

# Other Evidences of Divine Wisdom in the Contrivance of the Work of Redemption in and by the Person of Christ

by John Owen

---

*The sermon explores the divine wisdom behind the redemption of humanity through the person of Christ, highlighting the glory of God in the way of recovery.*

**Scripture:** Philippians 2:6

**Topics:** "Redemption through Christ", "Divine Wisdom"

---

## Description

John Owen emphasizes the divine wisdom in the work of redemption through Christ, illustrating how humanity's fall stemmed from a desire for self-sufficiency and dominion, which led to ruin. He explains that Christ, being God, willingly took on the form of a servant to restore what was lost, demonstrating the ultimate act of humility and obedience. Owen highlights that through Christ's incarnation and sacrifice, God secured the inheritance of grace and glory for humanity, ensuring that it would not be lost again. The sermon underscores the importance of recognizing the folly of sin and the beauty of obedience to God, as exemplified by Christ. Ultimately, Owen calls believers to contemplate this mystery of redemption, which reveals the depth of God's wisdom and love.

---

## Transcript

That which remains of our present inquiry, is concerning those evidences of divine condescency, or suitableness unto infinite wisdom and goodness, which we may gather from the nature of this work, and its effects as expressed in divine revelation. Some few instances hereof I shall choose out from amongst many that might be insisted on.

1. Man was made to serve God in all things. In his person -- in his soul and body -- in all his faculties, powers, and senses -- all that was given unto him or intrusted with him -- he was not his own, but every way a servant, in all that he was in all that he had, in all that he did or was to do. This he was made for -- this state and condition was necessary unto him as a creature. It could be no otherwise with any that was so; it was so with the angels, who were greater in dignity and power than man. The very name of creature includes the condition of universal subjection and service unto the Creator. This condition, in and by his sin, Adam designed to desert and to free himself from. He would exalt himself out of the state of service and obedience absolute and universal, into a condition of self-sufficiency -- of domination and rule. He

would be as God, like unto God; that is, subject no more to him, be in no more dependence on him -- but advance his own will above the will of God. And there is somewhat of this in every sin; -- the sinner would advance his own will in opposition unto and above the will of God. But what was the event hereof? Man, by endeavouring to free himself from absolute subjection and universal service, to invade absolute dominion, fell into absolute and eternal ruin.

For our recovery out of this state and condition, considering how we cast ourselves into it, the way insisted on was found out by divine wisdom -- namely, the incarnation of the Son of God; for he was Lord of all, had absolute dominion over all, owed no service, no obedience for himself -- being in the form of God, and equal unto him. From this state of absolute dominion he descended into a condition of absolute service. As Adam sinned and fell by leaving that state of absolute service which was due unto him, proper unto his nature, inseparable from it, -- to attempt a state of absolute dominion which was not his own, not due unto him, not consistent with his nature; so the Son of God, being made the second Adam, relieved us by descending from a state of absolute dominion, which was his own -- due to his nature -- to take on him a state of absolute service, which was not his own, nor due unto him. And this being inconsistent with his own divine nature, he performed it by taking our nature on him -- making it his own. He descended as much beneath himself in his self-humiliation, as Adam designed to ascend above himself in his pride and self-exaltation.

The consideration of the divine grace and wisdom herein the apostle proposeth unto us, Phil. ii. 6-8, "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." Adam being in the form -- that is, the state and condition -- of a servant, did by robbery attempt to take upon him the "form of God," or to make himself equal unto him. The Lord Christ being in the "form of God" -- that is, his essential form, of the same nature with him -- accounted it no robbery to be in the state and condition of God, to be "equal to him;" but being made in the "fashion of a man," taking on him our nature, he also submitted unto the form or the state and condition of a servant therein. He had dominion over all, owed service and obedience unto none, being in the "form of God," and equal unto him -- the condition which Adam aspired unto; but he condescended unto a state of absolute subjection and service for our recovery. This did no more belong unto him on his own account, than it belonged unto Adam to be like unto God, or equal to him. Wherefore it is said that he humbled himself unto it, as Adam would have exalted himself unto a state of dignity which was not his due.

This submission of the Son of God unto an estate of absolute and universal service is declared by the apostle, Heb. x. 5. For those words of the Psalmist, "Mine ears hast thou digged," or bored, Ps. xl. 6, he renders, "A body hast thou prepared me." There is an allusion in the words of the prophecy unto him under the law who gave up himself in absolute and perpetual service; in sign whereof his ears were bored with an awl. So the body of Christ was prepared for him, that therein he might be in a state of absolute service unto God. So he became to have nothing of his own -- the original state that Adam would have forsaken; no, not [even] his life -- he was obedient unto the death.

This way did divine wisdom find out and contrive, whereby more glory did arise unto the holiness and righteousness of God from his condescension unto universal service and obedience who was over all, God blessed for ever, than dishonour was cast upon them by the self-exaltation of him who, being in all things a servant, designed to be like unto God.

