

SERMON XXV

THE JUSTICE OF GOD SATISFIED BY CHRIST ALONE

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"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 often told you, hath special weight. It is iniquity that is laid on Christ, as well as the punishment of iniquity. "He was made sin for us." Sin is a debt, Christ is a surety; the debt of sin as he is a surety, is as really his, though not his own contracted, as if he had really contracted it himself; his own by imputation; so far his own, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." II Cor.5:19}

And it is the Lord that laid our iniquities upon him; it is too much presumption to give the glory of it unto any creature; it is God's glory alone; nothing of man, in man, or from man does it, but the Lord himself.

And the Lord hath done it; it is not now to be done; it is past, he hath laid iniquity. Also, observe out of the words, this, that we are now to come unto; "that the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Had our sins been disposed of anywhere else, but on him, they had recoiled back upon us again; none can bear iniquity, to carry it into the land of forgetfulness, but the scape-goat, Christ. It is Christ alone, on whom the iniquities of believers are laid for their discharge.

This proposition that our iniquities are laid on Christ is the basis that upholds all the consolation revealed in this chapter.

The main thing, I shall insist upon, will be to consider, what answerable ends the Lord might have in this most admirable work, of laying iniquity upon Christ; there is no work that administers matter of astonishment, and puts the reason and judgments of men, so much to a nonplus, as this one work of laying men's sins upon Christ; it must needs then have suitable ends; being but a means to conduce to higher purposes.

1. One great end of laying iniquity upon Christ, is, that the "Lord might lay help upon one that is mighty;" that so seeing he hath undertaken to discharge the poor believer from iniquity, he might go through the work, and not leave it by halves. Had iniquity been laid anywhere, but on Christ, the work of taking it away had been left unfinished, so far as it appears to us; it is not conceivable to any man under heaven, how iniquity should be carried away, but by the "Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." But I will proceed; there are many other remarkable uses and ends, for which the Lord laid iniquity upon Christ.

2. That the LORD might have the satisfaction and reparation of the injury done unto him, to his full content. It cannot be imagined, by all the wits in the world, how the justice of God violated, should be so satisfied, as in laying iniquity upon Christ. When Adam sinned, and by that act involved himself, and his whole posterity, into a state of transgression; nay, into a constant course of enmity and rebellion against God; by which justice was extremely violated, and the Divine Majesty insufferably affronted; it concerned God, for the maintenance of the honour of justice, to take order for the reparation of the violation, and affront of it. God could as soon cease to be, as not to take order, that justice violated, should be satisfied. You have an ordinary rule that "whatever is in God, is God himself;" and so let justice be once torn from the Divine Nature, and it ceases to be. In this regard, I say, it concerns God, to repair his justice in the largest way of satisfaction, that might answer it to the full; and yet, nevertheless, though the Lord was resolved, that justice should not be violated; for it is a certain position with God that "heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot and tittle of God's word shall fall to the ground;" much less a jot or tittle {if I may so speak} of his essence shall fall; yet, I say, though the Lord would have justice, even to the utmost satisfied; it was at the same instant, and everlastingly in his thought, that some few of those creatures that had thus violated it, should not sink under that reparation that it stood upon. Now here comes in a business, that no wisdom, but the infinite wisdom of God, could possibly either conceive, or contrive, to wit, a way of reconciliation of his justice and mercy; in the saving of such creatures, justice should be fully repaired, and yet the creature, violating justice, be saved, is a riddle that none but God himself could

ever untie. These two things therefore being jointly settled in the thoughts of God himself, he casts about with himself, how he might maintain and manifest both, without the prejudice of either.

The Psalmist saith, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." {Ps.85:10} Here is the agreement between both. The Lord knew well, that if the creatures violating justice, were themselves to make satisfaction to it, they must sink and perish, and be undone for ever; there was like to be nothing but ruin, and that eternal; and this payment would be very slow, and destructive to the creature, therefore God liked it not.

