

then our ultimate destiny will be awful beyond all description.

Truly it is an amazing consideration that ever it can be possible for a sinner to be free from condemnation. Have not all sinned and come short of the glory of God? They have. Did not all fall in Adam? They did. Have not all been guilty of personal sin? They have. And have we not broken the law times without number? We have. How true then is that word in the Psalms, "If Thou Lord shouldest be strict to mark iniquity, O Lord who shall stand?" Who could stand? But He does mark iniquities. It is according to the character of God to mark iniquities. He will certainly mark iniquity, either in the person who commits the sin, or in the person upon whom that sin is laid. O, what a mercy it will be for us if our sins were marked at Calvary! If that proves to be the case with us, then for us there will be no condemnation. There cannot be. It would be, so to speak, a slight upon the substitutionary work of the Redeemer. God forbid!

"Payment God cannot twice demand,
Once at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine."

What a wonderful word that is for a sinner to hear - no condemnation! So the Psalmist follows up that penetrating Scripture in Psalm 130, "But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared."

But there are particular people here described for whom there is no condemnation. They are said to be in a certain state or standing. They are IN CHRIST, that is why there is no condemnation. What a standing that is for one to be in who deserves the bottomless pit! "There is therefore now..." Emerging out of intense conflict, the Apostle came to this point. It was the same man who had just said, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" that breaks out like this. It was the same man who had been through these deep waters, who had been in some fellowship with the sufferings of Christ on account of the law of sin in his members, that breaks out in language like this, "There is therefore now no condemnation." But what is so striking about this is that, while in the first verse the Apostle refers to a people in this blessed standing, in the second verse he applies the same truth to his own

case; "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Hath made me free - that is what I like. He does not say "Hath made them free" which is perfectly true, but that it had made him free from the law of sin and death. To a certain point we can all affirm the truth of the first verse as a wonderful doctrine, but how many of us can come into the second verse and say "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death"? O blessed experience that is in the soul when the Saviour is thus revealed, and when the experience declared in the 16th. verse is known, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God". O beloved friends, have you ever had a moment when you could say "Hath made me free"? when the blessed liberating power of the Gospel has, as it were, just flowed into your soul and made you free, made you satisfied and confirmed in your prospect?

It is a wonderful Gospel, and one part of its beauty is its freeness. It is absolutely free. We may be too rich, but we cannot be too poor. And this is the painful part to flesh and blood, the crucifixion, the mortification, the weakening, the killing. But I do not know of anything really sweeter than to enter into what the Lord Himself said concerning the two debtors: "When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." No condemnation! O, if some of us could go to bed tonight with that word sounding in our souls, how wonderful it would be. At least it would be to any who may be here feeling under the sentence of death and the terrors of a broken law. No condemnation. Why it is like a voice from heaven coming right into the conscience of a confessing sinner: no condemnation. O, but, you say, I feel I deserve it. I do not believe that this word, no condemnation, will ever come in the blessedness of it to any person who does not feel that he deserves that condemnation. The work of the law by the Holy Ghost in the conscience strips one of all fancied meetness, brings him to that place to say and to feel,

"Should sudden vengeance seize my breath
I must pronounce Thee just in death;
And if my soul were sent to hell
Thy righteous law approves it well."

Have you ever got down as low as that? If so, I believe I can say that these are the very persons for whom there is no condemnation. O, it is heaven to feel that, and if you really get it in your heart you have got the seal of heaven. O, the liberty that such a word brings! It removes that legal bondage, the chains that bind, the cloud of uncertainty, fear and apprehension; it removes it all. If you really get this in your soul it will be in your experience, so to speak, like a sky without a cloud. The Lord Jesus would be in your soul as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, as a morning without clouds. O contemplate what it means, no condemnation, no sting in death, no legal terror, no dread of the holiness of God and the effects of a broken law, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