2082. Adam was poor in himself, as a creature must be. What riches he had in his hand or power, they were none of his own, they were only trusted with him for especial service. In this state of poverty he commits the robbery of attempting to be like unto God. Being poor, he would make himself rich by the rapine of an equality with God. This brought on him and us all, as it was meet it should, the loss of all that we were trusted with. Hereby we lost the image of God -- lost our right unto the creatures here below -- lost ourselves and our souls. This was the issue of his attempt to be rich when he was poor.

In this state infinite wisdom hath provided for our relief, unto the glory of God. For the Lord Jesus Christ being rich in himself, for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich, 2 Cor. viii. 9. He was rich in that riches which Adam designed by robbery; for "he was in the form of God, and accounted it no robbery to be equal with God." But he made himself poor for our sakes, with poverty which Adam would have relinquished; yea, to that degree that "he had not where to lay his head" -- he had nothing. Hereby he made a compensation for what he never made spoil of, or paid what he never took. In this condescension of his, out of grace and love to mankind, was God more glorified than he was dishonored in the sinful exaltation of Adam out of pride and self-love.

3. The sin of man consisted formally in disobedience; and it was the disobedience of him who was every way and in all things obliged unto obedience. For man -- by all that he was, by all that he had received, by all that he expected or was farther capable of, by the constitution of his own nature, by the nature and authority of God, with his relation thereunto -- was indispensably obliged unto universal obedience. His sin, therefore, was the disobedience of him who was absolutely obliged unto obedience by the very constitution of his being and necessary relation unto God. This was that which rendered it so exceeding sinful, and the consequents of it eternally miserable; and from this obligation his sin, in any one instance, was a total renunciation of all obedience unto God.

The recompense, with respect unto the glory of God, for disobedience must be by obedience, as hath been before declared. And if there be not a full obedience yielded unto the law of God in that nature that sinned, man cannot be saved without an eternal violation of the glory of God therein. But the disobedience of him who was every way obliged unto obedience could not be compensated but by his obedience who was no way obliged thereunto; and this could be only the obedience of him that is God, (for all creatures are obliged to obedience for themselves,) and it could be performed only by him who was man. Wherefore, for the accomplishment of this obedience, he who, in his own person as God, was above the law, was in his 209human nature, in his own person as man, made under the law. Had he not been made under the law, what he did could not have been obedience; and had he not been in himself above the law, his obedience could not have been beneficial unto us. The sin of Adam (and the same is in the nature of every sin) consisted in this -- that he who was naturally every way under the law, and subject unto it, would be every way above the law, and no way obliged by it. Wherefore it was taken away, unto the glory of God, by his obedience, who being in himself above the law, no way subject unto it, yet submitted, humbled himself, to be "made under the law," to be every way obliged by it. See Gal. iii. 13, iv. 4. This is the subject of the discourse of the apostle, Rom. v., from verse 12 to the end of the chapter.

Unto the glory of God in all these ends, the person of Christ, as an effect of infinite wisdom, was meet and able to be a mediator and undertaker between God and man. In the union of both our natures in the same person he was so meet by his relation unto both; -- unto God by filiation, or sonship; unto us by brotherhood, or nearness of kindred, Heb. ii. 14. And he was able from the dignity of his person; for the temporary sufferings of him who was eternal were a full compensation for the eternal sufferings of them who were temporary.

4. God made man the lord of all things here below. He was, as it were, the heir of God, as unto the inheritance of this world in present, and as unto a blessed state in eternal glory. But he lost all right and title hereunto by sin. He made forfeiture of the whole by the law of tenure whereby he held it, and God took the forfeiture. Wherefore he designs a new heir of all, and vests the whole inheritance of heaven and earth in him, even in his Son. He appointed him "the heir of all things," Heb. i. 2. This translation of God's inheritance the apostle declares, Heb. ii. 6-9; for the words which he cites from Ps. viii. 4-6, -- "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet," -- do declare the original condition of mankind in general. But man forfeited the dominion and inheritance that he was intrusted withal; and God settleth it anew, solely in the man Christ Jesus. So the apostle adds, "We see not yet all things put under him;" but we see it all accomplished in Jesus, verse 8. But as all other inheritances do descend with theirs, so did this unto him with its burden. There was a great debt upon it -- the debt of sin. This he was to undergo, to make payment of, or satisfaction for, or he could not rightly enter upon the inheritance. This could no otherwise be done but by his suffering in our nature, as hath been declared. He who was the heir of all, was 210in himself to purge our sins. Herein did the infinite wisdom of God manifest itself, in that he conveyed the inheritance of all things unto him who was meet and able so to enter upon it, so to enjoy and possess it, as that no detriment or damage might arise unto the riches, the revenue, the glory of God, from the waste made by the former possessor.