The prophet Ezekiel speaks expressly that the Lord desired not the death of a sinner. "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" {Ez.33:11} I will not stand to discourse nicely, as if there were any difference between the desire and will in God; for I know there is none; but in respect of the manifestation of the mind of God to us, we may conceive, that the Lord, for the satisfying of justice, will rather have the creature destroyed, than the continual violation of it should be without reparation; yet this cannot be called pleasure or delight, that he hath in this thing; but for the prevention of the violation of his justice, he is contented, the creatures should some of them perish. "I desire not the death of a sinner;" it is not the delight I have, I take no pleasure in the thing.

I say, therefore, seeing it is the pleasure of God, that some of his creatures should not perish, and yet justice violated should be repaid too; he casts about with himself, how these two things might stand together, and not one jar against the other; for this purpose, it pleased the Lord at the first, to propound to himself, and so to publish his mind to his people, concerning a way of reparation, by some present payment, in the blood of bulls and goats, and other sacrifices; upon the heads of which, as you have it in Lev.1:4, those that offer the sacrifices, were to lay their hands, and so there was a manifestation of atonement; in this, God had some content, for that time; but the full pleasure of the Lord, was not answered in this way of reparation; no, not though Jesus Christ himself, was shadowed out under those sacrifices; yet the Lord saw not that fulness of content to himself in this obscure way; and therefore, he finds out a better, and a more contenting way to himself; and what was that, you will say? Look in Heb.10:1-10, and you shall there find, how the apostle fully shows, that the Lord was not to the utmost so satisfied, as he would be, in that first way; and, also, what way he sets up to give himself full content, and that gives direct answer to the thing in hand. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not," {saith Christ,} "in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure;" mark but this phrase and expression well; which plainly shows the way that God then took, to repay his own justice in the blood of bulls and goats; though for the time it gave him some, yet not that full content, such as he could take full pleasure.

But some will be ready to say, that when the apostle spake thus of sacrifices and burnt offerings, he meant those simply considered, without respect unto Christ whom they typified.

To this I answer, that not only in the sacrifices, simply considered in themselves, without Christ, God took no pleasure, is his meaning, but under favour, he goeth further; for, if you mark the opposition well, you shall find it is not made between them considered as types of Christ, and considered simply, and abstractedly from him their substance; but the opposition is made between the whole service, as it then was, and the new way that Christ, when he came in the flesh, brought into the world to please God with; therefore saith Christ, immediately after, because thou hast no pleasure in them, "Lo, I come" {in the volume of the book it is written of me,} it is my delight "to do thy will, O God;" and in that he saith, "Lo, I come," "he taketh away the first that he might establish the second." So that you see he makes the difference between this way that God took to satisfy himself then, and the way in which he was satisfied when Christ came in person, wherein he, by once offering up himself, perfected for ever them that are sanctified; {vs.10;} the way in which Christ comes to give God satisfaction, is, by his personal offering up of himself a sacrifice; though Christ was darkly apprehended under those sacrifices of bulls and goats, yet God did not take so full pleasure in them, as he did in Christ once offering up himself; and therefore he saith, after he had once offered up himself, "he sat down at the right hand of God." {vs.12} It is therefore Christ's personal bearing of iniquity upon the cross, once for all, that gives unto the Lord full pleasure and content; and hence you shall find in the same epistle, when the Lord had before established the priesthood, after the order of Aaron, and that administration of service that was among them, the apostle declares that he changed it; and the reason of this change he also shows in Heb.10:1; because, "for the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect." There being a necessity of remembering sin again every year; so that this was but a lingering payment by piece-meals, as I may so say, I mean in respect of the manifestation of the mind of God. Indeed such a full way of payment

God hath in his secret thoughts in Christ, as that he was then fully satisfied and contented in them; but he did not manifest himself in those sacrifices, and in that administration, to have such complete payment all at once, as when Christ came into the world; therefore as the priesthood was changed, so Christ, being made a priest, after the order of Melchisedec, God liked his payment so well, that he swears, that notwithstanding Aaron's order, "thou art a priest for ever." I say again, the Lord took such full content in Christ's personal bearing iniquity, that now he seeth, that there is no way in the world to give himself satisfaction, or could be devised, like this way; and for this cause, the former priesthood being changed, he saith, nay, he swears, "thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec;" so that by this you may perceive, how abundantly the Lord found himself satisfied in his mind in this, that iniquity is laid upon his own Son; no way in the world would have done but this.

