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Sermon preached by Mr J H Gosden  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Wednesday evening 17 December 1947

ROMANS 8 v 34

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

There are two intercessors spoken of in this chapter, one in the heart - the Holy Ghost - and one in heaven - the exalted, great High Priest; a wonderful provision for poor men, sinful creatures, that God has made. A divine Person, the Holy Ghost, called by Christ, "another Comforter", whose work in the soul is both to convict and comfort, to teach a person to know himself and to know God, to convey to him a knowledge of the law, and a knowledge of the gospel; and then the Person of Christ, God's Own Son, and of Whom Paul speaks in this chapter: "He that spared not His Own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also, freely give us all things?" He is the Intercessor in the text at God's right-hand: "Who is even at the right-hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us". And in this chapter, the exercise of prayer is spoken of; and it seems to connect in the exercise of prayer, those two intercessions - the intercession of the Spirit within, and the intercession of Christ above, and that in the experience of a poor, insignificant, sinful worm. It is a great salvation which the Lord's people have in God, and that they are to work out in their own experience. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling". That is wrought out by the inworking of God, according to Paul to the Philippians: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure". (Philippians 2 v 13). And one of the points of God's good pleasure, and His design for His people, is that they should be a praying people, and that the blessings God designs to give them shall be made in their souls a matter of need and desire, and consequently of prayer. The Lord could pour down blessings on His people, if it pleased Him, without our praying, but it is not His pleasure. It is His appointment that we should pray, and so far from being, to a true

believer, an irksome, tiresome duty, it is a privilege, and yet in the exercise of it there are many difficulties, both because of our unworthiness, our guiltiness, our enemies; also because of the great things that are set before us, as attainable. There is a promise in salvation, both in regard to our fall, our ruin, and our need, and also a promise in respect of our capacity to receive, for the Lord has said that His people shall be filled with all the fulness of God, all communicable goodness. In the middle of this chapter, connecting these two intercessions, the Apostle says: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to His purpose." It seems to infer that these people who are called according to His purpose, are called to enter upon a life of faith and prayer, in all the vicissitudes of their journey, so that everything they encounter and experience shall be turned to a profitable account, through their exercises in prayer. In the Hebrews, speaking of chastisement, the Apostle says: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." In the text there is a great encouragement for people who, in prayer, labour under a sense of guilt. I believe that every child of God will find, more or less frequently, that one great difficulty in prayer is sin: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us"; we ignore and despise the value of an intercessor in heaven, for if we can go to God as innocent and sinless, we do not require a Mediator to advocate our cause in heaven. Therefore, though sin is a terrible thing, and bitter, it is an evil thing if we do not feel the need of the atonement, and do not feel the difficulty in respect of our sins, and therefore the need of an Intercessor in whose Name we may go to God. There is a challenge in this text, a great challenge. Having laid down the basis of the hope of the believer in Christ and His finished work, and God's grace in Him, he throws out this mighty challenge: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" If you look at this word from your own standpoint, as a convicted sinner, it may not be easy for you to think of yourself as a justified person, but the justification which is revealed in the gospel is a free justification for it is through the redemption of Christ, and by the grace of God, and is the justification of the

persons of God's elect. There can be no such thing as a partial justification; we shall be justified or condemned by God Himself. Therefore it is a solemn consideration and this challenge is a solemn challenge. The great point in connection with it is, whether we belong to the elect and are justified by the grace of God, freely, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus", for, if God justifies, none can condemn. Paul challenges anyone to condemn one whom God justifies. Yet the elect are often condemned, condemned in their own consciences, out of a broken law, the law they have infringed unaccountably at times, and whose standard they cannot reach by their best efforts. There are many people who would condemn them; the world condemns the elect, scorns the elect, hates the elect, and tries to find out evils in the elect. They eat up the sin of the Lord's people, as they eat bread. There are many who condemn the elect; their consciences frequently do. If God justifies, nothing can overturn it. Justification is an irreversible act, for God does not justify on the ground of any works; no works that they can do will procure His justification. And if I might dare to say such a thing - I would say it advisedly and to those who are made wise in the things of God - no sin can make God condemn finally His Own elect. If you believe that it will not make sin a light matter. I believe that the more a poor sinner is assured that his sins are put away, and that, through the redeeming blood of Christ, he is justified by God's grace, the more tender in conscience he will be. and the more he will hate sin and fear sinning. Those who talk about the doctrines of grace leading to a licentious life show that they are not the subjects of the power of that grace in their souls.