5. Mankind was to be recovered unto faith and trust in God, as also unto the love of him above all. All these things had utterly forsaken our nature; and the reduction of them into it is a work of the greatest difficulty. We had so provoked God, he had given such evidences of his wrath and displeasure against us, and our minds thereon were so alienated from him, as we stood in need of the strongest motives and highest encouragements once to attempt to return unto him, so as to place all our faith and trust in him, and all our love upon him.

Sinners generally live in a neglect and contempt of God, in an enmity against him; but whenever they are convinced of a necessity to endeavour a return unto him, the first thing they have to conflict withal is fear. Beginning to understand who and what he is, as also how things stand between him and them, they are afraid to have anything to do with him, and judge it impossible that they should find acceptance with him. This was the sense that Adam himself had upon his sin, when he was afraid, and hid himself. And the sense of other sinners is frequently expressed unto the same purpose in Scripture. See Isa. xxxiii. 14; Micah vi. 6, 7.

All these discouragements are absolutely provided against in that way of our recovery which infinite wisdom hath found out. It were a thing delightful to dwell on the securities given us therein, as unto our acceptance, in all those principles, acts, and duties wherein the renovation of the image of God doth consist. I must contract my meditations, and shall therefore instance in some few things only unto that purpose.

(1.) Faith is not capable of greater encouragement or confirmation than lieth in this one consideration -- that what we are to believe unto this end is delivered unto us by God himself in our nature. What could confirm our faith and hope in God, what could encourage us to expect acceptance with God, like this ineffable testimony of his goodwill unto us? The nature of things is not capable of greater assurance, seeing the divine nature is capable of no greater condescension.

This the Scripture proposeth as that which gives a just expectation that, against all fears and oppositions, we should close with divine calls and invitations to return unto God: "Last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son," Matt. xxi. 37, -- they will believe the message which I send by him. He hath "spoken unto us by his Son" -- "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 1-3. The consideration hereof is sufficient to dispel all that darkness and confusion which fear, dread, and guilt do bring on the minds of men, when they are invited to return unto God. That that God against whom we have sinned should speak unto us, and treat with us, in our own nature, about a return unto himself, is the utmost that divine excellencies could condescend unto. And as this was needful for us, (though proud men and senseless of sin understand it not,) so, if it be refused, it will be attended with the sorest destruction, Heb. xii. 25.

(2.) This treaty principally consists in a divine declaration, that all the causes of fear and dread upon the account of sin are removed and taken away. This is the substance of the Gospel, as it is declared by the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 18-21. Wherefore, if hereon we refuse to return unto God -- to make him the object of our faith, trust, love, and delight -- it is not by reason of any old or former sin, nor of that of our original apostasy from God, nor of the effects of it against the law, [but] by the means of a new sin, outdoing them all in guilt and contempt of God. Such is final unbelief against the proposal of the Gospel. It hath more malignity in it than all other sins whatever. But by this way of our recovery, all cause of fear and dread is taken away -- all pretences of a distrust of the love and good-will of God are defeated; so that if men will not hereon be recovered unto him, it is from their hatred of him and enmity unto him -- the fruits whereof they must feed on to eternity.

(3.) Whereas, if we will return unto God by faith, we are also to return unto him in love, what greater motive can there be unto it than that infinite love of the Father and the Son unto us, which is gloriously displayed in this way of our recovery? See 1 John iv. 9, 10 "Si amare pigebat, saltem redamare ne pigeat."

(4.) The whole race of mankind falling into sin against God, and apostasy from him, there was no example left unto them to manifest how excellent, how glorious and comely a thing it is, to live unto God, -- to believe and trust in him -- to cleave unto him unchangeably by love; for they were utter strangers unto what is done by angels above, nor could be affected with their example. But without a pattern of these things, manifesting their excellency and reward, they could not earnestly endeavour to attain unto them. This is given us most conspicuously in the human nature of Christ. See Heb. xii. 2, 3. Hereby, therefore, everything needful for our encouragement to return unto God is, in infinite wisdom, provided for and proposed unto us.

6. Divine Wisdom, in the way of our recovery by Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, designed to glorify a state of obedience unto God, and to cast the reproach of the most inexpressible folly on the relinquishment of that state by sin. For, as God would recover and restore us; so he would do it in a way of obedience on our part -- of that obedience which we had forsaken. The design of man, which was imposed on him by the craft of Satan, was to become wise like unto God, knowing good and evil. The folly of this endeavour was quickly discovered in its effects. Sense of nakedness, with shame, misery, and death, immediately ensued thereon.

But divine Wisdom thought meet to aggravate the reproach of this folly. He would let us see wherein the true knowledge of good and evil did consist, and how foolishly we had aspired unto it by a relinquishment of that state of obedience wherein we were created.

