

Christ's Love Lasts

Clearing the Debt

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I've been very glad to preach the word of God throughout this week because the word of God is precious and its truths are glorious and there's no greater message that men and women can hear or that can be declared by men than the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We turn in God's word to Romans 8 and for the time being we'll read from verse 18. Romans 8 and reading from verse 18.

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, 21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. 24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. 26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. 28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. 31 What shall we

then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 32 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? 33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. 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. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen. May God bless his word to us.

In verse 35 we have this question, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Our theme on this last evening is "Christ's Love Lasts." Christ's love lasts. Throughout these meetings, we have sought to show why Christ alone is the Savior of sinners, why we all need his righteousness, his perfect life and his bearing of the guilt of sin, why we need that righteousness imputed to us, that is, reckoned to our account, and that only those who believe upon him and trust only in him will have this righteousness reckoned as theirs, and without that righteousness reckoned to our account, we will be judged and damned according to all our sins, our guilt will remain and hell is sure. Tonight we look at the love of Christ as known to believers and, therefore, the blessedness of being his. The aim is twofold, not only to encourage those who are Christians but to show where true blessedness, where true happiness lies, to those of you who are not real Christians, to those of you who have not sought and found Christ.

It's not that the Lord promises a trouble-free life to his people. Far from it. He tells us the exact opposite. He tells us that a Christian must take up his cross daily and follow after him. It is through much tribulation that we enter the kingdom of God and don't let any smooth evangelist on the so-called God channel or anywhere else deceive you on this point. Being a real Christian and trusting Christ and thus becoming a follower of Christ is not a trouble-free existence. As well as the miseries of this life, the troubles of this life that are common to man, the believer in the Lord Jesus has his own distinctive afflictions in an ungodly world, but so glorious a thing is it to have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ that everyone ought to make the same assessment as Moses who chose affliction with the people of God rather than enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season, and esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, or indeed the treasures of anywhere else, we read of that in Hebrews 11:25 and 26. And our prayer is that the Holy Spirit will cause you to see this as the privileges of those who belong to Christ are brought before you, and that you will see Christ, the author of all these

blessings, in his beauty and glory, that you should desire him, and that by the Spirit of God you should see his beauty and the vileness, filthiness, and damnableness of sin.

Now in chapter 6 of Romans, we saw that since the believer has undergone an inner change called being born again of the Holy Spirit and, indeed, that's what caused him to become a believer, the Spirit of God renewed his heart and because his heart has been changed, his life is changed. The forgiven man is a changed man.

Now chapter 7, which we haven't been able to look at in this series, looks at the believer's relationship to God's law, that law of God, the 10 Commandments sum up that perfection of holiness which God rightly demands of man and which we can never accomplish. And the believer is no longer married to the law in the sense that his personal performance, or rather lack of such performance of that law, is no longer the basis of his standing with God because Christ has kept that law on behalf of his people, Christ has borne the punishment of transgression of that law on behalf of his people so that the Christian's personal conformity to God's law, or lack of it, is not the basis of his standing before God. He stands in Christ's righteousness, Christ's obedience, Christ's atonement, sin-bearing, Christ taking the guilt on himself.

All of that is reckoned to his account but the believer does delight in God's law. He has a new nature and he desires to show his love and gratitude to God by living a holy life, and he longs to be delivered from the remains of sin in his heart and life, and this leads on to the theme of chapter 8 which begins, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." This chapter is showing the certainty of complete triumph for those who are in Christ, that ultimately the victory over sin and Satan and death and over the world will be total in Christ for the people of God. The love, the power of Christ the Savior is such that the believer can be sure, he can be sure that he will be kept throughout his life in this world and glorified in the world to come.

Let us, then, look at the love of Christ and its effects. Firstly, it is a love that secures deliverance from all that sin has brought upon us. It is a love that secures deliverance from all that sin has brought upon the people of God. The first 27 verses tell us this, but verse 1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Without Christ, outside of Christ, without having Christ as our Savior, without his righteousness reckoned to our account, there is only condemnation. "He that believeth not the Son is condemned already." And if there is no change, if we are not brought to Christ while we are in this world, that condemnation which hangs over us by nature will be pronounced in the world to come as the Savior of sinners says to the guilty, unsaved, unforgiven sinners, "Depart from me into everlasting fire for I never knew you." But in Christ, for those who are in Christ there is no condemnation. They are justified. They are declared not guilty by the judge of all.

But why does the apostle return to this thought at this stage? Well, he does so to show that Christ bearing the guilt of sin paves the way not only for the removal of that guilt for his people but ultimately the removal of all the effects of sin, and indeed that they will

not only have all the effects of sin removed but be glorified beyond that which belonged to Adam before the fall. There will be the removal of the presence and practice of sin, verse 3, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." What this is saying is that the law cannot make us good and it doesn't. Knowing that something is sinful might trouble our conscience but it does not alter our desires, and if you know anything about your own heart, you will know that to be true. Knowing that something is wrong, knowing that God's law forbids it does not change us. It may hold us back but it doesn't take away the desire.