"Who is he that condemneth?" God's justification is not an arbitrary act, but it is an act which flows from His grace, through the merit of Christ's death. God cannot bless a sinner apart from reference to the work of Christ, the merit of Christ, because He cannot do an unjust thing, and to justify an ungodly person would be distinctly unjust, apart from the righteousness of Christ. I have often been thankful for the truth of divine justice in the business of man's redemption. The justice of God in the gospel is very attractive to me - a satisfied justice. It is a terrible thing for anyone to even think that God can be the author of sin, or that He can do that which is not strictly just. But here is a challenge, God justifying the

ungodly which believe in Jesus, and who can condemn them? God condemns all sin; He does not justify the ungodly in their ungodliness, but they are justified freely from all things, from which they could not be justified by the works of the law. God does not abrogate His law in order to justify; He does not ignore the law; but with the full consent of the law - it being honoured and satisfied by Christ, Who, as the blessed Surety obeyed, and, as a blessed Substitute, suffered - God justly forgives, and justly justifies, sinful men, through faith in Christ. That is a wonderful word in John's Epistle: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We cannot confess them unless we are convinced of them, and we cannot appreciate God's justification of our persons unless we have some knowledge of condemnation. The term "justification" would be meaningless to one who knew nothing about condemnation. It is solemn to know what condemnation means, what guilt is, what the curse of God in the conscience means; to feel that conscience condemns you, and God condemns you out of His law; it is a solemn thing, and painful to feel. You may say sometimes, as you look to yourself, I deserve eternal condemnation, but the Scriptures make it plain, and the experience of the true people of God proves, that God can, and does justify a sinner, through faith in Christ. Not that their faith contributes to justification, not that their faith is offset, as it were, against their sin, as something meritorious - not at all - but it is faith by which justification is received, by which the righteousness of Christ is felt; and "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" is realised in the mind and conscience. Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ forbids your condemnation. "There is therefore now" says Paul "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"; that is, are so united to the Lord Jesus, that all the virtue of His precious sacrifice, and His obedience to the law, is reckoned to their account, and they are justified, on that honourable basis, by God Himself. Condemnation cannot take place twice for one sin. If condemnation has taken place for our sins in the Person of the blessed Redeemer, then God's justice - shall I say it? - forbids that we should be condemned for that sin. I know that I am speaking of very solemn matters, and would not speak lightly of them, but God is just:

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

Now the doctrine of imputation is explicit in the text, and explicit in many parts of the Word of God, and the experience, and the benefit of Christ's substitutionary work is to be received, and often is received, in the path of believing prayer. Many a child of God has called upon the Lord's Name in a sense of guilt and condemnation, and bondage, and has received, even in the act of prayer, or afterwards, the sentence of justification, and felt in experience the peace of God, in the removal of that condemnation from the conscience, and sweet peace and pardon flowing in by the Spirit of Christ. This is to be laboured for in prayer, and sometimes groaned after, for the Apostle speaks of our being unable to pray as we ought, not knowing how. Your things are so deep, your case is so unique, and your desires are so great, that you cannot express all that you feel, but the Spirit makes intercession with groanings, and God knows what those groanings mean, for He inspires them. And the aspiration of the soul in those groanings is after the blessing which God designs to give, for Christ's sake. In one very gloomy Psalm, which people like to omit (Psalm 38) full of complaint to God (not groaning in despair or remorse, but groaning to be delivered from guilt) the groaning is accompanied with a longing desire for the enjoyment of the love of God in Christ. This is the work of the Spirit, very different from a rudimental religion, in which people please themselves by their well modulated prayers and their correct religion. The religious world scorns that vital exercise which is manifested by a groaning, praying, sinner. O, but the Lord knows and the will of God and the groaning of the sinner answer each other. And when the child of God receives the blessing of God in his own heart, and feels that his sins are forgiven for Christ's sake; when he receives a visit of Divine love and assurance that the Lord is his Redeemer, well then his groanings, for the time, cease and they are changed into praise. It must be worked out and laboured for. We can do nothing toward our own salvation, as to merit, but every child of God knows this, that the kingdom of heaven must suffer violence, and it is taken by force.

