

As we begin a New Year, our prayer is that the Lord would anchor us in His good purposes. Whether we encounter storms or smooth sailing, how we need to remember that Christ stands on the shores of each period of church history (and therefore our history as well) protecting our spiritual lives as vulnerable sheep through His prayers and intercessions for us.

Monday: Read Romans 8:31-34; Hebrews 9:24 & Hebrews 10:12

Our Security of Blessing

In Romans 8:31-34, Paul sums up his argument for our justification with a renewed appeal to Christ's person and atoning work – particularly his work by which we are justified. Because God is "for us" and "did not spare His own Son," we can rest assured that God will give us "all things" necessary for life and godliness. And the conduit for "all things" is the heavenly intercession of Christ.

How does God seal His commitment to us, to be our Justifier; Defender and Provider? He installs His Son at His right hand (Hebrews 10:12) in order that He might continually "appear" there for us (Hebrews 9:24).

Meditate and Pray: Give thanks with Charles Wesley's hymn in praise of the Ascended Christ: (# 305, *Trinity Hymnal*) "Arise, My Soul, Arise."

1 Arise, my soul, arise,
shake off your guilty fears:
the bleeding Sacrifice
in my behalf appears:
before the throne my Surety stands,
before the throne my Surety stands,
my name is written on his hands.

2 He ever lives above,
for me to intercede,
his all-redeeming love,
his precious blood to plead;
his blood atoned for ev'ry race,
his blood atoned for ev'ry race,
and sprinkles now the throne of grace.

3 Five bleeding wounds he bears,
received on Calvary;
they pour effectual prayers,
they strongly plead for me.
"Forgive him, O forgive," they cry,
"Forgive him, O forgive," they cry,
"nor let that ransomed sinner die!"

4 My God is reconciled;
his pard'ning voice I hear;
he owns me for his child,
I can no longer fear;
with confidence I now draw nigh,
with confidence I now draw nigh,
and "Father, Abba, Father!" cry.

Tuesday: Read Romans 8:26-34 & Hebrews 7:25**The Permanency of the Bond**

In order to have a proper view of the *setting of Christ's intercessory work* for His church, begin today with the words of Professor John Murray:

In Romans 8:34 the context is one in which the people of God are contemplated as being challenged by their adversaries... Who shall lay a charge against the elect of God? It is God that justifies: Who is he who condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died, yea rather is risen, who is at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us (Rom. 8:33, 34)..."

... it is obvious that the intercession of Christ is co-ordinated with Christ's death, resurrection, and exalted glory as that which insures the vindication... and the security... of the people of God. And this means that the active and abiding intercession of Christ is engaged with the permanency of the bond that unites the people of God to Christ in the efficacy of his death, in the power of his resurrection, and in the security of his exalted glory.

The intercession is appealed to here for the purpose of assuring believers that there is an abiding concern on the part of the exalted Lord with the conflicts and trials which beset the people of God and that this concern expresses itself in prayer on their behalf, that none of the assaults upon them will be successful in sundering the bond that unites them to him and that they will be more than conquerors in every engagement with their adversaries. In a word, it is intercession directed to every exigency of their warfare and therefore to the supply of grace for every need.

John Murray, *The Heavenly Priestly Activity of Christ*, pg. 12 , biblicalstudies.org.uk

Meditate and Pray: Give thanks that Jesus Christ continues in Heaven in His office as our Divine and human Priest-King, thereby ensuring that we will be “saved to the uttermost” (Heb. 7:25). Just as Christ was *faithful* in purchasing our salvation and redemption on the Cross by the shedding of His own blood, so He is *faithful* in applying that redemption to us by His ongoing prayers on our behalf! That blood which was shed for our forgiveness still speaks, arguing for our ongoing preservation. As hymn # 242 in our Trinity hymnal says:

1 Not all the blood of beasts
on Jewish altars slain,
could give the guilty conscience peace,
or wash away the stain:

2 But Christ, the heav'nly Lamb,
takes all our sins away,
a sacrifice of nobler name
and richer blood than they.

3 My faith would lay her hand
on that dear head of thine,
while like a penitent I stand,
and there confess my sin.

4 My soul looks back to see
the burdens thou didst bear,
when hanging on the cursed tree,
and knows her guilt was there.

5 Believing, we rejoice
to see the curse remove;
we bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,
and sing his bleeding love.

