

February 12, 2017

John 17:1-19 / Romans 8:26-27 / Romans 8:33-34

The Precious Prayers Jesus Prays For His People

I hope all the things we've looked at in the past four weeks have encouraged you. That's Paul's purpose in sharing them! But if not, the things we look at today, and next week, surely will. For in these verses we come to the truths that must be deduced from what Paul has already shared – and they are sweet to the soul.

In vv. 33-34 we find three of those truths. **1st**) We find that if we are one of God's chosen, no one can ever bring an accusation or charge against us that will lead God to condemn us. **2nd**) We find that the Judge before whom all the people's of the earth will stand on the Day of Judgment, is our personal Savior, the Lord Jesus. And **3rd**) We find that the Jesus we love and live for is incessantly interceding for us.

So, let's look at the **THREE** we find in our text, which are so encouraging, and bring such strength to the soul, starting **FIRST** with the initial question Paul asks in v. 33: *"Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?"*

And here, once again, who are we dealing with? We're dealing with the same people Paul has been zeroing in on since v. 28 – "those whom God has chosen." In the Greek, the word for "chosen" is "eklektwn." It's the Greek word from which we get our English term, "the elect." Those "chosen by God" are called "God's elect."

In fact, as the KJV, NKJV, NASB, and ESV rightly translate it: *"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect."* That is, against those God foreknew, predestined, called, justified, is sanctifying and will glorify. Who will **BRING AGAINST THEM** any accusation of guilt, concerning a crime, or moral violation, or transgression of God's Law, that would lead to **THEM** being condemned by God?

And the answer? No one! And how can it be that no one can bring a charge against us that will lead to our condemnation? Paul tells us in his very next statement. It's because, "*God is the one who justifies.*"

To "justify" is to declare a person, "Not Guilty." It's to exonerate them or erase all the charges that had been brought against that person. It's to free them from the charge or accusation that they're guilty of a crime, and with it, free them from the need to pay the penalty for what they did.

King David, for instance, committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband murdered. They were acts that surely weighed on his conscience, and led him to repentance, with a broken and contrite spirit (Ps. 51).

And surely Satan, and David's enemies, made sure he would never forget it, accusing him in his conscience, or to his face, before God. Yet it was to no avail. Because as one of God's "*chosen,*" or "*elect*" (foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and destined to be glorified) – forgiveness was his through the blood of the, "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8).

Through faith in the promised Messiah, foreseen in all the OT sacrifices, David's transgressions were forgiven and his sins were covered.

And that, says Paul, is true of **ALL** God's "elect" or "chosen ones." Any charge, or accusation, brought against ANY justified believer, cannot stand! Because Jesus, the sinner's substitute, bore in His body on the cross the punishment for all the sins they would ever commit.

There is not one sin that the chosen of God ever have, or ever will commit, that Jesus did not pay the penalty for in His death on the cross. Not one! Therefore, no charge of guilt can stick or succeed in bringing about their condemnation before God. Because every sin they would

ever commit was taken into account, and its guilt atoned for, in the death of our Lord Jesus.

Not one sin was left unatoned for – NO NOT ONE. THAT is my saving grace! That is what makes me want to worship Him and live for Him.

That's what makes me want to resist all sin!

That unbelievable expression of His grace to us (and I say unbelievable because when I first came to Christ I could not bring myself to believe it!) is what makes us want to honor Him in all we do.

So, once one of God's "chosen ones" is called, and comes to faith in Christ, he or she is "justified" (or pronounced no longer guilty) by God! And once a person is justified by God or has the perfect record of Jesus credited to their own account – *as if His was theirs* – they CANNOT be charged before Him with the guilt of any sin. For each one has already been atoned for.

Which brings us to our **SECOND** point. That God's chosen and justified ones – **CANNOT BE CONDEMNED FOR THEIR SINS** – because the JUDGE, who they will ultimately stand before... the JUDGE who will sit on the Great White Throne on the Day of Judgment, judging all the people's of the earth, is Jesus, the One who was condemned in their place.

The One who died for ALL the sins of ALL who would ever come to believe on Him. And as Scripture tells us, He **KNOWS** who every single one of His believing and thus justified people are! *"I know my sheep,"* said Jesus in John 10:14, *"and my sheep know me."* *"And I lay down my life for the sheep,"* as He says, in the very next verse.

So, what do we read in v. 34? *"Who is He that condemns? Christ Jesus who died – more than that who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God, and is also interceding for us."*

That's what gives me hope for the day of judgment! The One I will stand before; the One who will Judge me and all other people; the One every human being will have to give an account to for everything they have done in the flesh (even the secret things) – will be my Lord and Savior and Substitute and Advocate and closest Friend.

If ever there was truth to the statement, "It's not WHAT you know, but WHO you know that matters," it's in relation to salvation. For to know Him, and be known by Him, IS eternal life.

