

## CHRIST'S INTERCESSION.

ROM. viii. 34. *Who also maketh intercession for us.*

WHEN Aaron entered into the holy place, his bells gave a sound; so Christ having entered into heaven, his intercession makes a melodious sound in the ears of God. Christ, though he be exalted to glory, hath not laid aside his bowels of compassion, but is still mindful of his body mystical; as Joseph was mindful of his father and brethren, when he was exalted to the court. 'Who also maketh intercession for us,'—'To intercede, is to make request in the behalf of another. Christ is the great master of requests in heaven; *Christus est catholicus Patris Sacerdos*, Tertul.

Q. *What are the qualifications of our intercessor?*

Ans. 1. He is holy, Heb. vii. 26. 'For such an High-priest became us, who is holy, undefiled, separated from sinners.' 'Christ knew no sin,' 2 Cor. v. 21. He knew no sin in weight, not in the act. It was requisite that he, who was to do away the sins of others should himself be without sin. Holiness is one of the precious stones which shines on the breast-plate of our High-priest.

2. He is faithful, Heb. ii. 17. 'It behoved him to be like unto his brethren, that he might be a faithful High-priest.' Moses was faithful as a servant, Christ as a Son, Heb. iii. 5. He doth not forget any cause he hath to plead, nor doth he use any deceit in pleading. An ordinary attorney may either leave out some word which might make for the client, or put in a word against him, having received a fee on both sides; but Christ is true to the cause he pleads: we may leave our matters with him, we may trust our lives and souls in his hand.

3. He never dies. The priests under the law, while their office lived, they themselves died, Heb. vii. 23. 'They were not suffered to continue by reason of death:' But 'Christ ever lives to make intercession,' Heb. viii. 25. He hath no succession in his priesthood.

Q. *Who Christ intercedes for?*

Ans. Not for all promiscuously, John xvii. 9. but for the elect. The efficacy of Christ's prayer reacheth no further than the efficacy of his blood; but his blood was shed only for the elect, therefore his prayers only reach them. The high-priest went into the sanctuary with the names only of the twelve tribes upon his breast; so Christ goes into heaven only with the names of the elect upon his breast. Christ intercedes for the weakest

believers, John xvii. 20. and for all the sins of believers. In the law there were some sins the high-priest was neither to offer sacrifice for, nor yet to offer prayer, Numb. xv. 30. 'The soul that doth ought presumptuously shall be cut off.' The priest might offer up prayer for sins of ignorance, but not of presumption: but Christ's intercession extends to all the sins of the elect. Of what a bloody colour was David's sin? yet it did not exclude Christ's intercession.

Q. *What doth Christ in the work of intercession?*

Ans. Three things.

1. He presents the merit of his blood to his Father, and, in the virtue of that price paid, pleads for mercy. The high-priest was herein a lively type of Christ: Aaron was to do four things: 1. Kill the beasts: 2. To enter with the blood into the holy of holies: 3. To sprinkle the mercy-seat with the blood: 4. To kindle the incense, and with the smoke of it, cause a cloud arise over the mercy-seat; and so the atonement was made, Lev. xvi. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. Christ our high-priest did exactly answer to this type: he was offered up in sacrifice, that answers to the priest's killing the bullock: and Christ is gone up into heaven, that answers to the priest's going in to the holy of holies; and he spreads his blood before his Father, that answers to the priest's sprinkling the blood upon the mercy-seat: and he prays to his Father, that for his blood's sake, he would be propitious to sinners; that answers to the cloud of incense going up: and through his intercession God is pacified, that answers to the priest's making atonement.

2. Christ, by his intercession, answers all bills of indictment brought in against the elect. Believers, do what they can, sin, and then Satan accuseth them to God, and conscience accuseth them to themselves: now, Christ by his intercession, answers all these accusations, Rom. viii. 33. 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is Christ that maketh intercession for us.' When Esculus was accused for some impiety, his brother stood up for him, and shewed the magistrates how he had lost his hand in the service of the state, and so obtained his pardon: thus, when Satan accuseth the saints, or when the justice of God lays any thing to their charge, Christ shews his own wounds, and by virtue of his bloody sufferings, he answers all the demands and challenges of the law, and counterworks Satan's accusations.

