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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at Richmond Chapel on Friday
afternoon 31st. March, 1972

Hymns 1127, 786, 227

Reading: Isaiah 53 and 54 (1-10)

Sermon: Romans 8.34

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"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us".

To some people what I have read may not mean anything particular, but there are some people to whom what I have read here and in the prophecy of Isaiah is the best news they have ever heard. I believe I can say that it is the best news that I have ever heard. Very few people, sad to say, realise their position and what is awaiting them at their decease. They live and die easy as we read in Psalm 73, they have no bands in their death and their strength stands firm, although it is a false assurance in which they live and die, but to a sinner convinced of his sin, who realises that there is a judgment day, and a divine punishment for an offender against the law of God, the news of the glorious, blessed Gospel is the best news he can hear.

How beautifully this chapter opens. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus". What a wonderful answer this is to the challenge here, "Who is he that condemneth?". If one is in this blessed standing in Christ Jesus he is secure beyond all the condemnation that the world or the devil may pronounce upon him, and the answer in the text is also very clear, "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us". It does seem and it is, an amazing wonder that a sinner can be in such a case as that no condemnation will be pronounced upon him by his God, whatever others may say of or about him. The condemnation here referred to is the condemnation of a law breaker, the sword of justice smiting him to his eternal ruin and perdition in hell, condemned under a broken law. "There is therefore now no condemnation". It does not say there is

therefore now no reproof, or rebuke, or correction, or chastening, or anything of this, for there is; and it is necessary for all of us; but there is no condemnation. The dealings of the Lord with His people are in love to them, as we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth", and in the Revelation, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten"; but that is not condemnation in a proper sense; that can only fall upon the head of the wicked. It is a profoundly solemn fact and yet these people seem and are dead to their condition. Many of the Lord's people have feared they will fall under this condemnation, when the law is charged home upon the conscience and the sentence of death is felt. Condemnation may be felt in the conscience in that sense, but never, never, eternal condemnation. The 53rd. Isaiah confirms this blessed truth for we read there that the curse that we deserve was suffered, endured by the Surety. He suffered the curse of the law for His people that they should be delivered from it, therefore there is no condemnation; yet these people are assailed by Satan, and the world, and many other enemies beside, and they have much conflict about it, and much apprehension about their own standing; but, even so, there is no person who has any authority to condemn one poor sinner whose hope is built on Jesus' blood and righteousness.

Who is he that condemneth? The ungodly may, the world may, Satan may, sin may, the law may; but none of these have authority to condemn a living soul for whom Christ died. The law cannot take effect upon one on whose behalf the law has been honoured. The curse cannot fall upon him, the curse cannot fall upon one on whose behalf it has been borne away by the Substitute. "There is therefore now no condemnation". This is a blessed and **glorious** doctrine, then, for it incorporates the whole living family of God that are enrolled in the Lamb's book of life, and whose names are in that book of divine love and grace. This then is the blessed standing of all who truly believe, they are in Christ, and for them He died. In a sense the challenge is answered here, "Who is he that condemneth?" - none can - and this is the answer, "It is Christ that died", and this is what the Gospel means, this is the

life blood of the Gospel, it centres in substitution, the substitution of the Lord Jesus Christ on His people's behalf. It is a glorious doctrine, and it is a blessed experience. It can be an experience when one is brought to feel his own interest, when he is delivered from the fetters of the law, and brought to feel something in his own heart of the sweet liberty of the blessed Gospel, and to know Christ revealed and formed in his heart, the hope of glory. It is a blessed experience. O what sweet comfort, peace, joy, happiness it brings, when it is really felt in the soul that there is no condemnation. It removes the sting of death it confirms one's hope, it enables one to look forward to the joys awaiting the Lord's redeemed people which "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard". What can be sweeter while we are down here below to feel in prospect a good hope through grace that one day we shall join the ransomed throng above?