Wednesday: Read Romans 8:34 & Hebrews 9:24 & 9:26**Saved from Ruin**

What is this intercession which Christ exercises on our behalf? It is that Christ “put our sin away” (Heb. 9:26) by cleansing us of its guilt and power. Having absorbed for us its death-penalty, He has voided its authority so that it no longer controls our lives (Rom. 6).

The wonderful result is that, through His intercession as our Resurrected and Ascended Lord, our interests and needs as the people of God, in all our temptations and tribulations, are given full attention and sympathetic consideration at God’s throne because Christ holds “a representative mediatory office exercised in the presence of God at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens,” (Murray, *Ibid.* p. 4).

Meditate and Pray: On this wonderful lesson of comfort, drawn from Christ’s intercession:

Does Christ live for ever in Heaven to present our blood to God in the way of intercession for believers? ... Hence let them be encouraged against all their *sinful infirmities*, and lamented weaknesses... having such a High-priest in Heaven, these weaknesses can never be your ruin.

John Flavel, *Works*.

Thursday: Read Psalm 55:22 & Hebrews 7:25**Cast Your Burden on Christ**

We are now equipped to describe exactly what it means for Christ to be able to “save to the uttermost” those for whom He intercedes. We need Christ’s intercessions every hour and for every trial, so we are to ask the Father in Heaven to help us to *depend on those intercessions*. Here are some of the most important facets of his intercession:

In respect of our **sins**:

Q: What is the nature of Christ’s intercession? **A:** It is his willing that the merit of his sacrifice be applied to all those in whose room and stead he died, according to the method laid down in the covenant in their favor, John 17:24 – “Father, I will, that they whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am.”

James Fisher’s Commentary on the Westminster Shorter Catechism Explained, Q & A 51

In respect of the **Holy Spirit** in all His blessed effects on believers:

He lives forever to send the Holy Spirit unto his disciples. Without this constant effect of the present mediatory life of Christ the being of the church would fail, it could not subsist one moment. For hereon depends, 1. All saving light to understand the word of God... 2. All habitual grace, whereby the souls of the elect are quickened and regenerated; 3. All supplies of actual grace; which the whole church hath from him every moment, and without which it could yield no obedience unto God; 4. All spiritual gifts... 5. All comfort and consolation...

J Owen, *An Exposition of Hebrews*, vol. V, p. 536

In respect of our **sufferings**:

The Father always hears him; and we have not a deliverance from trouble, a recovering of health, ease of pain, freedom from any evil that ever laid hold upon us, but it is given us on the intercession of Jesus Christ.”

John Owen, *Works*, Vol. 2 p. 145

In respect of our continual need for **access** that we can never merit or maintain in our own strength:

Are not the saints on earth, being sinful, unfit to come into the presence of the King? Yes; but the glorious Advocate introduces them, procuring them access by his interest in the court; “For through him we have an access, by one Spirit, unto the Father” (Ephesians 2:18).

Fisher, *Q & A* 59

Meditate and Pray: Do not be afraid to commit your whole life, your whole list of needs, your sense of want, your sense of fear and perplexity – commit all these burdens to the Lord. This is what Psalm 55:22 commands.

Fri/Sat: Read Matt. 11:28-30, Rom. 8:31-34 & Heb. 10:12-13

It All Depends on Him

You would think that some Christians have never heard Christ’s command to “come unto Him, heavy-laden with their burdens, and rest.” That is the impression many believers give in their unrelenting *religious works* by which they seek assurance that they are God’s adopted children. But Christ has sat down (Hebrews 10:12-13) waiting for His enemies to be made His footstool. Somehow beyond our comprehension, He is able both to *rest* in His victory over sin and His rule of our lives and *also actively intercede for His suffering church*. How is Christ able to do both?

Surely there are some parts of the answer to this question that have to wait until we see Him face-to-face in Heaven. But we are convicted in our *underestimation* of Christ’s prayers for us in Heaven! We insufficiently appreciate the pervasive nature of Christ’s intercession for us and our urgent need for such intercession to continue, for our survival as well as our comfort!

What we are concerned with now is to recognize that his specifically high priestly ministrations are more operative and pervasive in the church upon earth **than we are frequently disposed to appreciate.**

John Murray, *Ibid.* p. 4, emphasis added

The Father always hears him; and we have not a deliverance from trouble, a recovering of health, ease of pain, freedom from any evil that ever laid hold upon us, but it is given us on the intercession of Jesus Christ. Believers are unacquainted with their own condition, if they look upon their mercies as dispensed in a way of common providence. **And this may, indeed, be a cause why we esteem them no more, are no more thankful for them, nor fruitful in the enjoyment of them: - we see not how, by what means, nor on what account, they are dispensed to us.** The generations of the people of God in the world are at this day alive, undevoured, merely on the account of the intercession of the Lord Jesus.”