3. Christ, by his intercession, calls for acquittance; Lord, let the sinner be absolved from guilt: and in this sense Christ is called an advocate, 1 John ii. 1. He requires that the sinner be set free in the court. An advocate differs much from an orator; an orator useth rhetoric to persuade and intreat the judge to shew mercy to another: but an advocate tells the judge

what is law. Thus Christ appears in heaven as an advocate, he represents what is law: when God's justice opens the debt-book, Christ opens the law book: Lord, saith he, thou art a just God, and wilt not be pacified without blood; lo, here the blood is shed, therefore, in justice, give me a discharge of these distressed creatures: it is equal, that the law being satisfied, the sinner should be acquitted. And, upon Christ's plea, God sets his hand to the sinner's pardon.

*Q. In what manner Christ intercedes?*

*Ans. 1. Freely:* he pleads our cause in heaven, and takes no fee. An ordinary lawyer will have his fee, and sometimes a bribe too: but Christ is not mercenary: how many causes doth he plead every day in heaven, and will take nothing? As Christ laid down his life freely, John x. 15, 18. so he intercedes freely.

*2. Feelingly:* he is as sensible of our condition as his own, Heb. vi. 15. 'We have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmity.' As a tender-hearted mother would plead with a judge for a child ready to be condemned; O how would her bowels work! how would her tears trickle down! what weeping rhetoric would she use to the judge for mercy! Thus the Lord Jesus is full of sympathy and tenderness, Heb. ii. 17. that he might be a merciful high-priest: though he hath left his passion, yet not his compassion. An ordinary lawyer is not affected with the cause he pleads, nor doth he care which way it goes; it is profit makes him plead, not affection: But Christ intercedes feelingly: and that which makes him intercede with affection is, it is his own cause which he pleads. He hath shed his blood to purchase life and salvation for the elect; and if they should not be saved, he would lose his purchase.

*2. Efficaciously:* It is a prevailing intercession. Christ never lost any cause he pleaded, he was never non-suited. Christ's intercession, must needs be effectual, if you consider,

(1.) The excellency of his person. If the prayer of a saint be so prevalent with God, (Moses' prayer did bind God's hand, Exod. xxxii. 10. 'Let me alone:.' And Jacob as a prince, prevailed with God, Gen. xxxii. 28. And Elijah did by prayer open and shut heaven, James v. 17.) Then what is Christ's prayer? He is the Son of God, the Son in whom he is well pleased, Matth. iii. 17. What will not a father grant a son? John xi. 42. 'I know that thou always hearest me.' If God could forget that Christ were a priest, yet he cannot forget that he is a son.

(2.) Christ prays for nothing but what his Father hath a mind to grant. There is but one will between Christ and his Father: Christ prays, 'Sanctify them through thy truth;.' and 'This

is the will of God, even your sanctification,' 1 Theff. iv. 3. So then, if Christ prays for nothing but what God the Father hath a mind to grant, then he is like to speed.

(3.) Christ prays for nothing but what he hath power to give: what he prays for as he is man, that he hath power to give as he is God, John xvii. 24. 'Father, I will'—*Father*, there he prays as a man; *I will*, there he gives as God. This is a great comfort to a believer, when his prayer is weak, and he can hardly pray for himself, Christ's prayer in heaven is mighty and powerful. Though God may refuse prayer as it comes from us, yet not as it comes from Christ.

4. Christ's intercession is always ready at hand. The people of God have sins of daily incursion; and, besides these, sometimes they lapse into great sins, and God is provoked, and his justice is ready to break forth upon them; But Christ's intercession is ready at hand, he daily makes up the breaches between God and them; he presents the merits of his blood to his Father, to pacify him. When the wrath of God began to break out upon Israel, Aaron presently stepped in with his censer, and offered incense, and so the plague was stayed, Numb. xvi. 47. so, no sooner doth a child of God offend, and God begin to be angry, but immediately Christ steps in and intercedes: Father, it is my child hath offended; though he hath forgotten his duty, thou hast not lost thy bowels: O pity him, and let thy anger be turned away from him. Christ's intercession is ready at hand, and, upon the least failings of the godly, he stands up and makes request for them in heaven.