LISTEN: Our Judge will be the One we pray to every morning and every night – and often throughout the day and night. He'll be the One we confess to and whose grace we plead for, at some point every day. It will be our Savior and Redeemer, our Righteousness and Justification, our Joy and our delight. Our Lord and Master, our Healer and Counsellor, our Mediator and Advocate. Our very best of all Friends.

Though I will be able to hide nothing, I will not be afraid, nor will I be condemned. For my Lord, whom I worship, and look to for my salvation, was condemned in my place – and thus I cannot be. Jesus will look at me, and be satisfied with all the saving merits of His own obedience, suffering, death and resurrection – which God, through faith, has credited to me.

And the same is true of you, if you have believed the Gospel, and thus trusted in Him, and Him alone, for your forgiveness and pardon and right standing with God. Not looking to yourself, or your own feeble and sin-stained efforts, but to Jesus – *who by His perfect sacrifice* – secured the acquittal and the verdict of "not guilty" for everyone who would ever believe.

Then **LAST**, we come to one of the most precious truths of all, where after asking us, "*who it is that condemns,*" Paul answers: "*Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand*

of God, and is also interceding for us.” That is, us, His chosen ones (John 17:9).

Think of it: If you're a believer – foreknown, predestined, called justified and sanctified – then Jesus Christ, the One who will one day judge all the people's of the earth, is *“interceding for you.”*

And, here, the word “interceding” can be taken in two ways. The first way is to see Him as defending you before all your accusers (even if that happens to include you!) by pointing the attention of all to the blood He shed on the cross. The blood which ALONE frees us from condemnation, and makes us able to receive pardon, or go free, as one of those He has declared, *“not guilty.”*

So, what's Paul's point? Simply this: That throughout the life of the believer, there will be many people who accuse us of wrongdoing, and bring against us charges of guilt, declarations of our unworthiness, and pronouncements of our being unfit for heaven.

They will see our mistakes failures, take note of our failures, key in on our flaws, and point out our faults – because they will be there. They WILL see us stumble and fall, maybe lose our temper, speak words we wish we could take back, possibly hear us cuss, or see us do something a person who calls themselves a Christian should never do. Unless you're Jesus, it will happen!

And at those times they will seek to condemn us with words like: “Yeah, some Christian you are!” “If you're the type of person who's going to be in heaven I don't want to be there!” “You call yourself a pastor?” “You call yourself a missionary?” “You're a joke! No, you're a disgrace!”

And if THEY don't pick up that refrain, Satan will surely step up to the plate to take his turn at assaulting our conscience with such condemning thoughts. And their purpose? To heap guilt upon the conscience and make us feel about as worthy as a worm. To discourage us, and rob us of our joy in God, and get us to question the Gospel's power to save us, change us, and make us new.

It's to make us THINK that the God Paul says is "for us," is really against us. That He's terribly angry with us, or only "for us" if we perform flawlessly, strive ceaselessly, and live blamelessly.

And as I said, if **PEOPLE** aren't there to do it, I guarantee you, **SATAN** (who is called "the Accuser of the Righteous") will be. Always seeking to defile our conscience, and load it with guilt, and get us to abhor or loathe ourselves – through feelings of shame and worthlessness, and self-hate, or thoughts of self-condemnation.

One person put it this way: *"Frequently I would wake up at night thinking of some of the horrible things I did in my past. Shameful things. Hurtful things. Things that even now make me cringe in-side when the memories come to mind. Things that have left others emotionally scarred with scars I cannot erase. The guilt I carry for those things is nearly unbearable. At first I found relief through self-punishment and self-condemning words – telling myself how vile and cruel and stupid I was and trying to show God how sorry I was. What a fool I'd been and what a hopeless case I was – a person so detestable that at times I didn't even want to live anymore."*

"In some perverse way," he says, "it actually made the guilt more bearable and made me feel better for a time – until that self-condemnation turned to self-hatred and even self-mutilation, and nearly drove me to the brink of suicide."

But what is Paul's answer to all that? *"No one can bring a charge against God's elect!"* (At least, not one that sticks!) Why? Because their sins were already condemned in Jesus when He died to purchase the pardon of each one.

God's **LAW** can no longer condemn them, because Christ fulfilled every stipulation of it on their behalf! Their **SIN** can't condemn them, because He died to pardon each and every one. **PEOPLE** can't condemn them because as sinner's themselves, that's not their place! And **SATAN** can't condemn them because he already stands condemned himself!

That's what the word "interceding" refers to in regard to His perpetual High-priestly role. He applies to the personal account of every believing Christian, the saving and forgiving merits of His perfect flawless life, and substitutionary, sin-pardoning death.