This is a great point. It is to them that are in Christ Jesus that there is no condemnation. But what does that mean, to be in Christ Jesus? What does Paul mean by such an inference? To be in Christ Jesus is first of all to be in the Father's gifts to Him. That is a great word the Lord expresses in the 17th. John, "Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me." It is to be in that gift. And here we have to observe the sovereignty of God in appointing some to obtain this salvation, and His predestinating decree, before the world was formed, of a number unto eternal life. It is very confirming to notice how closely the decree of God in this and the experience in the believer's heart are blended together. It is described by the Lord Himself in the 6th. John where He says "All that the Father giveth Me shall come unto Me". One flows out of the other. The coming, in the sinner, is the fruit of the gift in God's divine decrees, and this is to be in Christ, it is to be in that gift. Immutability is here. It is a gift that can never be subsequently revised. Never! Every one was, as it were, there registered for ever and ever; and O, what an amazing mercy to find eventually that we were in that gift by the Father to Christ, of a people chosen, predestinated, pre-determined by an immutable purpose, chosen by an unchanging God unto eternal life. This is to be in Christ, and this is where the secret lies, for every one of those was engraven on the palms of His hands, every one. O to be in Christ! The world is passing away, the days

are dark and threatening; but to be in Christ is to be safe for eternity. O to be in Christ!

To be in Christ is to be in the covenant made with Him. It embraces every elect vessel of mercy. It is a covenant made with Christ, but yet it is made with His people in Him. God makes this covenant with His people, but not upon any conditions. David was in a wonderfully good place just before he died, when he said "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath He made with me, with me, an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." And this is what I want to bring out, to be in Christ is to be in that covenant ordered in all things and sure. No devil can touch it, though he may touch many a poor sinner in it. Neither can one in it ever be shaken out of it.

"Once in Him, in Him for ever,
Thus the eternal covenant stands".

And truly it is a wonderful covenant. This covenant that was thus sealed with blood, this covenant in which every condition was fulfilled in Christ; we often say that it is a covenant without conditions, but it was not a covenant without conditions with respect to Christ. The conditions of that covenant were that He should suffer the hell that His people deserved, stand in their place, and be accountable to divine justice for all their sins. They were in Him there, in Him when He groaned and bled on the tree, in Him from all eternity. But O, think of the conditions as far as the Saviour was concerned! Great drops of blood were in those conditions, agony causing drops of blood to fall on the ground under an intolerable load of imputed guilt, the bruising and wounding of the Father, the awful sword of divine justice, the ransom-price, conflict, darkness, pain, grief and death were involved. Truly it was a wonderful covenant. It is purely a covenant of grace. But the point is, whether that covenant had ever been made with us. Well, say you, I do not know, and how can I know? I believe I can tell you how you can know. If the Lord has ever brought His blessed Gospel into your soul, and given you a taste of forgiveness, He has made a covenant with you, and He will never go back on what He has done. It is true, He may hide His face, everything may be dark, and you may be shaken even

about the most clear things you have had, but nothing can actually affect your standing here, "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David My servant", and every one in Christ comes within that promise. They are, as it were, bound together by two immutable things, and nothing, not a thousand devils, can get them out of that. O, what a consideration, no condemnation! No, there never was in this light, for they were from all eternity put into the hands of Christ, given to Him, and a covenant on their behalf was made with Him. And He never failed to fulfil it, did He? Although indeed the load was so great upon Him that it brought Him to the Garden of Gethsemane where He said "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless not My will but Thine be done." And every one of His children was there with Him in this sense, that they were in the covenant made with Him which there bound them together. Therefore there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. No, no condemnation. This is not something to be taken for granted, is it? Plenty of people take things for granted in religion and talk about loving Jesus, who have never smarted for their sins in secret before God as guilty, hell-deserving sinners. But for God to speak to a sensible sinner and to say "There is therefore now no condemnation" is the greatest miracle that has ever yet been. No condemnation!

To be in Christ is to be embraced in His everlasting love. That is to be in Christ. It is said earlier in this Epistle "God commendeth His love toward us." How does God commend His love toward us? When the Holy Ghost sheds it abroad in the heart and gives that sinner a view of a dying Saviour - "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Let me put it in this way, the sufferings and agony of the Redeemer on Calvary are the highest commendation of God's love to a sinner. Wonderful love!

"O love of unexampled kind
That leaves all thought so far behind,
Whose length and breadth and depth and height
Are lost to my astonished sight."

