## John Tillotson, SERMON CXXI. CHRIST THE AUTHOR, AND OBEDIENCE THE CONDITION OF SALVATION (likely in 1670s~)

The example of our Saviour’s life is like wise another excellent means to this end [of salvation]. The law lays an obligation upon us; but a pattern gives life and encouragement, and renders our duty more easy, and practicable, and familiar to us; for here we see obedience to the Divine law practised in our own nature, and performed by a man like ourselves, “in all things like unto us, sin only excepted.” It is true, indeed, this exception makes a great difference, and seems to take off very much from the encouraging force and virtue of this example. No wonder if he that was without sin, and was God as well as man, performed all righteousness; and therefore, where is the encouragement of this example? That our nature, pure and uncorrupted, supported and assisted by the divinity to which it was united, should be perfectly conformed to the law of God, as it is no strange thing, so neither doth it seem to have that force and encouragement in it, which an example more suited to our weakness might have had. But then this cannot be denied, that it hath the advantage of perfection, which a pattern ought to have, and to which, though we can never attain, yet we may always be aspiring towards it; and certainly we cannot better learn how God would have men to live, than by seeing how God himself lived when he was pleased to assume our nature, and to become man.

And then, we are to consider, that the Son of God did not assume our nature in its highest glory and perfection, but compassed with infirmities, and liable in all points to be tempted like as we are; but still it was without sin; and therefore God doth not exact from us perfect obedience, and that we should fulfil all righteousness, as he did; he makes allowance for the corruption of our nature, and is pleased to accept of our sincere, though very imperfect obedience. But after all this, his human nature was united to the divinity, and he had the “Spirit without measure;” and this would, indeed, make a wide difference between us and our pattern, as to the purpose of holiness and obedience, if we were destitute of that assistance which is necessary to enable us to the discharge of our duty; but this God offers, and is ready to afford to us, for he hath promised “to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him;” and “the Spirit of him that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead” dwells in all good men, who sincerely desire to do the will of God; “in the working out our salvation, God worketh in us both to will and to do.”

So that as to that obedience which the gospel requires of us, if we be not wanting to ourselves, if we do not “receive the grace of God in vain,” and “quench and resist his blessed Spirit,” we may be as really assisted as the Son of God himself was; for, in this respect, all true and sincere Christians are the sons of God; so that St. Paul tells us, ([Rom. viii. 14](http://www.ccel.org/study/Romans_8%3A14).) “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

So that, if all things be duly considered, the life of our blessed Saviour, as it is the most perfect, so, in the main, it is a very proper pattern for our imitation, and could not have come nearer to us, with out wanting that perfection which is necessary to a complete and absolute pattern. The Son of God condescended to every thing that might render him the most familiar and equal example to us, excepting that, which, as it was impossible, so had been infinitely dishonourable to him, and would have spoiled the perfection of his example; he came as near to us as was fit or possible, “being in all things like unto us, sin only excepted;” that is, abating that one thing, which he came to destroy and abolish, and which would have destroyed the very end of his coming; for if he had not been without sin, he could neither have made an expiation for sin, nor have been a perfect pattern of holiness and obedience.

And as the life of our blessed Saviour had all the perfection that is requisite to an absolute pattern (so that, by considering his temper and spirit, and the actions of his life, we may reform all the vicious inclinations of our minds, and the exorbitances of our passions, and the errors and irregularities of our lives), so it is a very powerful example, and of great force to oblige and provoke us to the imitation of it; for it is the example of one whom we ought to reverence, and have reason to love, above any person in the world: the example of our Prince and sovereign Lord, of our best friend and greatest benefactor, of the high-priest of our profession, and the Captain of our salvation, of the author and finisher of our faith, of one who came down from heaven for our sakes, and was contented to assume our nature, together with the infirmities of it, and to live in a low and mean condition, for no other reason but that he might have the opportunity to instruct and lead mankind in the way to life, to deliver us from sin and wrath, and to bring us to God and happiness. It is the example of one who laid down his life for us, and sealed his love to us in his blood, and whilst we were enemies, did and suffered more for us, than ever any man did for his friend.

And surely these considerations cannot but mightily recommend and endear to us this “example of our Lord and Saviour.” We are ambitious to imitate those whom we highly esteem and reverence, and are apt to have their examples in great veneration, from whom we have received great kindnesses and benefits, and are always endeavouring to be like those whom we love, and are apt to conform ourselves to the will and pleasure of those from whom we have received great favours, and who are continually heaping great obligations upon us.

So that, whether we consider the excellency of our pattern, or the mighty endearments of it to us, by that infinite love and kindness which he hath expressed towards us, we have all the temptation, and all the provocation in the world, to endeavour to be like him; for who would not gladly tread in the steps of the Son of God, and of the best friend that the sons of men ever had? Who would not follow that example to which we stand indebted for the greatest blessings and benefits that ever were procured for mankind? Thus you see of what force and advantage the example of our blessed Saviour is toward the recovery and salvation of mankind.

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When, by our sins, we had justly incurred the wrath and displeasure of Almighty God, and were liable to eternal death and misery, he was contented to be substituted a sacrifice for us, “to bear our sins in his own body on the tree,” and to expiate the guilt of all our offences by his own sufferings. He died for us, that is, ^not only for our benefit and advantage, but in our place and stead: so that if he had not died, we had eternally perished; and because he died, we are saved from that eternal ruin and punishment which was due to us for our sins.

And this, though it be no where in Scripture called by the name or term of satisfaction, yet, which is the same thing in effect, it is called the price of our redemption; for, as we are sinners, we are liable and indebted to the justice of God, and our blessed Saviour, by his death and sufferings, hath discharged this obligation; which discharge, since it was obtained for us by the shedding of his precious blood, without which, the Scripture expressly says, “there had been no remission of sin,” why it may not properly enough be called payment and satisfaction, I confess I cannot understand. Not that God was angry with his Son, for he was always well pleased with him; or that our Saviour suffered the very same which the sinner should have done in his own person, the proper pains and torments of the damned; but that his perfect obedience and grievous sufferings, undergone for our sakes, and upon our account, were of that value and esteem with God, and his voluntary sacrifice of himself in our stead so highly acceptable and well pleasing to him, that he thereupon was pleased to enter into a covenant of grace and mercy with mankind; wherein he hath promised and engaged himself to forgive the sins of all those who sincerely repent and believe, and to make them partakers of eternal life. And hence it is, that the blood of Christ, which was shed for us upon the cross, is called “the blood of the covenant;” as being the sanction of that new covenant of the gospel, into which God is entered with mankind; and not only the confirmation, but the very foundation of it; for which reason, the cup in the Lord’s supper (which represents to us the blood of Christ) is called “the new testament in his blood, which was shed for many for the remission of sins.”