If any man should undertake to agree for his brother, he could not give God content; no man can redeem his brother; it costs so much to redeem a soul, he must leave it for ever. It is not the fruit of the body that can answer for the sin of the soul, that cannot give God content; though a man could establish an innocent, nay, an angelic righteousness, yet this could not satisfy God to his content; it is this, "Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God," that gives him full content, Christ's own coming to bear iniquity.

It may be you will say, what did Christ come for, when he saith, "Lo, I come?" I answer, it is plain he came to be in the room of those sacrifices that went before; and why did he come in their room, it may be further demanded? God could not take full pleasure in them; therefore he came to give satisfaction in their place.

Now, what was the office, you will say, of the priest in offering sacrifice? It was, by that offering them; atonement might be pronounced by the priest upon the people, they laying their hands upon the head of the beast.

Now the business of Christ's coming for the pleasing of his Father, was to bear the sins of his people, which those sacrifices bore, {Christ being typified under them,} but imperfectly in regard of that full satisfaction he gave; for there is none like this. In Prov.8:30, observe how Christ, under the name of Wisdom, declares the Lord's pleasure in him. "I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;" as if God could not look upon anything as his delight, but only his Son. "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." {Mt.3:17}

Yea, may some say, as he was the Son of God, he was daily his delight; wherefore, in verse 31, you shall see in what respect he was so; for he saith immediately after, "my delights were with the sons of men." Here Christ seems to apply the delight that his Father took in him, unto this condition, as his delight was with the sons of men; and wherein doth Christ express it more than in this, in that whereas they were sunk in sin and misery, it was his delight to recover them, and bring them to shore with safety, that would have been drowned, except he had laid hold of them, and took them out; and hence in Isaiah 53:11,12, the Lord expresses himself wherein he taketh his greatest satisfaction. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied;" what was that? Certainly the bearing of the iniquities of all his elect upon himself, on his own body on the tree. The hand of God was just, and could not but be so; it could not smite but where it found a fault; the transaction of the iniquities of men on Christ, by way of Suretyship, drew the stripes of the Lord upon him, and so "he beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied; and the pleasure of the Lord," saith the same prophet, "shall prosper in his hands." What was in the hands of Christ, that the Lord saith should prosper? This was the main thing, the taking away the sins of the world, as John the Baptist testifieth; for this was the very office of him, and the glory of his ministry, to point out with his finger unto Christ, and say, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." {Jn.1:29} This was the chief business of Christ which "prospered in his hands;" the handy-work of Christ is done with such effect and fruit, that the pleasure of the Lord prospered; so far as that prospered, the pleasure of the Lord prospered and is fulfilled.

This is of infinite concern to us, that our iniquities be laid upon such a back, that God may take full satisfaction to himself; if any man conceive that the coming of Christ into the world, proclaims a mitigation of divine justice, I think they are much mistaken; Christ came not to abolish the law, much less to take anything away of the Divine Essence of God himself.

