

## SERMON XIX.

The Saints coming home to GOD by Reconciliation and  
Glorification, opened and applied.

1 PET. iii. 18.

*For Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.*

**T**HE scope of the apostle in this place is to prepare and fortify Christians for a day of suffering. In order to their cheerful sustaining whereof, he prescribeth two excellent rules of mighty use for all suffering Christians.

*First*, To get a good conscience within them, ver. 16, 17. *hic murus aheneus esto.*

*Secondly*, To set the example of Christ's sufferings before them, ver. 18. "For Christ hath once suffered for sinners;" the sufferings of Christ for us, is the great motive engaging Christians to suffer cheerfully for him.

In the words before us we have,

*First*, The sufficiency and fulness of Christ's sufferings intimated in that particle [once]; Christ needs to suffer no more, having finished and completed that whole work at once.

*Secondly*, The meritorious cause of the sufferings of Christ, and that is sin, *Christ once suffered for sins*; not his own sins, but ours; as it follows in the next clause, which is the third thing here observable, viz.

*Thirdly*, The admirable grace and unexampled love of Christ to us sinners, *the just for the unjust*; in which words the substitution of Christ in the room and place of sinners, the vicegerence of his death is plainly expressed. Christ died not only *nostro bono*, for our good, but also *nostro loco*, in our stead.

*Fourthly*, Here is also the final cause or design and scope of the sufferings of Christ, which was *to bring us to God*.

*Fifthly*, Here is also the issue of the sufferings of Christ, which was the death of Christ in the flesh, and the quickening of Christ after death by the Spirit. Many excellent observations are lodged in the bosom of this scripture; all which I must pass over in silence at this time, and confine my discourse to the final cause of the sufferings of Christ, namely, *that he might bring us to God*: where the observation will be plainly and briefly this.

Doct. *That the end of Christ's cursed death, and bitter sufferings, was to bring all those for whom he died unto God.*

In the explication and preparation of this point for use, two things must be spoken unto, viz.

1. What Christ's bringing us to God imports?

2. What influence the death of Christ hath upon this design of bringing us to God?

*First*, What Christ's bringing us to God imports? And certainly there be many great and excellent things contained in this expression: more generally it notes our state of reconciliation, and our state of glorification. By reconciliation we are brought nigh to God, Eph. ii. 13. "Ye are made nigh," i. e. reconciled, "by the blood of Christ," Heb. xii. 22, 23. we are said "to come to God the Judge of all." By reconciliation we are brought nigh unto God now; by glorification we shall be brought home to God hereafter, 1 Thes. iv. 17. "We shall be ever with the Lord." But more particularly this phrase, "that he might bring us to God," imports,

*First*, That the chief happiness of man consisteth in the enjoyment of God: that the creature hath as necessary dependence upon God for happiness, as the stream hath upon the fountain, or the image in the glass upon the face of him that looks into it. For as the sum of the creature's misery lies in this, *depart from me*; separation from God being the principal part of damnation; so, on the contrary, the chief happiness of the creature consisteth in the enjoyment and blessed vision of God, 1 John iii. 2. Psal. xvii. 15. "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

*Secondly*, It implies man's revolt and apostasy from God, Eph. ii. 12. "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who were some time afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Those whom Christ bringeth unto God were before afar off from him, both in state and condition, and in temper and disposition: we were lost creatures, and had no desire to return to God\*. The prodigal was said to go into a far country, Luke xv. 30.

*Thirdly*, Christ's bringing us to God, implies our inability to return to God of ourselves; we must be brought back by Christ, or perish for ever in a state of separation from God: the lost sheep is made the emblem of the lost sinner, Luke xv. 5. The sheep returns not to the fold of itself, but the shepherd seeks it, finds it, and carries it back upon his shoulders. And the apostle plainly tells us, Rom. v. 6. That when *we were without strength*, i. e. any

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\* Although the faculties of the soul were not extinguished by the fall, yet their inclination to spiritual objects was wholly lost. *Zœm on the image of God.*

ability to recover, help, or save ourselves, *in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

*Fourthly*, Christ bringing us to God evidently implies this, that God's unsatisfied justice was once the great bar betwixt him and man. Man can have no access to God but by Christ: Christ brings us to God by no other way but the way of satisfaction by his blood: "He hath suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Better ten thousand worlds should perish for ever, than that God should lose the honour of his justice. This great *obex*, or bar to our enjoyment of God, is effectually removed by the death of Christ, whereby God's justice is not only fully satisfied, but highly honoured and glorified, Rom. iii. 24. And so the way by which we are brought to God is again opened (to the wonder and joy of all believers) by the blood and sufferings of Christ.