Job xxviii. from verse 12 unto the end of the chapter, there is an inquiry after wisdom, and the place of its habitation. All creatures give an account that it is not in them, that it is hid from them -- only they have heard the fame thereof. All the context is to evince that it is essentially and originally only in God himself. But if we cannot comprehend it in itself, yet may we not know what is wisdom unto us, and what is required thereunto? Yes, saith he; for "unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding," verse 28. Man, on the other hand, by the suggestion of Satan, thought, and now of himself continues to think, otherwise; namely, that the way to be wise is to relinquish these things. The world will not be persuaded that "the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding;" yea, there is nothing that the most of men do more despise and scorn, than thoughts that true wisdom doth consist in faith, love, fear, and obedience unto God. See Ps. xiv. 6. Whatever else may be pleaded to be in it, yet sure enough they are that those who count it wisdom are but fools.

To cast an everlasting reproach of folly on this contrivance of the devil and man, and uncontrollably to evince wherein alone true wisdom doth consist, God would glorify a state of obedience. He would render it incomparably more amiable, desirable, and excellent, than ever it could have appeared to have been in the obedience of all the angels in heaven and men on earth, had they continued therein. This he did in this way of our recovery, -- in that his own eternal Son entered into a state of obedience, and took upon him the "form" or condition "of a servant" unto God.

What more evident conviction could there be of the folly of mankind in hearkening unto the suggestion of Satan to seek after wisdom in another condition? How could that great maxim, which is laid down in opposition unto all vain thoughts of man, be more eminently exemplified -- that "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding?" What greater evidence could be given, that the nature of man is not capable of a better condition than that of service and universal obedience unto God? How could any state be represented more amiable, desirable, and blessed? In the obedience of Christ, of the Son of God in our nature, apostate sinners are upbraided with their folly in relinquishing that state which, by his susception of it, is rendered so glorious. What have we attained by leaving that condition which the eternal Son of God delighted in? "I delight," saith he, "to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is in the midst of my bowels," Ps. xl. 8 -- margin. It is the highest demonstration that our nature is not capable of more order, more beauty, more glory, than consists in obedience unto God. And that state which we fell into upon our forsaking of it, we now know to be all darkness, confusion, and misery.

Wherefore, seeing God, in infinite grace and mercy, would recover us unto himself; and, in his righteousness and holiness, would do this in a way of obedience, -- of that obedience which we had forsaken; it hath an eminent impression of divine wisdom upon it, that in this mystery of God manifest in the flesh, the only means of our recovery, he would cast the reproach of the most inexpressible folly on our apostasy from a state of it, and render it amiable and desirable unto all who are to return unto him.

To bear the shame of this folly, to be deeply sensible of it, and to live in a constant prospect and view of the glory of obedience in the person of Christ, with a sedulous endeavour for conformity thereunto, is the highest attainment of our wisdom in this world; -- and whosoever is otherwise minded, is so at his own utmost peril.

7. God, in infinite wisdom, hath by this means secured the whole inheritance of this life and that which is to come from a second forfeiture. Whatever God will bestow on the children of men, he grants it unto them in the way of an inheritance. So the land of Canaan, chosen out for a representative of spiritual and eternal things, was granted unto Abraham and his seed for an inheritance. And his interest in the promise is

expressed by being "heir of the world." All the things of this life, that are really good and useful unto us, do belong unto this inheritance. So they did when it was vested in Adam. All things of grace and glory do so also. And the whole of the privilege of believers is, that they are heirs of salvation. Hence godliness hath the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," 1 Tim. iv. 8. And the promise is only of the inheritance. This inheritance, as was before intimated, was lost in Adam, and forfeited into the hand of the great Lord, the great possessor of heaven and earth. In his sovereign grace and goodness he was pleased again to restore it -- as unto all the benefits of it -- unto the former tenants; and that with an addition of grace, and a more exceeding weight of glory. But withal, infinite wisdom provides <sup>214</sup>that a second forfeiture shall not be made of it. Wherefore the grant of it is not made immediately unto any of those for whose use and benefit it is prepared and granted. They had been once tried, and failed in their trust, unto their own eternal beggary and ruin, had not infinite grace interposed for their relief. And it did not become the wisdom and glory of God to make a second grant of it, which might be frustrate in like manner. Wherefore he would not commit it again unto any mere creature whatever; nor would it safely have been so done with security unto his glory. For --

(1.) It was too great a trust -- even the whole inheritance of heaven and earth, all the riches of grace and glory -- to be committed unto any one of them. God would not give this glory unto any one creature. If it be said it was first committed unto Adam, and therefore to have it again is not an honour above the capacity of a creature; I say that the nature of the inheritance is greatly changed. The whole of what was intrusted with Adam comes exceedingly short of what God hath now prepared as the inheritance of the church. There is grace in it, and glory added unto it, which Adam neither had nor could have right unto. It is now of that nature, as could neither be intrusted with, nor communicated by, any mere creature. Besides, he that hath it is the object of the faith and trust of the church; nor can any be interested in any part of this inheritance without the exercise of those and all other graces on him whose the inheritance is. And so to be the object of our faith, is the prerogative of the divine nature alone.

