the cross; in respect of applying of it to particular persons, while children are in the womb, before ever they have done good or evil. There is great diversity or judgment about this; God applies pardon of sin, say some, at the time of conversion, and persons remain in a state of wrath until then. Others rise higher; God applies it in baptism, say they; but beloved, the Lord loves his people with an everlasting love; there is not a moment of time in which iniquity is transacted back again from Christ, and remains upon a particular person. Take one unbaptized, supposing him elect, and a child of God, for whom Christ died, where are his sins? In sin he was conceived and brought into the world; where are these sins? Are they upon Christ, or upon himself, before baptism? If they were laid upon Christ, when he suffered for them; how came they back again from him? Who was the scape-goat that carried away the sins laid upon him, into a land of forgetfulness; how came they back again? If they came not back again, being laid upon Christ, then, even before baptism, the elect are discharged from sin, as other persons whose sins Christ took away.

I pass to a sixth consideration in the text, and indeed it is the basis that bears up the whole structure and frame of the gospel, putting the emphasis on the word "Him." "The Lord hath laid on Him, the iniquity of us all." It is of infinite concern, as much as life and salvation is worth, that he, who bore the iniquities of men, should have a back strong and broad enough to stand upright, and not be sunk under them. While the pillars stood firm upon which the house stood, where the princes of the Philistines met to make sport with Sampson, they were all safe; but when they sunk, the house fell, and great was the fall of it, and they all perished in it. This discharge of sin is the security of persons from wrath; if the pillars that bear it should possibly sink, all were utterly lost and come to nothing. The apostle Paul, pleading concerning the resurrection of Christ in I Cor.15:17, saith, "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins;" so if it be not Christ, on whom iniquity was laid, you are yet in your sins, and your faith is vain. Sureties are the comfort of imprisoned debtors, and yet not all, but only able ones. Let a person bring twenty to be surety for him, to his creditor; if they be all as very beggars himself, he is but where he was before, and he is not a jot the better; but let him bring one able surety, that the creditor can trust, that will pay the debt, then hath he joy and comfort. Beloved, if you had ten thousand sureties to stand for you before God, yet if they be beggars, like yourselves, there is no comfort in them. "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD," saith one, "and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" {Mic.6:6,7} No, they are not able to make satisfaction. So beloved, they are all beggars that we can bring; shall I bring one man to stand for another, or for myself? No man can make an agreement for his brother, nor redeem his own soul; it will cost more to redeem it, and therefore, he must leave it forever. But, saith the text, "the Lord laid it on him;" here is a word of comfort. "Thou spakest in vision to thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people." {Ps.89:19} But, who is this "Him" on whom iniquity is laid? Everyone will suppose, the prophet takes for granted it is Christ; and so it is; but beloved, in truth of such concern as this, it is not good to go altogether upon trust, and to receive things, because everyone receives them, but to have a sure foundation for them. Strength of consolation hath not the voice of the people, but the word of life, for its security; and therefore, it is good to see for certain, that this "Him" here, is Christ, and no other. The prophet speaks darkly, while he speaks of him that bears iniquity; the clearest expression he hath is in verse 2, for there he calls him "a root out of a dry ground;" and all along through the rest of the chapter, it is but He, and Him, and His. And indeed, it is usual with the prophets, personally to point out Christ darkly; insomuch, that the weak-sighted, or rather the envious or malignant Rabbis, as much as possibly they could, cast a mist before every truth that spake of Christ; applying them still to this, or that worthy man, among those people, as to David, or