*Fifthly, and lastly*, It shews us the peculiar happiness and privilege of believers above all people in the world: these only are they which shall be brought to God by Jesus Christ in a reconciled state: others, indeed, shall be brought to God as a Judge, to be condemned by him: believers only are brought to God in the Mediator's hand, as a reconciled Father, to be made blessed for ever in the enjoyment of him: every believer is brought singly to God at his death, Luke xvi. 22. And all believers shall be jointly and solemnly presented to God in the great day, Col. i. 22. Jude, ver. 24. They shall be all presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Now the privilege of believers in that day will lie in divers things.

*First*, That they shall be all brought to God together. This will be the general assembly mentioned, Heb. xii. 22. There shall be a collection of all believers, in all ages of the world, into one blessed assembly; they shall come from the *east*, and *west*, and *north*, and *south*, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God, Luke xiii. 29. O what a glorious train will be seen following the Redeemer in that day!

*Secondly*, As all the saints shall be collected into one body; so they shall be all brought or presented unto God, faultless and without blemish, Jude, ver. 24. "A glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," Eph. v. 27. For this is the general assembly of the spirits of just men that are made perfect, Heb. xii. 23. All sin was perfectly separated from them when death had separated their souls and bodies.

*Thirdly*, In this lies the privilege of believers, that as they shall be all brought together, and that in a state of absolute purity, and perfection, so they shall be all brought to God: they shall see his face, in the vision whereof is "fulness of joy, and at whose right-

“hand are pleasures for evermore,” Psal. xvi. 11. The objective blessedness of the saints consisteth in their fruition of God, Psal. lxxii. 25. To see God in his word and works, is the happiness of the saints on earth; but to see him face to face, will be the fulness of their blessedness in heaven, 1 John iii. 2. This is that intuitive, transforming, and sanctifying vision, of which the scriptures frequently speaks, Psal. xvii. 15. 1 Cor. xv. 28. Rev. vii. 17.

*Fourthly*, To be brought unto God, must needs imply a state of perfect joy and highest delight. So speaks the apostle, Jude 14. Christ shall present, or bring them to God with exceeding joy. And more fully the joy of this day is expressed, Psal. xlv. 15. “With joy and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter “into the king’s palace.” It will be a day of universal joy, when all the saints are brought home to God in a perfected state. For,

1. God the Father will rejoice when Christ brings home that precious number of his elect, whom he redeemed by his blood: he rejoiceth in them now, though imperfect, and under many distasteful corruptions and weaknesses, Zeph. iii. 17. How much more will he rejoice in them when Christ presents them without spot or wrinkle to him, Eph. v. 27.

2. Jesus Christ will exceedingly rejoice; it will be the day of the gladness and satisfaction of his heart; for now, and not till now, he receives his mystical fulness, Col. i. 24. beholds all the blessed issues of his death, which cannot but give him unspeakable contentment, Isa. liii. 11. “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and “shall be satisfied.”

3. The day in which believers are brought home to God, will be a day of unspeakable joy to the Holy Spirit of God himself. For unto this all his sanctifying designs in this world had respect: to this day he sealed them: towards this day he stirred up desires, and groanings in their hearts that cannot be uttered, Eph. iv. 30. Rom. viii. 26. Thus the great and blessed persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, will rejoice in the bringing home of the elect to God. For as it is the greatest joy to a man to see the designs which his heart hath been long projecting, and intently set upon, by an orderly conduct, at last brought to the happy issue he first aimed at; much more will it be so here; the counsel and hand of each person being deeply concerned in this blessed design.

4. The angels of God will rejoice at the bringing home of believers to him: the spirits of just men made perfect, will be united in one general assembly, with an innumerable company of angels, Heb. ii. 22. Great is the affection and love of angels to redeemed ones; they greatly rejoiced at the incarnation of Christ for them, Luke ii. 13. They greatly delighted to pry into the mystery of their redemption, 1 Pet. i. 12. They were marvellously delighted at

their conversion, which was the day of their espousals to Christ, Luke xv. 10. They have been tender and careful over them, and very serviceable to them in this world, Heb. i. 14. and therefore cannot but rejoice exceedingly, to see them all brought home in safety to their father's house.

5. To conclude, Christ's bringing home all believers unto God, will be matter of unspeakable joy to themselves; for, whatever knowledge and acquaintance they had with God here, whatever sights of faith they had of heaven and the glory to come in this world, yet the sight of God and Christ the Redeemer will be an unspeakable surprise to them in that day. This will be the day of relieving all their wants, the day of satisfaction to all their desires; for now they are come where they would be, arrived at the very desires of their souls.