So when ANY Accuser points out our faults and obvious sins and imperfections, Jesus "intercedes for us" as the old hymn states, by, "interposing His precious blood." To every charge and accusation brought against us, Jesus – *our Judge and Savior and High Priest, with His "rich wounds still visible above"* – responds by placing Himself between us and any charge or accusation that we are deserving of punishment and eternal condemnation. He reminds any Accuser, we've been pardoned.

And knowing that should cause us to do the same. What we need to do when Satan assaults the conscience, is point to the intercession of Christ and say: *"It's been covered by the blood. It's already been forgiven. Christ shed His sin-atonement blood to purchase the pardon and liberate me from the guilt of every sin I ever have or will commit. YOU can't condemn me. PEOPLE can't condemn me. I don't even have the right*

to condemn myself! It is God who justifies and Christ who condemns. You have no right to condemn me. I can't even condemn myself."

So don't plead your innocence. Don't point to what you've done to try and make up for things. Rest in the intercession of Jesus on your behalf!

Yet there's one **LAST** way we can take the phrase, "intercedes for us." It's to see it as Jesus praying for us – "us" meaning His chosen ones, as Paul makes sure we understand from v. 33.

We see this in Jesus' High Priestly Prayer in John 17:1-26, just before His death. There, He does NOT pray for everyone, for as we hear Him say to the Father in v.9: "*I am not praying for the world, but those you have given me, for they are yours.*" His prayer is for those who by grace have come to faith.

And then 11 verses later he adds: "*My prayer is not for them alone (that is, those who had already come to faith) I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.*"

So, who does Jesus pray or "intercede" for? Not everyone in the world, but those whom God had "*given Him.*" Those who had already become believers **AND** those who in the future would become believers through their message, or the Gospel message.

And you know what makes the truth of His intercession for us so encouraging and comforting and faith building? It's the fact that the Bible says in James 5:16 (and it's alluded to in other places such as I John 3:22 and elsewhere) that "*the prayer of a righteous man (or a righteous person) is powerful and effective.*" That is, in bringing about what is prayed for.

I've heard people say: "*I had a praying grandmother, and when she prayed things happened.*" I heard one man share his testimony on TV and attribute his conversion to the prayers of his devout parents who poured their hearts out to God for him throughout his many years of rebellion.

In my own life I KNOW God used the prayers of my own mother in the process of bringing me to faith. I used to walk out of my bedroom every school day to see her sitting in her favorite armchair, in front of the bay window in my house in Norfolk, Massachusetts, Bible open on her lap, praying. Praying as I wandered from the church. Praying as I mocked Jesus and the naiveté of believers. Praying as I got into every imaginable type of sin.

In fact, one time I came home so drunk, I passed out on the bathroom floor, only to wake up and see my mom looking down at me. Tears were rolling down her cheek, and I could see the disappointment in her eyes, because I wasn't the first time. She simply turned and walked back to her bedroom, where I know she spent the rest of the night doing the only thing she knew to do – *pray*.

And over time God used those prayers to bring about what He had foreordained. For as I said before, the God who ordains the end, also ordains everything in between that leads to that end. What God ordains and what we do, join together, in the divine mystery of providence – *to bring about God's divine and perfect plan.*

Yet, you know what is far more encouraging to consider than even that? If the fervent prayers of a righteous person are powerful and effective, **HOW MUCH MORE** the prayers of the flawlessly holy and spotlessly perfect Son of God!

If our prayers – *imperfect as we are, and they are* – are powerful in bringing about God's appointed ends, think of Jesus' prayers! If our prayers are powerful, how much MORE the prayers of the flawlessly righteous One, whose prayers are always in perfect accord with God's will for us!

Will His prayers not MOVE HEAVEN AND EARTH and ALWAYS BRING ABOUT WHAT HE PRAYS FOR? Yes, they will.

Did my mother's fervent prayers play a part in my coming to faith in Christ? I know they did! But infinitely more powerful than hers, or anyone else's (and many others were also praying for me) were the prayers JESUS prayed for me! Prayers so powerful that they melted my heart, and changed the whole orientation of my being, from sin and self, to Him.

How it warms my heart, and encourages me to know, that Jesus, whose prayers are ALWAYS answered, prays for me! And if you are one of His chosen ones, or as Jesus puts it in His high priestly prayer, one of those, "*God has given to Him*" -- one of "*the elect*" who has come to believe, or would come to believe through their message, then He is also praying for you. And the answers to His prayers, always come to pass!

Folks, I pray for you on many occasions. But my ultimate hope is NOT in the prayers I pray for you! My real hope is in the prayers Jesus prays for you!

So, when you're discouraged, picture what Paul states here – *Jesus, the perfect and holy Son of God interceding for you!* Praying for you! Praying for this Body! Praying for our struggles! Praying that we might hear and see and know and do the will of the Father!

And above all else, knowing that whatever He prays for us – will come about!