Solomon, or Hezekiah, or such like. But the prophet, or rather the Lord, by the prophet, in this place, gives such lively characters of Christ, that they themselves were compelled to yield to the truth, that he meant him alone in this chapter. But we need not the testimony of man, {much less fear any opposition of theirs,} to testify that it is Christ, whom the Holy Ghost means by him, that is here spoken of. Observe the margin or your bibles, and you shall find in all the evangelical passages of the prophets, none come near this chapter in being applied to Christ, nor so many quotations by Christ, and his apostles, taken out of any other. To give you a hint in one or two places; iniquity was laid upon him that was "despised and rejected of men;" and "we esteemed him not." But who is this that was thus rejected of men, and not esteemed? Christ applies this passage to himself in Mark 9:12. The margin of my text refers you to that place, and that refers you to this again, "he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities," &c. Who was this? Of all the prophets, I find Daniel most privileged to speak most plainly concerning him that bears our iniquities; the Lord meant to tell Daniel a secret, that shall be an intimation of the exceeding largeness of his love to him; the secret is this. "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;" {Dan.9:24;} and afterwards he tells us, that at the end of so many weeks "shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself." {vs.26} Here you may see plainly who it is that was wounded to death for transgression, it was the Messiah, that is, Christ. Look in I Pet.2:21-24, the apostle runs over the most material passages of this very chapter, applying them by name to Christ; "Christ also suffered for us," saith he; {vs.21;} this answers to that "He was wounded for our transgressions." Christ "was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth;" he was "brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb," and "so he openeth not his mouth." {Is.53:7} This answers to that, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." {I Pet.2:22,23} "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls;" {I Pet.2:24,25;} which answers to that in Isaiah, "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." {Is.53:6} "Himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" and here "the Lord laid the iniquities of us all on him;" naming Christ in particular, as the person who in his own body bare our sins. Christ then, it is clear, is he on whom the Lord laid our iniquities. Christ, who is that? A man would think it strange, that in a Christian congregation there needs this A. B. C. to be taught to people, as to who Christ is? Moses unveiled, say some; and if that be true, I am sure Moses' veil will obscure Christ; and I doubt there is so much of Moses in the minds and preaching of men, that Christ is quite forgotten among them. It is worth the while beloved, to know what this Christ is that was to bear iniquity; he must be something else than the common apprehension of men is of him, to do this, to bare our sins. The prophet tells us that he is Emmanuel, and the Holy Ghost in Matt.1.23, expounds it, "they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Christ is such a "Him" who is God and man; nay more, he is God and man so united, that both make but one person; and this one is he that bears our iniquities. Christ is so one, as that the several properties of each nature do not reserve themselves solely to themselves, but communicate them to the whole. The divine properties of Christ's Godhead are not so inseparable to it, but the virtue thereof is communicated unto his human nature; and the virtue of the Divine Nature of Christ, is that which makes Christ of steel, as I may so speak; not to bow or bend under the heaviest weight that can possibly be laid upon him.

The Godhead, it is true, is incapable to bear iniquity, and the human nature is as incapable of bearing it to any purpose. Should iniquity be laid upon the human nature, and the divine nature not support it, it would have sunk under sin, as a mere human creature. Christ "was made in the likeness of sinful flesh;" in respect of flesh it was the same, in respect of sin he was like it. He did not sin, yet he bore it, by the imputation of it, upon him; what now could this mere creature do; and how could it

be strengthened enough to bear that weight that would crush a mere creature to dust and powder? But now, if the humanity bear sin, and the divinity bears it up in suffering, this gives such infinite validity to the obedience of Christ, both active and passive, that it becomes effectual to the purging away of sin. Take a dark illustration of it. The body of a man bears a burden, the soul is incapable of it, but it keeps up the body from sinking under it; set a dead man on his legs, and lay a small weight upon his shoulders, he sinks under the burden and that falls upon him. What makes the living man stand to it, and carry it away? It is the soul in him that strengthens the body, and bears it up to stand under it, and bear it away. So the divine nature is a kind of soul to the humanity, consisting of soul and body, and is the form and strength of both; for the soul of Christ's human nature is not as the soul in man, giving being to the man, as is well observed; that is, as a form giving being and strength to the person of Christ; for in us the reasonable soul gives life and being to us, but in Christ the Godhead gives life to the reasonable soul of Christ; for, as the philosophers say, there are three souls, the vegetative in plants, the sensitive in brutes, and the reasonable soul in man; yet in man the reasonable soul is from and hath the other two virtually in itself; thus the soul gives life to us; the Godhead gives life to Christ, and so all the sufficiency to bear iniquity proceeds from that. Now beloved, when we consider Christ, we are not to conceive as if he were in all respects distinct from God, as usually we are apt to imagine; we conceive otherwise when we hear Christ did such a thing, than we do when we hear God did such a thing; but Christ is the one God assuming human nature; and God in it manages those things that concern the welfare of his people.

The main thing I drive at, at this time, concerning this point of laying iniquity upon Christ, is to show what special ends and purposes the Lord hath in singling out him alone to bear iniquity. Though the Lord is pleased at all times to work strange wonders, yet never did God do such a wonderful thing, to the amazement of the creature, as this one thing, to lay iniquity upon Christ. Sin is the hate-fullest thing in the world to God; where it is found, a toad is not so odious unto man, as that person is in the sight of God; for though the Lord professeth he doth not afflict willingly, yet it agrees with his nature; but sin is most horrible and abominable; nay, the only abhorred thing in the world to God; that God should make Christ a beggar in the world, and the scorn of it, and make him suffer the most shameful, nay, the most accursed death, the death of the cross, is much; yet all this may agree with the nature of God; but, that he should make Christ to be sin, is out of the reach of all the creatures in the world to apprehend how he should do it, and yet retain his love and respect to him.