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died". Here is a

mighty encouragement - the death of Christ. O, the precious death of Christ, what it did! He "died for our sins", says Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, in punishment for them. Christ's death was a punishment, and condemnation of sin. He died unto sin once and His death effected what no other death could. When His Divine Father did not spare Him, but delivered Him up, what was it for? To vindicate His law and justice, and it was in love. In His love and pity He laid down His life for His sheep.

"It is Christ that died". What is the death of Christ to you, my friends? Did the Spirit ever make that death of Christ to you, a sacred, solemn, awful attraction? There is a fulness about it. We shall never know fully what the death of Christ was to Christ. We read in Isaiah 53 "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all". Very solemn; condemnation takes place there in the sufferings and death of Christ, condemnation for sins that were laid upon Him. "It is Christ that died" to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; God's gracious provision for His unworthy people. What a provision! The love of Christ was in that; His hatred of sin was in that, and both were united in His undergoing that suffering death. He hated sin, He loved righteousness; He loves His people. One has said:

Why art Thou afraid to come?  
Why afraid to tell thy case?  
He will not pronounce thy doom  
Smiles are seated on His face

Though His majesty be great  
Yet His mercy is no less,  
Though He thy transgressions hate,  
Jesus feels for thy distress

Think of it, poor sinners - if there be a distressed sinner here - Christ died for the ungodly; but He lives. "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again". Death could not hold Him because His death effected the purpose for which He died - took away sin and expiated it entirely, everlastingly. Those three words, I have often mentioned, but there is more in them than we can comprehend - "It is finished". Henceforth an end is made of sin; the important words

imply no less. O, my friends, if we are interested in that death, and more, interested in Him who died and rose again, and is even at the right hand of God, and who also maketh intercession for poor, praying sinners upon earth, what can invalidate our salvation? What can overthrow us finally? They must succeed who pray in the Name of Christ. "Whatsoever", He said Himself, "ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do." But O, how solemn it is, that when we often would pray, there is so much to confess, so many sins, particular sins, sins that are set before our mind, in the light of God's countenance, and secret sins! Sometimes we feel that it is no exaggeration to say: "they are more than the hairs of our head", and yet, we may be living, as far as externals are concerned, a life of strict integrity and uprightness, but in the heart, thoughts, motives and breathings of our nature - O, how sinful! God makes some of us feel it, and that makes it difficult sometimes to pray; yet it is profitable. When the Holy Spirit convinces us of sins of which we were not aware, sins in our thoughts, sins that we did not think were sins; when we become guilty, we need the atonement, and prayer - the Name of Christ must be mentioned by us. And what a mercy it is to feel it; what comfort and encouragement, that Christ is at the right hand of God, always interceding there; never absent, never intermitting His compassion and care; never absent when a sinner comes in His Name. His intercession in heaven is a prevailing intercession. The weakest, guiltiest, lost, fearful sinner, who comes through Him to God, placing His case in the hands of the Lord Jesus, cannot fail of success, ultimately. This will enlarge you in prayer; it will enable you to look into this chapter, which you may be afraid sometimes to look at, because of the high privileges which it contains, and pray for these blessings; not only the removal of sin, which is a great thing, for it is not a little thing to be forgiven.

Can blood such horrid crimes atone?

Yes, blood so rich as Thine

Sometimes your memory may go back to certain things, and you may entertain a kind of stupid wish that you might undo those things. You cannot; nothing that we have done, said or thought. can be undone. They are all recorded - I wish we all felt it. God knows our thoughts afar off. If we made a conscience of our thoughts, we might have more

trouble and more confession to make before God in prayer. Blessed be His Holy Name, what we cannot undo, He can obliterate; He can shut it out of our consciences, as He has blotted out all His people's sins by His death. Now prayer will go for that blessing. If you can be satisfied without it, your satisfaction is sadly short. Some people seem to be perfectly satisfied with some kind of hazy hope that they may somehow get to heaven; that is a poor kind of religion. I hope I shall get to heaven by the miracle of divine grace, when I die, and sometimes long to go. Do we not want to walk with Him in communion and fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ? How is that fellowship to be? "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin". It is not walking in the light of innocence, but walking in the light of God's conviction and in the light of truth, by faith in Christ. There is a fellowship and the Spirit teaches us to pray for it. The poet prayed for it when he said