(2.) No mere creature could secure this inheritance that it should be lost no more; and yet if it were so, it would be highly derogatory unto the glory of God. For two things were required hereunto, -- First, That he in whom this trust is vested should be in himself incapable of any such failure, as through which, by the immutable, eternal law of obedience unto God, a forfeiture of it should be made; -- Secondly, That he undertake for them all who shall be heirs of salvation, who shall enjoy this inheritance, that none of them should lose or forfeit their own personal interest in it, or the terms whereon it is conveyed and communicated unto them. But no mere creature was sufficient unto these ends; for no one of them, in and by him in the constitution of his nature, is absolutely free from falling from God, himself. They may receive -- the angels in heaven and the glorified saints have received -- such a confirmation, in and by grace, as that they shall never actually apostatize or fall from God; but this they have not from themselves, nor the principles of their own nature, -- which is necessary unto him that shall receive this trust. For so when it was first vested in Adam, he was left to preserve it by the innate concreated abilities of his own nature. And as unto <sup>215</sup>the latter, all the angels in heaven cannot undertake to secure the obedience of any one man, so as that the conveyance of the inheritance may be sure unto him. Wherefore, with respect hereunto, those angels themselves though the most holy and glorious of all the creatures of God, have no greater trust or interest than to be "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation," Heb. i. 14. So unmeet are they to have the whole inheritance vested in any of them.

But all this infinite wisdom hath provided for in the great "mystery of godliness God manifest in the flesh." God herein makes his only Son the heir of all things, and vests the whole inheritance absolutely in him.

For the promise, which is the court-roll of heaven -- the only external mean and record of its conveyance -- was originally made unto Christ only. God said not, "And to seeds as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ," Gal. iii. 16. And we become again heirs of God only as we are joint heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17; that is by being taken into a participation of that inheritance which is vested in him alone. For many may be partakers of the benefit of that whose right and title is in one alone, when it is conveyed unto him for their use. And hereby the ends before mentioned are fully provided for. For --

[1.] He who is thus made the "heir of all" is meet to be intrusted with the glory of it. For where this grant is solemnly expressed, it is declared that he is the "brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 2, 3; and that by him the worlds were made. He alone was meet to be this heir who is partaker of the divine nature, and by whom all things were created; for such things belong unto it as cannot appertain unto any other. The reader may consult, if he please, our exposition of that place of the apostle.

[2.] Any failure in his own person was absolutely impossible. The subsistence of the human nature in the person of the Son of God, rendered the least sin utterly impossible unto him; for all the moral operations of that nature are the acts of the person of the Son of God. And hereby not only is the inheritance secured but also an assurance that it is so is given unto all them that do believe. This is the life and soul of all Gospel comforts, that the whole inheritance of grace and glory is vested in Christ, where it can never suffer loss or damage. When we are sensible of the want of grace, should we go unto God, and say, "Father, give us the portion of goods that falls unto us," as the prodigal did, we should quickly consume it, and bring ourselves unto the utmost misery, as he did also. But in Christ the whole inheritance is secured for evermore.

[3.] He is able to preserve all those who shall be heirs of this inheritance, that they forfeit not their own personal interest therein, according unto the terms of the covenant whereby it is made over to them. He can and will, by the power of his grace, preserve them all unto the full enjoyment of the purchased inheritance. We hold our title by the rod -- at the will of the Lord; and many failures we are liable unto, whereon we are "in misericordia Domini," and are subject unto ameracements. But yet the whole inheritance being granted unto Christ is eternally secured for us, and we are by his grace preserved from such offences against the supreme Lord, or committing any such wastes, as should cast us out of our possession. See Ps. lxxxix. 27-32. Thus in all things infinite wisdom hath provided that no second forfeiture should be made of the inheritance of grace and glory, which as it would have been eternally ruinous unto mankind, so it was inconsistent with the glory and honour of God.

8. The wisdom of God was gloriously exalted in the righteous destruction of Satan and his interest, by the incarnation and mediation of the Son of God. He had prevailed against the first way of the manifestation of divine glory; and therein both pleased and prided himself. Nothing could ever give such satisfaction unto the malicious murderer, as the breach he had occasioned between God and man, with his hopes and apprehensions that it would be eternal. He had no other thoughts but that the whole race of mankind, which God had designed unto the enjoyment of himself, should be everlastingly ruined. So he had satisfied his envy against man in his eternal destruction with himself, and his malice against God in depriving him of his glory. Hereon, upon the distance that he had made between God and man, he interposed himself, and boasted himself for a long season as "The god of this world," who had all power over it and in it. It belonged unto the honour of the wisdom of God that he should be defeated in this triumph. Neither was it meet that this should be done by a mere act of sovereign omnipotent power; for he would yet glory in his craft and the success of it, -- that there was no way to disappoint him, but by