Surely beloved, a work of such an extraordinary nature as this is, to lay iniquity upon Christ, must needs have suitable ends. You will laugh at that man that will build a famous structure to keep a kennel of dogs in; to be at such cost for base ends. The end of things is always the rule and line by which they are measured; the end is always first in intention, though last in execution; and being first in intention, is that which all things conduce unto. A man makes a mold to cast a vessel, or a piece of ordnance; he hath the form of it in his head, and according to that he casts it, and fits his molds, and suits all his materials. God hath special ends in his heart, for which he lays iniquity upon Christ; and certainly the thing itself must answer the end, and the end must be answerable to that, for God doth all things in weight and measure, and proportion.

And the truth is beloved, there are admirable ends, every way answering that miraculous work of the Lord's laying iniquity upon Christ; I shall instance in particulars, and therein show how marvelously the Lord sees himself out to the world by it; in nothing did he ever show himself, as in this thing. The ends are many, I shall show you some of the chief, by God's assistance.

1. The Lord laid iniquity upon Christ, that so he may lay help upon one that is mighty. "Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people." {Ps.89:19}

2. That Christ might satisfy his great longing, which he had lost, if iniquity had not been laid upon him. "But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" {Lk.12:50}

3. That he himself might be fully satisfied to his own content, and be at rest. God himself if I may so speak, had not been at rest within himself, if iniquity had not been laid upon Christ; nothing

else could have satisfied him, that he might sit down in the enjoyment of himself as he would. "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God." {Heb.10:12}

4. That he might show to the world, especially to his own people, the exceeding horrid loathsomeness of sin, and the inconceivable measure of sinfulness that is in it; as there is nothing that ever the Lord did, or the wit of man can do, could set out the abominableness of sin, as this one thing, the laying of iniquity upon Christ.

5. That he might commend that unsearchable love of his to the sons of men; with a witness, as I may say, God herein declares his love to man; many and sundry ways indeed he manifests it; as "he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust;" {Mt.5:45;} but all other ways of manifestation of the love of God to men, come infinitely short of this expression of his, laying iniquity upon Christ. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." {Jn.15:13} "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." {Rom.5:10} But if this were a commendation of his love, what a commendation of it is here expressed, that he should not only die for enemies, but bear that very enmity itself upon him? That Christ should bear our sins is more by far than the former.

6. That he might make a clean people; a people clean and fair enough for himself to take pleasure in. There is no way in the world to make them so, that God might delight in them, but the laying iniquity upon Christ; this was the way to make them all fair and lovely, without, any spot; or wrinkle. "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." {Eph.5:27}

7. That the people of Christ might have strong consolation; there is but weak consolation in everything in the world, but in this one truth {the Lord hath laid iniquity upon Christ} that people can shed tears, pray, fast, and mourn, affords but weak consolation to this; for here is the fulness of it. That "we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." {Heb.6:18}

8. That his people might serve him the more freely, less interruptedly, and more zealously. There are many promises, as encouragements, to call out the people of God to serve him; but there is none takes off the soul from all kind of terror and slavish fear, but this, that the Lord hath laid our iniquity upon Christ.

9. That at the appointed time of the Father, his people might enjoy the purchased inheritance, and the promised possession. There is no possession of the glory laid up for the saints in light, but by laying iniquity upon Christ; no unclean thing can enter into the kingdom of heaven. When we attain to the height of sanctification, we remain yet unclean, for there is pollution in the best of it. When we die, suppose we are more holy in life than any that went before us; yet there is not so much holiness of life in us, but that there remains still some uncleanness, and un-mortification of life in thoughts and practice, some deadness and indisposition in our hearts and affections to holiness; and, with this unholiness, we lie down in the dust, if all our uncleanness were not laid upon Christ, that so we might enter into rest, as perfect and complete in him.

These are admirable ends! All the joys and comfort of believers, have their basis in these jointly, nay, in these severally and apart being all of them full of sweetness, and wine refined upon the lees.

The Lord laid the iniquities of men upon Christ, to the end to lay help upon one that is mighty. You know beloved, what our Saviour taxeth that foolish man with, that began to build, but could not finish; and, for the prevention of such folly, advises them to whom he spake, first, to sit down and consider what it would cost them; not like a forward person that goes out to war with an enemy, not considering his own, or the strength of his enemy; that is like the man that began to build, and could not finish. {Lk.14:28-31} God is more wise than to begin thus, and let the work sink under his hands; his full purpose was, and is, to save that which was lost, and gather together the dispersed; now had he gone any other way to work, as it appears to us, he had miscarried. Had not the Lord prepared