*Secondly*, In the last place, let it be considered, what influence the death of Christ hath upon this design, and you shall find it much every way. In two things especially, the death of Christ hath a blessed casualty and influence in this matter, *viz.*

1. It effectually removes all obstacles to it.

2. It purchaseth (as a price) their title to it.

*First*, The death of Christ removes all obstacles out of the way of this mercy: such were the bars hindering our access to God as nothing but the death of Christ could remove, and thereby open a way for believers to come to God. The guilt of sin barred us from his gracious presence, Rom. i. 2, 3. Hos. xiv. 2. The filth of sin excluded us from God, Hab. i. 23. Heb. xii. 14. The enmity of our nature perfectly stopped up our way to God, Col. i. 21. Rom. viii. 7. by reason hereof fallen man hath no desire to come unto God, Job xxi. 14. The justice of God, like a flaming sword, turning every way, kept all men from access to God. And *Lastly*, Satan, that malicious and armed adversary, lay as a lion in the way to God, 2 Pet. v. 8. O, with what strong bars were the gates of heaven shut against our souls! The way of God was chained up with such difficulties, as none but Christ was able to remove; and he by death hath effectually removed them all: The way is now open, even the new and the living way, consecrated for us by his blood. The death of Christ effectually removes the guilt of sin, 1 Pet. ii. 24. washes off the filth of sin, 1 John v. 6. takes away the enmity of nature, Col. i. 20, 21. satisfies all the demands of justice, Rom. iii. 25, 26. hath broken all the power of Satan, Col. ii. 15. Heb. ii. 14. and consequently the way to God is effectually and fully opened to believers by the blood of Jesus, Heb. x. 20.

*Secondly*, The blood of Christ purchased for believers their right and title to this privilege, Gal. iv. 4, 5. "But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman,

“made under the law; to redeem them that were under the law, “that we might receive the adoption of sons,” i. e. both the relation and inheritance of sons. There was value and worth enough in the precious blood of Christ, not only to pay all our debts to justice, but over and above the payment of our debts, to purchase for us this invaluable privilege. We must put this unspeakable mercy of being brought to God, as my text puts it, upon the account, and to the score of the death of Christ: no believer had ever tasted the sweetness of such a mercy, if Christ had not tasted the bitterness of death for him. The use of all you will have in the following deductions of truth.

*Deduction 1. Great is the preciousness and worth of souls, that the life of Christ should be given to redeem and recover them to God.* As God laid out his thoughts and counsel from eternity, upon them, to project the way and method of their salvation, so the Lord Jesus, in pursuance of that blessed design, came from the bosom of the Father, and spilt his invaluable blood to bring them to God. No wise man expends vast sums to bring home trifling commodities: how cheap soever our souls are in our estimation, it is evident by this they are of precious esteem in the eyes of Christ.

*Deduct. 2. Redeemed souls must expect no rest or satisfaction on this side heaven, and the full enjoyment of God.* The life of a believer in this world, is a life of motion and expectation: they are now coming to God, 1 Pet. ii. 4. God, you see, is the centre and rest of their souls, Heb. iv. 9. As the rivers cannot rest till they pour themselves into the bosom of the sea, so neither can renewed souls find rest till they come into the bosom of God\*. There are four things which do and will break the rest, and disturb the souls of believers in this world; afflictions, temptations, corruptions, and absence from God. If the three former causes of disquietness were totally removed, so that a believer were placed in such a condition upon earth, where no affliction could disturb him, no temptation trouble him, no corruption defile or grieve him, yet his very absence from God must still keep him restless and unsatisfied, 2 Cor. v. 6. “Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from “the Lord.”

*Deduct. 3. What sweet and pleasant thoughts should all believers have of death!* When they die, and never till they die, shall they be fully brought home to God. Death to the saints, is the door by which they enter into the enjoyment of God: the dying Christian is almost at home, yet a few pangs and agonies more, and then he is come to God, in whose presence is the fulness of joy.

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\* Thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are unsatisfied till they rest in thee. *Aug. Confes. lib. 1. c. 1.*

“ I desire (saith Paul) to depart, and to be with Christ, which is “ far better,” Phil. i. 23. It should not affright us to be brought to death, the king of terrors, so long as it is the office of death to bring us to God. That dreaming opinion of the soul sleeping after death, is as ungrounded, as it is uncomfortable: the same day we loose from this shore, we shall be landed upon the blessed shore, where we shall see and enjoy God for ever. O, if the friends of dead believers did but understand where, and with whom their souls are, whilst they are mourning over their bodies, certainly a few believing thoughts of this would quickly dry up their tears. and fill the house of mourning with voices of praise and thanksgiving!