There is no condemnation here, is there? No, no condemnation; and the attractive feature of this love is that it is everlasting and inseparable love. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ",

said the Apostle, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" By this I take the Apostle to mean more particularly the love of Christ to His people, more than their love to Him; for the dear Redeemer suffered all these things, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, and death too, even the death of the cross; but it never separated Him from His love; no, instead of that, it was the highest manifestation of it. O the heights of that word, if we could believe it for a moment,

"For love of me the Son of God
Drained every drop of vital blood."

For love of me! You would be glad to get under a hedge and weep with Him if you got that, and it would be wonderfully sweet, for there would be no condemnation there. No, no condemnation. Have you ever got it? Have you ever had a moment when you could feel that God had nothing against you, and you had nothing against God? Perhaps you say, What do you mean, nothing against God? I mean no inward, secret rebellion in your heart against the ways of God with you. O it is very blessed, is this reconciliation of the soul, and this sweet flow of His love into the heart, so that all terrors are removed; it is a real coming together between the soul and God, a wonderful coming together. And this is to be in Christ. "We love Him because He first loved us." This is to be in Christ, and they are very sweet moments when you can feel it. To lie upon your bed, perhaps in pain of body, and yet to feel that you are wrapped up in this inseparable love for time and eternity, would break you to pieces. O it is a wonderful religion. Why? Because there is no condemnation. This is everything. Do you feel, or have you ever felt, that you have no dread of God? I do not mean to suggest that you live in such an atmosphere, but have you had a moment when you have felt you would not dread to appear in His presence? "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." There is no condemnation there. No. It is an amazing thing that God should love a sinner in the person of His Son.

And what a great love it is! It was a wonderful joy to Jeremiah's heart when the Lord appeared to him saying "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." This is to be in Christ, to be embraced by His love.

To be in Christ is to be in the union subsisting between Christ and His Church. "His Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." What a union! Naturally speaking, the body cannot live without the head, so neither can the Church live without Christ. There are His words: "Yet a little while and the world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me. Because I live, ye shall live also." This is to be in Christ. And are there not times when it seems as if He brings you, in your feelings, into this union? He draws you to Himself. "And I, if I be lifted up will draw all men unto Me." All men, not all the world. What kind of men are they then that are drawn? Well, I can tell you what kind of men they are. They are those who from their heart have to say "Give me Christ or else I die." O, say you, I have said that many times. Have you? Well, if you really have said it, you have been emptied from vessel to vessel and have had a painful experience. But still, if we have been brought to say that, "Give me Christ, or else I die" then there is no condemnation. No condemnation. Such a one is in Christ.

Then there is just this in concluding. To be in Christ is to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in Him. That covers everything in our lives. "Be careful for nothing." Not a sparrow can fall to the ground without His notice, and "Ye are of more value than many sparrows." Blessed with all spiritual blessings, not one or two. No, the beauty of this is that all is complete in Him, and His people are complete in Him. "Ye are complete in Him." "Blessed with all spiritual blessings." Every need will be supplied from His fulness. "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Well, perhaps you say, all you have been talking about is very nice, I suppose for some people, but all there seems to be in my religion is condemnation, condemnation, written on everything. Yes, there are many now falling before the Lamb in glory who here found

condemnation written upon everything. Once they struggled here below with sin and death and hell, - condemnation - but remember that it is these poor things who feel the sentence of death in their conscience, for whom in the purpose of God there is no condemnation, no condemnation.

May the Lord bring it home to us, for salvation is in it, and the sweetest happiness the soul can know is in this, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." It is the work of the Holy Ghost to show you where you stand, whether you are in the secret or not. It is a mercy if there is any great concern about it; for if there is no concern, there is no evidence of interest. I know the concern will not bring the consolation, but when the Lord brings it into your heart and speaks forgiveness there, then you will know it, and then you will be able to say with the Apostle here in the 2nd. verse "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death". O that me! I have looked at it heaps and heaps of times, and I believe I have had it, I believe I have known what it is, and it is a wonderful thing, "It hath made me free". May the Lord grant it to us for His name's sake. Amen.