*Q. What are the fruits of Christ's intercession?*

*Ans.* 1. *Justification.* In justification there are two things: 1. Guilt is remitted. 2. Righteousness is imputed, Jer. xxiii. 6. 'The Lord our righteousness.' We are reputed not only righteous, as the angels, but as Christ, having his robes put upon us, 2 Cor. v. 21. But whence is it that we are justified? It is from Christ's intercession, Rom. viii. 33, 34. Lord, saith Christ, these are the persons I have died for; look upon them as if they had not sinned, and repute them righteous.

*2d Fruit.* The unction of the Spirit, 1 John ii. 20. 'Ye have an unction from the holy One.' This unction or anointing is nothing else but the work of sanctification in the heart, whereby the Spirit makes us partake of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. Such as speak of the Philosopher's stone, suppose it to have such a property, that when it toucheth the metal, it turns it into gold: Such a property hath the Spirit of God upon the soul; when it toucheth the soul, it puts it into a divine nature, it makes it to be holy, and to resemble God. The sanctifying work of the Spirit is the fruit of Christ's intercession, John vii.

39. 'The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.' Christ being glorified, and in heaven, now he prays the Father, and the Father sends the Spirit, who pours out the holy anointing upon the elect.

*3d Fruit.* The purification of our holy things. It is Christ's work in heaven, not only to present his own prayers to his Father, but he prays over our prayers again, Rev. viii. 3, 'Another angel came, having a golden censer, and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar.' This angel was Christ; he takes the golden censer of his merits, and puts our prayers into this censer, and with the incense of his intercession makes our prayers go up as a sweet perfume in heaven. It is observable, Lev. xvi. 16. 'Aaron shall make atonement for the holy place.' This was typical, to shew that our holy duties need to have atonement made for them. Our best services, as they come from us, are mixed with corruption, as wine that tastes of the cask, Isa. lxiv. 6. 'They are filthy rags;' but Christ purifies and sweetens these services, mixing the sweet odours of his intercession with them; and now God accepts and crowns them. What would become of our duties without an high-priest? Christ's intercession doth, to our prayers, as the fan to the chaff, it winnows it from the corn; so Christ winnows out the chaff which intermixeth with our prayers.

*4th Fruit.* Access with boldness unto the throne of grace, Heb. iv. 16. We have a great High-priest that is passed into the heavens, let us go; come boldly to the throne of grace; we have a friend at court that speaks a good word for us, and is following our cause in heaven, therefore let this animate and encourage us in prayer. We think it too much boldness; what? such sinners as we to come for pardon! we shall be denied; this is a sinful modesty: did we indeed come in our name in prayer, it were presumption, but Christ intercedes for us in the force and efficacy of his blood: Now, to be afraid to come to God in prayer, is a dishonour to Christ's intercession.

*5th Fruit.* The sending the Comforter, John xiv. 16. 'I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter.' The comfort of the Spirit is distinct from the anointing; this comfort is very sweet, sweeter than the honey-drops from the comb; it is the manna in the golden pot, it is *vinum in pectore*; a drop of this heavenly comfort is enough to sweeten a sea of worldly sorrow: it is called the 'earnest of the Spirit,' 2 Cor. i. 22. an earnest assures one of the whole sum. The Spirit gives us an earnest of heaven in our hand. Whence is this comforting work of the Spirit? Thank Christ's intercession for it: 'I will pray the Father, and he shall send the Comforter.'

*6th Fruit.* Perseverance in grace, John xvii. 11. 'Keep

through thine own name those which thou hast given me.' It is not our prayer, or watchfulness, or grace that keeps us, but it is God's care and manutenance; he holds us, that we do not fall away. And whence is it God preserves us? It is from Christ's intercession; 'Father keep them.' That prayer of Christ for Peter, is the copy of his prayer now in heaven, Luke xxii. 32. 'I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' Peter's faith did fail in some degree, when he denied Christ; but Christ prayed that it might not totally fail. The saints persevere in believing, because Christ perseveres in praying.

*7th Fruit.* Absolution at the day of judgment. Christ shall judge the world, John v. 22. 'God hath committed all judgment to the Son.' Now sure; those that Christ hath so prayed for, he will absolve when he sits upon the bench of judicature. Will Christ condemn those he prays for? Believers are his spouse, will he condemn his spouse?