That Christ should make the justice of God more remiss, is to rob God; and the pleasure of the Lord could not prosper in the hands of such as should rob him of that which is so near and dear unto him; therefore the mitigation of Divine Justice was not the business of Christ, which prospering pleased God; but in that the back of Christ was made strong and broad enough to bear the weight of vindictive justice, therefore the pleasure of the Lord prospered. "A body hast thou prepared me;" that is, the Lord fitted and steeled Christ to be able in bearing of iniquity, that he might fetch his full stroke, and take out the full payment that justice itself could require of him; and this infinitely

concerns us, that Christ is the person on whom iniquity is laid, whereby justice is satisfied to the full; for certainly, if our Surety had not given to the Lord that full content he desired, woe had been to every one of us; for so much of divine justice as was not satisfied upon the back of Christ, the Lord would have looked for upon our own. This is certain, that eparation must be had; so that had not Christ suffered; had it not been that God acknowledged himself that he had all the satisfaction he looked for, or could desire, he had come upon every person where anything was left behind unsatisfied. Now all the creatures under heaven, put them together, could not give God perfect satisfaction for sin; there would have been something behind, that the elect could never reach unto; and in what a sad condition then should they have been, when God should have come in flaming fire to take vengeance upon them, which he might do; nay, which he would have done, if he had not taken full satisfaction upon Christ. Had not he worn out the rod of vengeance to the stumps, the remainder should have been upon our backs, and that would have pierced us with an everlasting sting. Certainly there is not the least sin, but deserves all the punishment of this, and of the world to come; and if Christ did not give God full satisfaction for both, he did for neither; and it could not have been said of him that the LORD "beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied," if there had remained anything to be done after Christ had done his work.

Beloved, it was the happiest day that ever came, and the gladdest tidings ever heard, that "mercy and truth met together, and that righteousness and peace kissed each other;" for if God in his infinite wisdom had not brought it thus to pass by the sufferings of his Son, all the world should have sunk and perished for ever; for before these glorious attributes of God should have grated and jarred one against another.

3. As the laying of iniquity upon Christ was that which gave God full satisfaction, when nothing else could do it; so he did it, to save Christ's longing. The truth is, beloved, as Christ studied nothing more than to give his Father content, so he again desired nothing more than to give his Son content, and to answer him in that he most affected and desired. It is true that poor sinners are saved by Christ, but that is a subordinate thing; Christ's main aim is at giving his Father content. "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." {Jn.17:4} And in another place, "and this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." {Jn.6:39} In that Christ "took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, the death of the cross, therefore God hath highly exalted him." The eye of Christ was upon the pleasing of his Father, and to give him consent; as the glory of God is the chiefest end of all things, the same was the chief end in Christ's eye, in procuring the salvation of his people.

The Lord delights in his Son; "I was daily his delight," saith Christ. {Prov.8:30} He took delight in nothing so much as in him; now what is the fruit, the consequence of it? "And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I knew that thou hearest me always;" saith he, John 11:42. There is nothing he desires, cost what it will, but the Father will give it him, and part with for his sake. Now what is it that he desires of the Father above all things? "My delights were with the sons of men." {Prov.8:31} Observe the universality of the expression; he saith, not only some, but "all" my delight was with them; I care for nothing else but that they might do well; let it therefore cost what it will, so that the sons of men miscarry not, I shall have my heart's desire. Take away these from Christ, and you take away the delight of his soul. If God could, or would not, give Christ the sons of men, he must cross his mind; but now, rather than that should be crossed, Christ must bear iniquity, forasmuch as there was no other way to save poor lost miserable man. It is true, the bearing of iniquity itself, simply considered, is no desirable thing; and therefore of itself, it could not be the object of Christ's longing, nor desirable unto him, but as it served for a further end, and conduced to advance that which he took most delight in; so, for that, he desired and longed to bear it. And, for the proof of this, you shall find many expressions of scripture, by which it will appear that there is nothing in the world Christ hath thirsted after so much as to bear the sins of men, and the wrath of God that is due to them. In Psalm 19:5, the Psalmist speaks literally indeed of the sun in the firmament, but mystically of Christ, that it goeth forth "as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race." Christ is the sun of righteousness; the sun hastens not more to dispel the corrupt vapours and fogs that are settled upon the earth, and to exhale them up towards itself from it, that so it may be clear and wholesome, than Christ hastened, nay, eagerly longed to exhale those noxious and corrupt vapours of sinfulness and wrath due to his own people, that they may be a peculiar people, all fair before God, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, as in Eph.5:27. No strong man is more hot and eager to a combat, wherein he hopes to work deliverance for those that are captives, than Christ is to fight the battle of the poor captives of the Lord, that they may be redeemed from bondage. Christ "hast ascended on high, thou hast led

captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." {Ps.68:18} Such gifts had Christ and that for the rebellious, even when they were no better; such as the leading captivity captive, delighting as a strong man to run his race. There is no man more eager to run a race to win the goal, than Christ was to obtain this one thing, to deliver man from the bondage of sin and misery. In Psalm 40:8, the Psalmist hath this expression, when Christ had said, "Lo I come," presently he adds, "I delight to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is written in my heart;" or, as it is in the margin, "it is written in the midst of my bowels;" as much as to say, the bowels of Christ do yearn within him, to come in the room of a burnt-sacrifice, to bear the sins of the people; "it is written as a law in my heart; it is my great delight."

In Luke 12:50, you shall find how mightily the heart of Christ was set upon it to bear the iniquity of his people; "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" What was this baptism? It was nothing else but Christ's bearing our sins upon the cross, as Peter expresses it, in I Pet.2:24, "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."

This was the thing Christ so much longed for, and was so much straitened in his spirit about, that he could not be at rest till it was accomplished; and, in Luke 22:15, you shall further see, how he was set upon it, "and he said unto them, with desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." The Passover, you know, was nothing else but the paschal lamb slain and eaten, and a type of Christ, and his bearing and suffering for sin; Christ is that paschal lamb, "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Now, "with desire I have desired to eat" it, saith Christ; what is that he means? That his heart was so eager of being the paschal lamb, and to bear iniquity, that he could hardly stay, but must be acting it in every type; he had such a mind to bear the sins of his people, that, for the sake of it, he desires with desire to act the thing in the type of it. The phrase expresses largeness of bowels, that he could not contain himself.

Now, beloved, what thing else in all the world, could satisfy the longing of Christ, but having the thing that his heart was act upon? When women long, how do you satisfy them? They long for one thing, do you give them another? Nay, that will not give them content; you must give them the thing they long for. This was the longing of Christ to bear the sins of his people, to come in the room of burnt-sacrifices. Now how could this longing of his be satisfied, but by having the thing his heart desired?

This is a thing which infinitely concerns every soul that would have joy unspeakable and glorious founded upon a rock that cannot be shaken, that Christ did long for this thing. Certainly it cost the Father such a price, to make Christ an offering for sin, that if he himself had not had a mighty mind to it, he could not have pressed him, nor have yielded to give his own dear and only Son, and deliver him up for us all. Oh! What a task was he put unto! It went to the heart of him {as I may so say} to do it. What thing in heaven or earth could have ever moved him to do it, but only the longing of Christ, his own willingness? You see how God advances the renown of Abraham, in that he spared not his only son, but yielded him up in the integrity of his heart, that was so dear unto him; therefore, saith he, "in blessing I will bless thee, &c." Certainly God could not part with anything in the world that went so near to his heart, as his Son Christ, much more his forsaking of him, as he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God saith elsewhere of him, "thou art my beloved Son, I am well pleased with thee." {Matt.3:17} And yet now to forsake this beloved Son, how near must this needs touch his heart? Now what could move the Father to this strange, this unparalleled act of his, but the extreme eagerness of Christ? And what moved Christ to this, but that he well knew, that if he had not suffered, his poor little flock should have been for ever drowned; he had for ever lost that which the Father had given him, and they had perished; this made him long to bear iniquity, and his longing made the Father willing that he should bear it.