crushing him with power, without respect unto righteousness or demonstration of wisdom. Wherefore, it must be done in such a way as wherein he might see, unto his eternal shame and confusion, all his arts and subtleties defeated by infinite wisdom, and his enterprise overthrown in a way of right and equity. The remark that the Holy Ghost puts on the serpent, which was his instrument in drawing man unto apostasy from God -- namely, that he was "more subtle than any beast of the field" -- is only to intimate wherein Satan designed his attempt, and from whence he hoped for his success. It was not an act of power or rage; but of craft, counsel, subtlety, and deceit. Herein he gloried and prided himself; wherefore the way to disappoint him with shame, must be a contrivance of infinite wisdom, turning all his artifices into mere folly.

217 This work of God, with respect unto him, is expressed in the Scripture two ways:-- First, it is called the spoiling of him, as unto his power and the prey that he had taken. The "strong man armed" was to be bound, and his goods spoiled. The Lord Christ, by his death, "destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." He "led captivity captive," spoiling principalities and powers, triumphing over them in his cross. So Abraham, when he smote the kings, not only delivered Lot, who was their captive, but also took all their spoils. Again, it is expressed by the destruction of his works: "For this cause was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." The spoils which he had in his own power were taken from him, and the works which he had erected in the minds of men were demolished. The web which he had woven to clothe himself withal, as the god of this world, was unravelled to the last thread. And although all this seems to represent a work of power, yet was it indeed an effect of wisdom and righteousness principally.

For the power which Satan had over mankind was in itself unjust. For, (1.) He obtained it by fraud and deceit: "The serpent beguiled" Eve. (2.) He possessed it with injustice, with respect unto God, being an invader of his right and possession. (3.) He used and exercised it with malice, tyranny, and rage; -- so as that it was every way unjust, both in its foundation and execution. With respect hereunto he was justly destroyed by omnipotent power, which puts forth itself in his eternal punishment. But, on the other side, mankind did suffer justly under his power -- being given up unto it in the righteous judgement of God. For one may suffer justly what another doth unjustly inflict; as when one causelessly strikes an innocent man, if he strikes him again, he who did the first injury suffereth justly, but the other doth unjustly in revenging himself. Wherefore, as man was given up unto him in a way of punishment, he was a lawful captive, and was not to be delivered but in a way of justice. And this was done in a way that Satan never thought of. For, by the obedience and sufferings of the Son of God incarnate, there was full satisfaction made unto the justice of God for the sins of man, a reparation of his glory, and an exaltation of the honour of his holiness, with all the other properties of his nature, as also of his law, outbalancing all the diminution of it by the first apostasy of mankind; as hath been declared. Immediately hereon all the charms of Satan were dissolved, all his chains loosed, his darkness that he had brought on the creation dispelled, his whole plot and design defeated; -- whereon he saw himself, and was exposed unto all the holy angels of heaven, in all the counsels, craft, and power he had boasted of, to be nothing but a congeries -- a mass of darkness, malice, folly, impotency, and rage.

Hereon did Satan make an entrance into one of the principal parts 218 of his eternal torments, in that furious self-maceration which he is given up unto on the consideration of his defeat and disappointment. Absolute power he always feared, and what it would produce; for he believes that, and trembles. But against any other war he thought he had secured himself. It lies plain to every understanding, what shame, confusion, and self-revenge, the proud apostate was cast into, upon his holy, righteous disappointment of his design; whereas he had always promised himself to carry his cause, or at least to

put God to act in the destruction of his dominion, by mere omnipotent power, without regard unto any other properties of his nature. To find that which he contrived for the destruction of the glory of God -- the disappointment of his ends in the creation of all things -- and the eternal ruin of mankind, to issue in a more glorious exaltation of the holy properties of the divine nature, and an unspeakable augmentation of blessedness unto mankind itself, is the highest aggravation of his eternal torments. This was a work every way becoming the infinite wisdom of God.

9. Whereas there are three distinct persons in the holy Trinity, it became the wisdom of God that the Son, the second person, should undertake this work, and be incarnate. I shall but sparingly touch on this glorious mystery; for as unto the reason of it, it is absolutely resolved into the infinite wisdom and sovereign counsel of the divine will. And all such things are the objects of a holy admiration -- not curiously to be inquired into. To intrude ourselves into the things which we have not seen -- that is, which are not revealed -- in those concernments of them which are not revealed, is not unto the advantage of faith in our edification. But as unto what is declared of them -- either immediately and directly, or by their relation unto other known truths -- we may meditate on them unto the improvement of faith and love towards God. And some things are thus evident unto us in this mystery.