*Deduct. 4. How comfortable and sweet should the converses and communication of Christians be one with another, in this world!* Christ is bringing them all to God through this vale of tears: they are now in the way to him; all bound for heaven; going home to God, their everlasting rest in glory: every day, every hour, every duty brings them nearer and nearer to their journey’s end, Rom. xiii. 11. “ Now (saith the apostle) is our salvation nearer than when “ we believed.” O, what manner of heavenly communications and ravishing discourses should believers have with each other as they walk by the way! O, what pleasant and delightful converse should they have with one another about the place and state whither Christ is bringing them, and where they shall shortly be! What ravishing, transporting, transforming visions they shall have that day they are brought home to God! How surprizingly glorious to them the sight of Jesus Christ will be, who died for them to bring them unto God! how should such discourses as these, shorten and sweeten their passage through this world, strengthen and encourage the dejected and feeble-minded, and exceedingly honour and adorn their profession? Thus lived the believers of old, Heb. xi. 9, 10. “ By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac “ and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he “ looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and “ maker is God.” But, alas! most Christians are either so entangled in the cares and troubles, or so ensnared by the delights and pleasures which almost continually divert and take up their thoughts by the way, that there is but little room for any discourses of Christ and heaven, among many of them: but certainly this would be as much your interest as your duty. When the apostle had entertained the Thessalonians with a lovely discourse of their meeting the Lord in the air, and being ever with the Lord, he charges it upon them as their great duty, to comfort one another with these words, 1 Thes. iv. 17, 18.

*Deduct. 5. How unreasonable are the dejections of believers upon the account of those troubles which they meet with in this world! It is true, afflictions of all kinds do attend believers in their way to God; through many tribulations we must enter into that kingdom. But what then? must we despond and droop under them as other men? Surely no; If afflictions be the way through which you must come to God, then never be discouraged at affliction; troubles and afflictions are of excellent use, under the blessings of the Spirit, to further Christ's great design in bringing you to God. How often would you turn out of that way which leads to God, if he did not hedge up your way with thorns, Hos. ii. 6. Doubtless when you come home to God, you shall find you have been much beholden (it may be a great deal more) to your troubles than to your comforts, for bringing you thither: however, the sweetness of the end will infinitely more than recompense the sorrows and troubles of the way: nor are they worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in you, Rom. viii. 18.*

*Deduct. 6. How much are all believers obliged, in point of interest, to follow Jesus Christ whithersoever he goes! Thus are the saints described, Rev. xiv. 4. "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth: these were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God, and to the Lamb." If it be the design of Christ to bring us to God, then certainly it is our duty to follow Christ in all the paths of active and passive obedience through which he now leads us, as ever we expect to be brought home to God at last: "We are made partakers of Christ, "if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the "end," Heb. iii. 14. If we have followed him through many sufferings and troubles, and shall turn away from him at last, we lose all that we have wrought and suffered in religion, and shall never reach home to God at last. The crown of life belongs only to them who are faithful to the death.*

*Deduct. 7. Let all that desire, or expect to come to God hereafter, come to Christ by faith now. There is no other way to the Father, but by Christ; no other way to Christ but faith. How vain therefore are the hopes and expectations of all unbelievers? Be assured of this great truth, Death shall bring you to God as an avenging Judge, if Christ do not bring you now to God as a reconciled Father: without holiness no man shall see God: the door of hope is shut against all christless persons, John xiv. 6. "No man cometh "unto the Father but by me." O what a sweet voice cometh down from heaven to your souls this day, saying, As ever you expect or hope to come to God, and enjoy the blessing that is here, come unto Christ, obey his calls, give up yourselves to his conduct and government, and you shall certainly be brought to God! As*



sure as you shall now be brought to Jesus Christ by spiritual union, so sure shall you be brought to God in full fruition.

*Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, the new and living way to the Father.*

And thus I have finished the motives drawn from the titles and benefits of Christ, serving to enforce and quicken the great gospel-exhortation of coming to, and effectually applying the Lord Jesus Christ in the way of faith. O that the blessings of the Spirit might follow these calls, and fix these considerations as nails in sure places! But seeing the great hindrance and obstruction to faith is the false opinion and persuasion of most unregenerate men, that they are already in Christ; my next work therefore shall be, in a second use of conviction, to undeceive men in that matter; and that, by shewing them the undoubted certainty of these two things:

*First*, That there is no coming ordinarily to Christ without the application of the law to our consciences, in a way of effectual conviction.

*Secondly*, Nor by that neither, without the teachings of God, in the way of spiritual illumination. The first of these will be fully confirmed and opened in the following sermon.

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## SERMON XX.

The great usefulness of the Law or Word of GOD, in order to the Application of CHRIST.

ROM. vii. 9.

*For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*

**T**HE scope of the apostle in this epistle, and more particularly in this chapter, is to state the due use and excellency of the law, which he doth accordingly.

*First*, By denying to it a power to justify us, which is the peculiar honour of Christ.

*Secondly*, By ascribing to it a power to convince us, and so prepare us for Christ\*.

Neither attributing to it more honour than belongeth to it, nor yet detracting from it that honour and usefulness which God hath given it. It cannot make us righteous, but it can convince us that

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\* The author means that it shews us our need of Christ. *Editor.*