You that are fathers can apprehend what a thing it is, to have your child's throat cut, especially you that have but one son, how near would it go to your heart! But to have his throat cut, and that for the saving of a varlet that would have cut yours, if it had been in his power, is not this example beyond your reach? God did this for you; and this is not all, he was not only contented to let Christ suffer, but was himself a spectator, and beheld him suffering, and saw the tragedy acted; and this was not all neither, but he had his own hands in it; there was his determinate council upon it; nay, more, there was actually the hand of God himself upon him; he did not only put him into, and leave him in the hands of miscreants and devils, to revile and blaspheme him, but takes him up himself and scourge him with the rod of his own indignation.

Oh! What should thus turn the bowels of God, to break out so upon his dear Son Christ, to beat and bruise him as he did, but his own longing! Oh, it is of infinite concern unto us, that the bowels of Christ were unto such a work; for the weight of it would have been so heavy, and the task

so great, that without some vehement incentive, he could never have brooked it; so tedious it was that you know what he said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" if he had not had a longing, the bitterness of the cup would have made him flinch from the thing; but his heart was so set upon it, that he overlooks all this, and will go perfectly through the work.

You know how the eagerness of a man in a business that he delights in makes him overlook discouragements in it that will make others give it over. It is said of Jacob, though he served seven years under Laban, and that with rigour, for Rachel, "yet he thought it but a little time;" and why was that? Because he loved her! Love breaks through all difficulties; so then the heart of Christ being so set upon the thing, that iniquity should be laid upon him, therefore it was done, or else Christ should have lost his longing.

4. The Lord laid iniquity upon Christ, to the end that he might show to the world, especially to his own people the most abominable loathsomeness and filthiness of sin. Beloved, it is but a mistake in the minds of some people, that the preaching of the gospel of Christ, Christ's bearing the iniquities of his people, is a way to lessen the apprehension of the ugliness of sin. I dare be bold to say, all the rhetoric in the world, setting out all the aggravations of sin, and thundering out all the threatenings and curses of the law, with all the terrors of God's wrath for it; nay, the execution of the terrible wrath of God, all at once, upon all the creatures in the world, could not, would not, so discover the abominable loathsomeness and filthiness of sin in the sight of God, as this one act of God's laying iniquity upon his Son. If the entire world should sustain iniquity, and thereby all the wrath of God at once, the Lord should lay his wrath but upon mere creatures, when all that were done; but when he lays iniquity upon his Son, and spends his entire wrath upon him, this shows an extreme bitterness of the heart of God against sin. If a man meet with a Spaniard, or any he is at open enmity with, and smite, or slay him, there would not hereby appear such indignation against this enemy, as if this man should take his own son, and go near to cut his throat, for committing some act against his pleasure. A man will beat his servant for a fault, when his son for the same shall go free, and there shall be no notice taken of it; but if at another time you shall find his spirit so stirred up, that he lays about him, and is ready to brain his child, if he comes near him; this shows the depth of indignation that is raised in him, and the greatness of the fault in his eye, that stirred it up. Now, beloved, when the Lord should be moved, that he doth not only fall foul upon all the creatures, but upon his own Son, and becomes the executioner of him, and delivers up his soul for sin; what an expression of wrath against sin is here? A mild and meek master when he is provoked to beat his servant, and to turn him out of doors, it signifies the fault to be great; but when the son cannot be spared, but must be forsaken, this must be a fault that nothing else can take off the edge of spirit against it; and I say, the smarting of the Son of God's love, especially in such a manner as he did, certainly shows the extremity of the indignation of God against sin.

Therefore beloved, if ever you would come to see the evil of sin, that it may be a bridle to restrain you from it; when profit and pleasure, or any such thing come in, and would tempt you to sin, look upon Christ, and see that God would not spare him a stroke; and all this for thy sake, lest thou should perish under this vengeance; and wilt not thou fear to commit that sin, that cost so many blows to his dearest Son? There are many other admirable reasons, wherefore God laid iniquity upon his Son; but I cannot speak further of them now.