(1.) We had by sin lost the image of God, and thereby all gracious acceptance with him, -- all interest in his love and favour. In our recovery, as we have declared, this image is again to be restored unto us, or we are to be renewed into the likeness of God. And there was a condecency unto divine wisdom, that this work should, in a peculiar manner, be effected by him who is the essential image of God -- that is, the Father. This, as we have formerly showed, was the person of the Son. Receiving his personal subsistence, and therewithal the divine nature, with all its essential properties, from the Father by eternal generation, he was thereon the express image of his person, and the brightness of his glory. Whatever is in the person of the Father is in the person of the Son, and being all received from the Father, he is his essential image. And one end of his incarnation was, that he might be the representative image of God unto us. Whereas, therefore, in the work of our recovery, the image of God should be restored in us, there was a condecency that it should be done by him who was the essential image of God; for it consists in the communication of the effects and likeness of the same image unto us which was essentially in himself.

(2.) We were by nature the sons of God. We stood in relation of sons unto him by virtue of our creation -- the communication of his image and likeness -- with the preparation of an inheritance for us. On the same accounts the angels are frequently called the sons of God. This title, this relation unto God, we utterly lost by sin, becoming aliens from him, and enemies unto him. Without a recovery into this estate we cannot be restored, nor brought unto the enjoyment of God. And this cannot be done but by adoption. Now, it seems convenient unto divine wisdom that he should recover our sonship by adoption, who was himself the essential and eternal Son of God.

(3.) The sum of what we can comprehend in this great mystery ariseth from the consideration of the order of the holy persons of the blessed Trinity in their operations; for their order herein doth follow that of their subsistence. Unto this great work there are peculiarly required, authority, love, and power -- all directed by infinite wisdom. These originally reside in the person of the Father, and the acting of them in this matter is constantly ascribed unto him. He sent the Son, as he gives the Spirit, by an act of sovereign authority. And he sent the Son from his eternal love; -- he loved the world, and sent his Son to die. This is constantly assigned to be the effect of the love and grace of the Father. And he wrought in Christ, and he works in us, with respect unto the end of this mystery, with the "exceeding greatness of his power," Eph. i. 19. The

Son, who is the second person in the order of subsistence, in the order of operation puts the whole authority, love, and power of the Father in execution. This order of subsistence and operation thereon is expressly declared by the apostle, 1 Cor. viii. 6, "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." The Father is the original fountain and spring, from whom -- [from] whose original authority, love, goodness, and power -- are all these things. That expression, "from him," peculiarly denotes the eternal original of all things. But how are this authority, goodness, love, and power in the Father, whence all these things spring and arise, made effectual -- how are their effects wrought out and accomplished? "There is one Lord," even Jesus Christ, a distinct person from the Father, "by whom are all things." He works in the order of his subsistence, to execute, work, and accomplish all that originally proceedeth from the Father. By the Holy Spirit, who is the third person in order of subsistence, there is made a perfecting application of the whole unto all its proper ends.

Wherefore, this work of our redemption and recovery being the especial effect of the authority, love, and power of the Father -- it was to be executed in and by the person of the Son; as the application of it unto us is made by the Holy Ghost. Hence it became not the person of the Father to assume our nature; -- it belonged not thereunto in the order of subsistence and operation in the blessed Trinity. The authority, love, and power whence the whole work proceeded, were his in a peculiar manner. But the execution of what infinite wisdom designed in them and by them belonged unto another. Nor did this belong unto the person of the Holy Spirit, who, in order of divine operation following that of his subsistence, was to perfect the whole work, in making application of it unto the church when it was wrought. Wherefore it was every way suited unto divine wisdom -- unto the order of the Holy Persons in their subsistence and operation -- that this work should be undertaken and accomplished in the person of the Son. What is farther must be referred unto another world.

These are some few of those things wherein the infinite wisdom of God in this holy contrivance giveth forth some rays of itself into enlightened minds and truly humbled souls. But how little a portion of it is heard by us! How weak, how low are our conceptions about it! We cannot herein find out the Almighty unto perfection. No small part of the glory of heaven will consist in that comprehension which we shall have of the mystery of the wisdom, love, and grace of God herein.

Howbeit, we are with all diligence to inquire into it whilst we are here in the way. It is the very centre of all glorious evangelical truths. Not one of them can be understood, believed, or improved as they ought, without a due comprehension of their relation hereunto; as we have showed before.

This is that which the prophets of old inquired into and after with all diligence, even the mystery of God manifest in the flesh, with the glory that ensued thereon, 1 Pet. i. 11. Yet had they not that light to discern it by which we have. The "least in the kingdom of God," as to the knowledge of this mystery, may be above the greatest of them. And ought we not to fear lest our sloth under the beams of the sun should be condemned by their diligence in the twilight?

This the angels bow down to look into, although their concerns therein are not equal to ours. But angels are angels, and prophets were prophets; we are a generation of poor, sinful men, who are little concerned in the glory of God or our own duty.