Christ a body, and fitted it to suffer for us, we had lain still in our sins; it lay, therefore, upon his honour and credit, that seeing he would save sinners, he should go that way wherein he might go through his plan, and that was to lay iniquity upon Christ. And, that this was the only way, you shall find expressly, in Isa.28:16, a notable prophecy concerning Christ; there the Lord is manifesting that his main purpose was, in the great business of saving men from their sins, to find out such a one that there might be some rest to him, and that he might not fail in it. "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." Mark how the Lord presses, as I may so speak, by gradations, the stability of the way found out for the saving of men from sin. "I lay in Zion, for a foundation;" a foundation, what is that? Foundations, you know, are the bottoms of buildings that must bear up the weight of the whole structure, though never so heavy; that is the property of a foundation. Now, saith he, "for a foundation, I lay in Zion a stone." You know what our Saviour saith, in Matt.7:26,27. "Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it." Here was a sinking foundation; and so all sinks, because the foundation falls; but mark, saith God, "I will lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone;" a rock that will not sink, nor yield, but stand firm. So that you see the foundation upon which our sins, the heaviest things in the world, are laid, is a stone; that is, Christ that will not sink; but, he saith, not only that he is a stone, but he is also a tried stone. You know that *probatum est*, {it is proven,} written to a thing, gives abundance of worth to it. Armor of proof is precious, and is highly esteemed; that armor that is shot against, and yet not pierced, is tried, and hath *probatum est* upon it; so Christ is made of the Lord the foundation to bear all our iniquities, as he was proved and tried; he was tried by God, by man, by devils, by the godly, and in all he proved a tried stone that will not fail. He was tried by God, by his council in heaven, and with the weight of his wrath upon him on earth, when he suffered; you see that the Lord not only set men upon him, but planted his own cannons against him; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yet Christ stands fast, "it is finished," saith he; "Father, I have done the work that thou hadst given me to do." You see that the cannons of God's wrath could not beat through him. "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. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" {Rom.8:33-35} These could not break through this rock; he stands sure in all their batteries; he is a tried stone. He was tried by man too; and when all men tried, yet still he was a stone, and a tried stone. The godly tried him, he never fails, nor forsakes them; "the LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower;" {Ps.18:2;} saith David; he found him so, and in Ps.46:3, "therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;" I will not be moved, I will lie down in rest and be quiet. "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." {Ps.46:10}

You that are oppressed in your spirits, in respect of the weight of sin, you apply to yourselves; if you would but try Christ, and acknowledge him the bearer of your transgressions, you should have sweet rest, and settlement to your spirits. "Son, be of good cheer," saith Christ, "thy sins are forgiven thee?" They that try Christ shall find themselves of good cheer; for they find by his bearing their iniquities, that nothing can pierce them. He that hath a shield of steel, and a proved one too, all the darts that come upon it, do not any more offend, pierce, or wound that person's breast, than if there were no darts in the world shot against it. Just such a shield is Christ; and, because of this, was he singled out to bear iniquity; and to this purpose, that he might bear off all the violence, that all the wicked men in the world can do, put together; all the forces they can use, or raise against Christ, to trample down his honour, and lay it with the ground, what becomes of it all? "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD." {Is.54:17} We that have experience of it; there is not one weapon this day, to your

knowledge, that hath prospered against Christ, nor shall any hereafter. Christ is all steel, all marble; and if there be a stone that cannot be pierced, he is that. It is Christ that bears thy iniquities, that is such one; and if he had not been such a one, God had been disappointed in his purpose. God's people are called sheep, as the devil is too subtle for them; the world is cunning, and they would soon be ensnared; but God hath chosen out a mighty one, one infinitely wise, to find out all the plots of his enemies, and to turn all their cunning into folly.

The devil, and the world, have tried him; all the elect have tried him, and death too; and all that could be done against him came to nothing; that all might see, what a mighty champion God had to save poor sinners, that trust in, and rest, upon him. The Lord laid iniquity on such a mighty one, that every one that lifts up the heel, may dash against the stones, and kick against the pricks, rather to hurt themselves, than the people of God.

Oh, beloved, that you could but behold the firmness of this rock, upon whom your iniquities are laid; it is not the storm of a temptation against you, that shall make you fall; nor the blustering of divine wrath breaking forth, for the ungodliness of the world, that shall make you shake and tremble; the house that is built upon the sand indeed, shall be beaten down, when these storms beat and blow; but the house built upon the rock, stands as firm, as if there never were a blast at all.

We should consider; the other particular ends and purposes of God's laying iniquity upon Christ; and they are all of them so full of marrow and fatness, that it is pity to cast them aside, and not taste and eat abundantly of them. I should therefore proceed to the opening of the rest of them; some of which I shall speak of in the afternoon.