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died". When the dear Redeemer died two things were accomplished by His substitution. First, the law found its end, for it is said that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth". When He said, "It is finished" the law found its end there as it respects all His dear people on whose behalf He stood. He honoured it, He magnified and made honourable that law substitutionally, so that none dare condemn. Although the Apostle says, "Who is he that condemneth?", it is as though he would say, Who is he that would dare to condemn, it is God that justifieth. Secondly this also is involved, not only the fulfilling of the law, but suffering its curse as though He had broken it. He did both of these, therefore, the sword of justice can never smite a sinner for whom the Saviour suffered and for whom He said, "It is finished". Here we are secure, here our standing is firm and sure, sheltered beneath the Rock. He is that Refuge where the Lord's people find absolute security. "It is Christ that died", although speaking from an experimental point of view, many for whom Christ died may not feel to their own satisfaction that He died for them. Hence the conflict, prayers, hungering and thirsting after the Lord Jesus.

But when that sweet day of liberty comes and the blood of atonement is applied, then the conscience is freed from its burden, it finds a sweet rest, peace and joy in believing. I remember when I felt this myself. I felt then as though I would continue in that sweet assurance for the rest of my life. But when the power abates, and the powers of evil arise, we fall into conflict again, and the days of darkness are many; but even so, nothing can affect or overthrow our standing. "There is therefore now no condemnation". A transporting thought, a glorious declaration, and a blessed experience when it is felt.

To be delivered from this condemnation under which we stand in ourselves involves more than we can understand, but there are three things involved that are mentioned in the text, the first is "It is Christ that died". That is the first answer to the challenge, "It is Christ that died"; and an effective answer it is too. The fact that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, in the fulness of time assumed human flesh, suffered, bled and died, is a solemn and a blessed reality. We have no hope whatever beside this blessed substitution, "It is Christ that died". It was the Christ that died, it was the promised Messiah that died. It was the Son of God incarnate, the Man Christ Jesus, that died. He died, it is true, by wicked hands; He was crucified and slain; but in the divine purposes of God, in a covenant sense, He died according to the counsel and foreknowledge of God. There was a divine purpose decreed in the blessed Trinity, in the covenant of grace, that the Lord Jesus Christ should assume human flesh, stand in the place of His people, and die to deliver them from eternal death. It is Christ that died. It is that Christ of Whom we read all through the Old Testament in the promises, types and shadows, of the Old Testament. It is the promised one, the sent of the Father, Christ, that died, the Anointed One. It is then Christ that died according to the covenant purposes of the Father; and this must be noticed particularly in Isaiah 53, where it says, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief". This was according to the eternal counsels of God, it is Christ that died. Here is an effective answer to the

challenge, "It is Christ that died", as though the Apostle might say "This must close the mouth of all who may attempt or dare to condemn. It is Christ that died". The answer is effective and conclusive. What a mercy if you and I can feel at any time in our life that we have a part or lot in this matter. "It is Christ that died". I know the doctrine can be received with much comfort of mind, "It is Christ that died". The doctrine may be received, and much comfort may be felt therein; but when that good Spirit applies the blood in its efficacy to a poor sinner's conscience, when he can say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me", then this blessed truth, "It is Christ that died", will mean more to him than anything else can.

"It is Christ that died". By dying, then, He fulfilled the divine decrees of God. In the redemption of His people by dying He removed the curse from His people, He bore it away by dying, and delivered Satan a fatal blow. By dying He fulfilled the first promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head". By dying He opened a new and living way for coming sinners. By dying He brought the distant night, as the Apostle says in the Epistle to the Ephesians "Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ". By dying He made heaven secure, so that no opposing powers can ever overthrow the divine purpose of God concerning His people.

We shall never properly know what is involved in this. We cannot enter very far into Gethsemane, we can only contemplate in our minds that cup which He drank right up. We can read and meditate upon those drops of blood that fell from His sacred brow, but very, very little can we understand of the awful sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ when He was made sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. But He paid the price that justice demanded, He saved us from the wrath of God; and paid our ransom with His blood; He died and, as you know, before He expired, He said, "It is finished". What was finished? All the types and shadows of the ceremonial law. They had their fulfillment in Him, and all the promises that pointed to His sufferings had

their fulfilment in that word "It is finished". It is Christ that died. Could not another have stood in His place? That would have been an utter impossibility. "It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again", as though by this word rather the Apostle Paul would put particular emphasis on its importance. It is as though He would say, 'Although Christ has died, apart from His resurrection, His death would have been ineffective as to the ultimate issues in fulfilling the purpose for which He came'. "Yea rather".