*Use 1. Branch 1.* See here the constancy of Christ's love to the elect. He did not only die for them, but intercedes for them in heaven; when Christ hath done dying, he hath not done loving: he is now at work in heaven for the saints, he carries their names on his breast, and will never leave praying till that prayer be granted, John xvii. 24. 'Father, I will, that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.'

*Branch 2.* See whence it is that the prayers of the saints are so powerful with God. Jacob, as an angel, prevailed with God: Moses' prayer tied God's hands; *Precibus suis tanquam vinculis ligatum tenuit Deum*; 'Let me alone,' Exod. xxxii. 10. Whence is this? It is Christ's prayer in heaven makes the saints prayers so available. Christ's divine nature is the altar on which he offers up our prayers, and so they prevail: prayer, as it comes from the saints is but weak and languid; but when the arrow of a saint's prayer is put into the bow of Christ's intercession, now it pierceth the throne of grace.

*Branch 3.* It shews where a Christian must chiefly fix his eye when he comes to prayer, viz. on Christ's intercession. We are to look up to the mercy-seat, but to hope for mercy through Christ's intercession. We read, Lev. vi. that Aaron made the atonement as well by the incense as by the blood: We must look to the cloud of incense, viz. the intercession of Christ. Christian, look up to thy advocate, one that God can deny nothing to: a word from Christ's mouth is more, than if all the angels in heaven were interceding for thee. If a man had a suit depending in the court of chancery, and had a skilful lawyer to plead, this would much encourage him. Christ is now at the court appearing for us, Heb. ix. 24. and he hath great potency in heaven: this should much encourage us to look up to him, and hope for audience in prayer. We might

indeed be afraid to present our petitions, if we had not Christ to deliver them.

*Branch 4.* The sad condition of an unbeliever; he hath none in heaven to speak a word for him, John xvii. 9. 'I pray not for the world;' as good be shut out of heaven, as be shut out of Christ's prayer. Christ pleads for the saints, as queen Esther did for the Jews, when they should have been destroyed; 'Let my people be given me at my request,' Esth. vii. 3. When the devil shews the blackness of their sins, Christ shews the redness of his wounds. But how sad is the condition of that man, Christ will not pray for, nay, that he will pray against? As queen Esther petitioned against Haman, and then his face was covered, Esth. vii. 6. and he was led away to execution. It is sad when the law shall be against the sinner, and conscience, and judge, and no friend to speak a word for him: there is no way, then, but, jailor, take the prisoner.

*Branch 5.* If Christ makes intercession, then we have nothing to do with other intercessors. The church of Rome distinguisheth between mediators of redemption and intercession, and say, the angels do not redeem us, but intercede for us: and pray to them: but Christ only can intercede for us *ex officio*. God hath consecrated him an high-priest, Heb. v. 9. 'Thou art a priest for ever.' Christ intercedes *vi pretii*, in the virtue of his blood, he pleads his merits to his Father; the angels have no merits to bring to God, therefore can be no intercessors for us; whoever is our advocate must be our propitiation to pacify God, 1 John ii. 1. 'We have an advocate with the Father, v. 2. And he is our propitiation.' The angels cannot be our propitiation, therefore not our advocates.

*2d Use of trial.* How shall we know that Christ intercedes for us? They have little ground to think Christ prays for them, who never pray for themselves: well, but how shall we know?

*Ans. 1.* If Christ be praying for us, then his Spirit is praying in us, Gal. iv. 6. 'He hath sent forth his Spirit into your heart, crying, Abba, Father;' and Rom. viii. 26. the Spirit helps us with sighs and groans; not only with gifts but groans. We need not climb up into the firmament to see if the sun be there, we may see the beauty of it upon the earth; so we need not go up into heaven to see if Christ be there interceding for us; let us look into our hearts, if they are quickened and inflamed in prayer, and we can cry, Abba, Father: By this interceding of the Spirit within us, we may know Christ is interceding above for us.

*Ans. 2.* If we are given to Christ then he intercedes for us, John xvii. 9. 'I pray for them whom thou hast given me:'

'tis one thing for Christ to be given to us, another for us to be given to Christ.