Is it not much to be lamented that many Christians content themselves with a very superficial knowledge of these things? How are the studies, the abilities, the time, and diligence of many excellent persons engaged in, and laid out about, the works of nature, and the effects of divine wisdom and power in them, by whom any endeavour to inquire into this glorious mystery is neglected, if not despised! Alas! The light of divine wisdom in the greatest works of nature holds not the proportion of the meanest star unto the sun in its full strength, unto that glory of it which shines in this mystery of God manifest in the flesh, and the work accomplished thereby! A little time shall put an end unto the whole subject of their inquiries, with all the concernment of God and man in them for evermore. This alone is that which fills up eternity, and which, although it be now with some a nothing, yet will shortly be all.

Is it not much more to be lamented, that many who are called Christians do even despise these mysteries? Some oppose them directly with pernicious heresies about the person of Christ, denying his divine nature, or the personal union of his two natures whereby the whole mystery of infinite wisdom is evacuated and rejected; and some there are who, though they do not deny the truth of this mystery, yet they both despise and reproach such as with any diligence endeavour to inquire into it. I shall add the words used on a like occasion, unto them who sincerely believe the mysteries of the Gospel: "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." And the due contemplation of this mystery will certainly be attended with many spiritual advantages.

[1.] It will bring in steadfastness in believing, as unto the especial concerns of our own souls; so as to give unto God the glory that is his due thereon. This is the work, these are the ends, of faith, Rom. v. 1-5. We see how many Christians who are sincere believers, yet fluctuate in their minds with great uncertainties as unto their own state and condition. The principal reason of it is, because they are "unskilful in the word of righteousness," and so are babes, in a weak condition, as the apostle speaks, Heb. v. 13. This is the way of spiritual peace. When the soul of a believer is able to take a view of the glory of the wisdom of God, exalting all the other holy properties of his nature, in this great mystery unto our salvation, it will obviate all fears, remove all objections, and be a means of bringing in assured peace into the mind; which without a due comprehension of it will never be attained.

[2.] The acting of faith hereon is that which is accompanied with its great power to change and transform the soul into the image and likeness of Christ. So is it expressed by the apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 18, "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" -- we all beholding -- &#954;&#945;&#964;&#959;&#960;&#964;&#961;&#953;&#950;&#8057;&#956;&#949;&#957;&#959;&#953;, not taking a transient glance of these things, but diligently inspecting them, as those do who, through a glass, design a steady view of things at a distance.<sup>2</sup> That which we are thus to behold by the continued actings of faith in holy contemplation, is the "glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," as it is expressed, chap. iv. 6; which is nothing but that mystery of godliness in whose explanation we have been engaged. And what is the effect of the steady contemplation of this mystery by faith? &#924;&#949;&#964;&#945;&#956;&#959;&#961;&#966;&#959;&#8059;&#956;&#949;&#952;&#945; -- "we are changed" -- made quite other creatures than we were -- cast into the form, figure, and image of Jesus Christ -- the great design of all believers in this world. Would we, then, be like unto Christ? Would we bear the image of the heavenly, as we have borne the image of the earthy? Is nothing so detestable unto us as the deformed image of the old man, in the lusts of the mind and of the flesh? Is nothing so amiable and desirable as the image of Christ, and the representation of God in him? This is the way, this is

the means of attaining the end which we aim at.

[3.] Abounding in this duty is the most effectual means of freeing us, in particular, from the shame and bane of profession in earthly-mindedness. There is nothing so unbecoming a Christian as to have his mind always exercised about, always filled with thoughts of, earthly things and according as men's thoughts are exercised about them, their affections are increased and inflamed towards them. These things mutually promote one another, and there is a kind of circulation in them. Multiplied thoughts inflame affections, and inflamed affections increase the number of thoughts concerning them. Nothing is more repugnant unto the whole life of faith, nothing more obstructive unto the exercise of all grace, than a prevalence of this frame of mind. And at this season, in an especial manner, it is visibly preying on the vitals of religion. To abound in the contemplation of this mystery, and in the exercise of faith about it, as it is diametrically opposed unto this frame, so it will gradually cast it out of the soul. And without this we shall labour in the fire for deliverance from this pernicious evil.

[4.] And hereby are we prepared for the enjoyment of glory above. No small part of that glory consists in the eternal contemplation and adoration of the wisdom, goodness, love, and power of God in this mystery, and the effects of it; as shall afterward be declared.

223And how can we better or otherwise be prepared for it, but by the implanting a sense of it on our minds by sedulous contemplation whilst we are in this world? God will not take us into heaven, into the vision and possession of heavenly glory, with our heads and hearts reeking with the thoughts and affections of earthly things. He hath appointed means to make us "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," before he will bring us into the enjoyment of it. And this is the principal way whereby he doth it; for hereby it is that we are "changed" into the image of Christ, "from glory to glory," and make the nearest approaches unto the eternal fulness of it.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-owen/other-evidences-of-divine-wisdom-in-the-contrivance-of-the-work-of-redemption-in/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**