This beautiful reference, "Yea rather, that is risen again" is as though he would take us now from the scene of the cross and from the grave, to that glorious morning of the resurrection when He broke death's bands and our glorious Conqueror came forth triumphant over sin, death and hell. "He was delivered", it is said by the Apostle, "He was delivered for our offences, but He rose again for our justification." Oh it is sweet sometimes to meditate upon His blessed resurrection. I have felt it to be so many times in my life. I believe my own heart has been warmed as I have felt in my case that my Jesus is a living Jesus. "Yea rather", Death could not hold Him, by dying He bore the curse away, but by rising He gave open demonstration that it was accomplished, by His resurrection He ratified, openly confirmed, the acceptance of His substitution. He rose to die no more, and, as you know, we have the record in the Holy Scripture of some events that took place after the Saviour rose from the dead; how He appeared to Mary Magdalene, to the others, later to two on their way to Emmaus, and afterward to the eleven, and eventually to above five hundred brethren at once. All this is very sweetly confirming, and especially when we read of the two on their way to Emmaus, how the Lord appeared to them, and manifested Himself to them, as He did later to the eleven and particularly to Thomas. And does He not say, "Because I live ye shall live also"? "Yea rather that is risen again". His resurrection proves and demonstrates the acceptance at the hand of justice of the price that He paid, so that no further claim will be made.

"Yea rather, that is risen again and is even at the right hand of God". This is not merely a doctrine, although it is a doctrine; a vital doctrine, a necessary doctrine, a soul-confirming doctrine; but it is a blessed reality, it is a reality. The same body that was nailed to the cross, the same body that was buried and rose again, that same body entered into heaven - a transporting thought indeed - as a representative of all for whom He suffered, and is even at the right hand of God; as though the Apostle would say, this is an amazing truth, a blessed reality, it is even so. This "rather" has something very attractive about it. The Apostle embraces it, as to the reality of it, "Yea rather", He is not in the grave now; He rose again, and is even at the right hand of God, It is as though he would say, "It is such a wonder, it seems almost beyond our reach to believe it". "Even at the right hand of God". Yet it is the most blessed truth that we can really know. There He is. The right hand of God indicates His power, the power that is given to Him, the honour conferred upon Him, and the blessings that flow through Him. There He is at the right hand of God; and He is there for a purpose. He is the worthy representative of His people there, and He will be there until He shall come again the second time without sin unto salvation. We shall be gone probably before that day comes, but even so the day will come when He will appear again in glorious Majesty upon this earth. It will come to pass as predicted on the morning of the resurrection. He will descend from heaven with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

"Is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us", - that is He is interceding effectively upon the ground of His own all-sufficient merit. He does not intercede as an earthly advocate for the defence in bringing up a lot of things to attempt to clear a guilty person, but He intercedes effectively upon the ground of His own merit, which answers to and satisfies the claim of justice so that none can condemn; no not even justice dare condemn, "It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us". This intercession incorporates the

whole of His blessed priesthood. John saw Him as a Lamb that had been slain. The hymnwriter refers to this,

"A man there is, a real Man,
With wounds still gaping wide,
From which rich streams of blood once ran
In hands, and feet, and side."

He is there now making intercession for us.

"Come then repenting sinner, come;
Approach with humble faith;
Owe what thou wilt, the total sum
Is cancelled by his death."

He ever liveth to make intercession for us. He lives to die no more, and the efficacy and merit of His substitution will carry every ransomed vessel of mercy into heaven, to be there with Him for ever and ever, and to go no more out. I long sometimes to feel to have this matter confirmed in my own soul and I believe I did one night when I was asking the Lord for another confirmation. That word seemed sweetly to descend upon my spirit as though it was spoken three times, "All is settled; all is settled; all is settled", as though it might be said, 'Why ask for more? All is settled', and it was very, very sweet to me, and I have sometimes felt I can die on that, "All is settled". Although, as far as we are concerned, while here much may remain to be endured, yet when the dear Saviour said, "It is finished" all was settled on behalf of His dear people; their eternal salvation was settled; their justification was settled, and their ultimate destiny was settled. What a mercy, what a mercy it is, for us poor sinners to feel that heaven is before us, for then the best is before us, "All is settled and my soul approves it well". Amen.