*Q. How know you that?*

*Ans.* If thou art a believer, then thou art one given to Christ, and he prays for thee: faith is an act of recumbency, we do rest on Christ, as the stones in the building rest upon the corner-stone. Faith throws itself into Christ's arms; it faith, Christ is my priest, his blood is my sacrifice, his divine nature is my altar, and here I rest. This faith is seen by the effects of it, a refining work, and a resigning work: it purifies the heart, and there is the refining work; it makes a deed of gift to Christ, it gives up its use, its love to him, 1 Cor. vi. 19. there is the resigning work of faith. These that believe are given to Christ, and have a part in his prayer, John xvii. 20. 'Nor do I pray for these alone, but for all them that shall believe on me.'

*3d Use of exhortation. Branch 1.* It stirs us up to several duties: 1. If Christ appears for us in heaven, then we must appear for him upon earth: Christ is not ashamed to carry our names on his breast, and shall we be ashamed of his truth? Doth he plead our cause, and shall we not stand up in his cause? What a mighty argument is this to stand up for the honour of Christ in times of apostasy? Christ is interceding for us: doth he present our names in heaven, and shall not we profess his name on earth:

*Branch 2.* If Christ lays out all his interest for us at the throne of grace, we must lay out all our interest for him, Phil. i. 20. 'That Christ may be magnified.' Trade your talents for Christ's glory; there's no man but hath some talent to trade, one parts, another estate: Oh trade for Christ's glory! Spend and be spent for him: let your head study for Christ, your hands work for Christ, your tongue speak for him; if Christ be an advocate for us in heaven, we must be factors for him on earth, every one in his sphere must act vigorously for Christ.

*Branch 3.* Believe in this glorious intercession of Christ! That he now intercedes for us, and that for his sake God will accept us: in the text, 'Who maketh intercession for us.' If we believe not, we dishonour Christ's intercession. If a poor sinner may not go to Christ as his High-priest, believing in his intercession, then are we Christians in a worse condition under the gospel, than the Jews were under the law: they, when they had sinned, had their high-priest to make atonement; and shall not we have our high-priest? is not Christ our Aaron, who presents his blood and incense before the mercy-seat? O look up by faith to Christ's intercession! Christ did not only pray for his disciples and apostles, but for the weakest believer.

*Branch 4.* Love your intercessor, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema.' Kind-

ness invites love; had you a friend at court, who, when you were questioned for delinquency or debt, should plead with the judge for you, and bring you off your troubles, would you not love that friend? So it is here, how oft doth Satan put in his bills against us in the court? Now Christ is at the judge's hand, he sits at his Father's right hand, ever to plead for us, and to make our peace with God: O how should our hearts be fired with love to Christ! Love him with a sincere and superlative love, above estate, relation; *Bern. Plusquam tua, tuos.* And our fire of love should be as fire on the altar, never to go out, Lev. vi. 13.

*4th Use, of comfort to believers.* Christ is at work for you in heaven, he makes intercession for you. Oh! but I am afraid Christ does not intercede for me.

*Q. I am a sinner; who doth Christ intercede for?*

*Ans.* Isa. liii. 12. 'He made intercession for the transgressors.' Did Christ open his sides for thee, and will he not open his mouth to plead for thee?

*Q. But I have offended my high-priest, by distrusting his blood, abusing his love, grieving his Spirit; and will he ever pray for me?*

*Ans.* Which of us may not say so? But, Christian, dost thou mourn for unbelief? Be not discouraged, thou mayest have a part in Christ's prayer. Numb. xvi. 'The congregation murmured against Aaron;' yet, though they had sinned against their high-priest, ver. 46. 'Aaron ran in with his censer, and stood between the dead and the living.' If so much bowels in Aaron, who was but a type of Christ, how much more bowels are in Christ, who will pray for them who have sinned against their high-priest? Did not he pray for them that crucified him, 'Father, forgive them?'

*Q. But I am unworthy; what am I, that Christ should intercede for me?*

*Ans.* The work of Christ's intercession is a work of free grace; Christ's praying for us, is from his pitying of us; Christ looks not at our worthiness, but our wants.

*Q. But I am followed with sad temptations?*

*Ans.* But, though Satan tempts, Christ prays, and Satan shall be vanquished; though thou mayest lose a single battle, yet not the victory: Christ prays that thy faith fail not; therefore, Christians, say, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' Christ intercedes, it is man that sins, it is God that prays: the Greek word for advocate, signifies comforter. This is a sovereign comfort, Christ makes intercession.