John Owen Works, Vol. 2 p. 145 emphasis added

Meditate and Pray: Why is this intercession so important for our lives and our ministries? Professor John Murray writes regarding our perseverance as it is related to the knowledge of Christ's ongoing intercession for us:

To view the heavenly sympathy of our Lord from the aspect of our existential need, how indispensable to comfort and to perseverance in faith to know that in all the temptations of this life we have a sympathiser, and helper, and comforter in the person of him from whom we must conceal nothing, who feels with us in every weakness and temptation, and knows exactly what our situation physical, psychological, moral, and spiritual is. And this he knows because he himself was tempted, like as we are, without sin. That he who has this feeling with us in temptation appears in the presence of God for us and is our advocate with the Father invests his sympathy and help with an efficacy that is nothing less than omnipotent compassion.

Murray, *Ibid.* p. 8

Well may we sing with the Scottish paraphrase (1781) from Romans 8:34-39:

*The Savior died, but rose again
Triumphant from the grave;
And pleads our cause at God's right hand,
Omnipotent to save.*

*Who, then, can e'er divide us more
From Jesus and His love;
Or break the sacred chain that binds
The earth to Heav'n above?*

*Let troubles rise, and terrors frown,
And days of darkness fall;
Through Him all dangers we'll defy,
And more than conquer all.*

*Nor death, nor life, nor earth nor hell,
Nor time's destroying sway,
Can e'er efface us from His heart,
Or make His love decay.*

Sunday: Read Hebrews 9:24-26 & 10:10-14**Done Once, Continuing Effect**

Just as Christ “appeared” in our flesh at the end of the ages, to put away sin (Hebrews 9:26), so He now “appears for us” (Hebrews 9:24) in order to carry on His intercession for us in Heaven. This is an everyday, continuous ministry which ensures the church’s survival, growth, sanctification and eventual glorification.

Nevertheless, it is right for us to conclude this weekend’s notes by emphasizing that the *effective and prevailing* nature of these intercessions flows from His once-for-all, finished, sacrificial work accomplished on the Cross. According to Hebrews 10:9-10, Christ set aside the *whole Old Testament sacrificial system* by His life of obedience on earth and by His singular sacrifice of His body on the Cross. The will of God the Father has been fully accomplished for our salvation. The result now is that every believer in Christ’s saving work has been once-for-all perfected (that is, definitively sanctified and set apart for God’s holy purposes) in the destiny of full salvation through the Son of God in our flesh. This is the emphasis in Hebrews 10:10-14. Christ has now sat down *as a sign that His work is done*. What then about our ongoing need for Christ’s intercession?

The Puritans help us by describing Christ’s ongoing intercessions as a simple application of His finished work on the Cross. In other words, Christ’s shedding of blood, His sufferings and sacrificial offering up of His body – all that ended successfully on the Cross. When He cries out in John’s Gospel, “It is finished,” it *really is finished*.

This even includes our sanctification. We have been “made holy” (perfect tense, Hebrews 10:10) so that the ongoing process of sanctification (present tense in Hebrews 10:14) is guaranteed success.

Meditate and Pray: Christ on the Cross, in His once-for-all work, “purchased” all saving and sanctifying graces needed to ensure that one day we will be glorified with Christ in Heaven, perfectly conformed to His image. Prayerfully read through Thomas Goodwin’s comments below, thanking God that there is nothing left *in our salvation or our sanctification*.

By His death, Christ purchased all of the grace and glory that the God of all grace had designed for us: “For by one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14). Alas for poor us poor creatures! For a long time after we are sanctified, we remain imperfect, lacking all and everything in comparison. How, then, are we perfected? Because Jesus Christ, by that one offering, perfectly purchased all that ever shall go to make up our perfection. It is finished in that sense. He so abundantly procured all by His death that He needed to offer Himself but once. If there were anything necessary to perfect a saint that Christ did not purchase, His offering must have been imperfect.

Likewise, when He first ascended into Heaven, He as a head received every whit, the whole of all that should be given to us by the Spirit of God, even to all the saints that were then unborn; He received all of it all at once, though it shall be given forth to us by parcels to all eternity: “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He has shed forth this which you now see and hear” (Acts 2:33).

Amen!