O for a closer walk with God

What can bring us near? The blood of Christ, as sprinkled on the conscience. Experimentally, we are far from God, when guilt is on the conscience, and yet guilt felt there is accounted a fitness for Christ. If we never feel our guilt we shall not be able conscientiously to confess our sin and, lacking that, what shall we know of the blood of Christ? That conviction of sin is one of the things which work together for good to them that love God, and sinners love Him, and hate themselves for their sins:

Self abhorring, grace admiring  
Made unto salvation wise

That is the attitude that grace, that the Spirit, puts a sinner into in his prayer. But there are many things connected with divine pardon. I would not depreciate the preciousness and importance of pardon for the world. Indeed the Apostle speaks of it as the embodiment of the covenant, as if, using that one blessing, he would set forth the whole: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their



hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (Hebrews 10 verses 16 and 17) If that be so, it will not only be indicative of not remembering sin, but it will be possibly remembering the sinner with the favour which He bears to His Own people, and you will be after that favour - a smile from God, a sense of His love, a realisation of being a child of God, and a warrant to call God your own in ties of love and blood, being joint-heirs with Christ, and enabled to claim the Lord as your portion. There are great blessings in this chapter, written for our learning, but inciting in our hearts the prayer of faith for the exercise and enjoyment of these blessings. Do you find prayer drawn out of your hearts, sometimes? And when you feel that you would pray. You may feel yourself just in the position of Joshua, the high priest. There was the poor man, being resisted at his right hand by Satan; before the Lord in filthy garments - you may feel like that - but the Lord stood by. It is true, and encouraging to believe that the Lord does not intercede for us in heaven because of the notion we give Him in prayer, but He intercedes for us in His love and never intermits it. Our prayer is the result of His intercession and of His sending down the Holy Spirit; an evidence that He has in His hand and in His heart, blessings for us. It is as if He should say, I will have you confess your sins; I will have you pray for what I design to give you. Is not that a privilege? Is it not child-like? A parent knows what is good for a child and intends to give what is good for it, yet a wise parent will make the child ask, with due deference, for what it desires. We may ask for many things which are not according to the will of God to give us, but if we ask anything in Christ's Name, He will do it. What does that mean? I believe it means this, that when we pray in Christ's Name, by the Spirit's teaching, we pray according to the will of God, but when we merely make expression of our desires, and wants before God, we probably pray according to our own judgments. Praying in the Holy Ghost, is being interceded for, according to the will of God. You will then pray in the Name of Christ, the Lord Jesus, in heaven, an Intercessor. Blessed be His Name for His infinite condescension. Though He be so highly exalted, the Son of Man, the Son of God, His interests are with His poor people upon earth. You cannot want a Representative in heaven if Christ is there for you; you do not go alone though you pray in your room in secret, for there is the Holy Spirit in your heart and He brings

heaven near sometimes, and brings Christ's righteousness near, and occasionally reveals the Lord Jesus, with His divine atonement, at the Lord's right hand. Then you get what Joshua got; the Lord defended Joshua from the adversary and said: "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" "And He answered and spake unto those that stood before Him, saying: Take away the filthy garments from him. And He said: Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with a change of raiment". Blessings are not obtained because of merit in prayer, but blessings do come to sinners in answer to the prayer of faith, inspired by the Holy Spirit and through the intercession of Christ in heaven. And what will be the final issue? Why, if we have communications from heaven, if we sometimes find access through Christ to the Father, and receive blessings from His heart and hand, well, He causes us to know that heaven is before the Lord's people; they aspire to it and pray for it.

Prepare me gracious God  
To stand before Thy face  
Thy Spirit must the work perform  
For it is all of grace

To be prepared for that day, to be fitted for heaven, to be taken there ultimately, will be one of the subjects of our prayers, as well as all the intervening things. It is a good life to live - a life of prayer. May the Lord teach us how to pray, how to live a life of faith on the Son of God, and often give us a realisation of the comfort, in our trials upon earth, of having an Intercessor, a Friend in the courts of heaven.

AMEN.