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," the flesh there means not the physical body, it means man's sinful nature without the grace of the Spirit of God. But "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh," the Son of God became a man in the likeness of sinful flesh but without the sin, "condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." What he's saying is that Christ's bearing the guilt of sin paved the way for the actual removal, reversal of the depravity of sin in the hearts of God's people. You see, it was through Adam's first transgression that we all became guilty and God's judgment upon man's sin included handing us over to the corruption and depravity of our nature. Christ's bearing the guilt of sin means that there can be a reversal of that depravity. The Christian has been declared righteous and the Christian is being made righteous by the Holy Spirit. When a sinner trusts Christ, the guilt of sin is completely removed but that new birth, that work of the Spirit which brings him to faith in Christ is the beginning of his actually being purified from the presence of sin but that isn't completed until he's in heaven, so that Christ's bearing the guilt of sin for his people is also the basis on which the people of God are actually being made more holy by the Spirit of God until they join the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven.

Now if you're not a Christian, none of this is true of you. Verse 8 says, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If you're not a Christian, if you're not a true believer in the Lord Jesus, you have never loved God. Not in the slightest degree have you loved the living and true God. But you say, "But I like to go to church and some of my friends are Christian people and I don't feel that I'm an enemy of God." But you see, once you begin to think of God as he really is, you don't love him, do you, because without the Spirit of God our hearts by nature are at enmity with God. You've never known what it is to love God; not the slightest flicker of love to the living and true God have you known. But when the Spirit of God renews the heart and a sinner is brought to trust in Christ to take his guilt away before God, he begins to love the Lord, he walks in the Spirit. He doesn't love the Lord as he should and he doesn't love the Lord as in heaven, he will, but he does begin to love him.

And this is telling us that that work of God in delivering his people from the actual pollution and the presence of the practice of sin, the completion of that is sure, but then also this passage speaks of the removal of the physical effects of sin. Verse 11, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." This is saying that those who are in Christ, the guilt of sin is gone, the pollution of sin is going, the physical bodily effects of sin are not changed, not yet. Christians die just the same as non-Christians; the body gets sick and eventually death comes. Every illness is simply under-developed death. When man sinned, he became liable to physical death. We're all mortal. We're all dying. It is true, of course, that all will be raised from the dead, not only the people of God but the ungodly will be raised from the dead, but those who die without Christ, their bodies will be raised in a form, their bodies will be fitted for hell whereas the redeemed will be raised with a body fitted for heaven, a glorious body.

In John 5:28 the Lord Jesus says, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." All will be raised but the redeemed will be gloriously raised, whereas the damned whose souls have been in hell, yes, body and soul will be reunited but only to be cast into hell.

So the redeemed will be raised with a glorious body, altogether free from death, altogether free from the effects of sin. We're told that the believer, that his body shall be raised to glory, that he shall have a glorious body like a body that Christ shall change this vile body to be made like unto his glorious body, with that same power whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself, Philippians 3:21. And in 1 Corinthians 15, the apostle says that this mortal shall put on immortality, this corruptible shall put on incorruption, in the moment, in the twinkling of an eye and we shall be changed. He says the last enemy to be destroyed is death, that the application of redemption to the people of God will reach its final stage when even their bodies are raised to glory and they will have a body more glorious than that which Adam had before the fall, so verse 18 of Romans 8, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

So Christ in bearing the guilt of sin for his people has ensured their ultimate complete deliverance from the pollution of sin and when they go to heaven, it will be completed, and at the last day, their deliverance even from the physical bodily effects of sin, that is, death. And then Christ will deliver his people even from the effects of sin on the creation, verse 21, "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." When man sinned, God cursed the creation, he cursed the ground for man's sake on account of his sin. In Genesis 3:17, "And unto Adam he said," that is, God, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the

herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

So that as well as physical death of the body, God cursed the creation, but Christ having borne the guilt of sin for his people means that they will be delivered, yes, from the guilt of sin but also from the pollution of sin, from the bodily effects of sin, and even the effects of sin upon the creation. So 2 Peter 3:11, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." A new heavens, a renewed creation. Revelation 21, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful."

The love of Christ will deliver the people of God from all the ills that sin has brought upon them. He bore the guilt of sin. They are delivered from the guilt of sin whenever they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are being delivered from the presence of sin and that will be completed at death when their souls go to heaven. The souls of the lost go to hell but the souls of the redeemed at death go into the immediate presence of Christ are at perfected in holiness. They shall be delivered from the bodily effects of sin at the last day when they are raised to glory, and even the physical creation will be delivered from the effects of sin when the redeemed are raised to glory, the heavens and the earth will be renewed and completely free of all the effects of the curse of God on account of man's sin.

The love of Christ is such that he redeems his people entirely body and soul, he delivers them from the guilt, the pollution, the physical effects, and even the effects of the creation of sin. He delivers from all that sin has brought upon them and he delivers them and more than delivers them. Their resurrection body will be more glorious. The new heavens and the new earth will be more glorious than the created heavens and earth at the beginning. But then, secondly, it is the love of one who governs all. It is the love of the one who governs all. Verse 28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." This tells us the Christian has been called by God not only outwardly as you all are as the gospel is preached in your ears, that's the outward call of the gospel, but believers have been effectually called, that is, the Holy Spirit has renewed their hearts and wills so that they have been made willing to come to Christ as he is freely offered in the gospel and this is according to God's purpose, God's plan. They are called according to God's purpose and

therefore they have begun to love God and this same God governs everything that happens.

We're told in the scripture that he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel was humbled and brought low and acknowledged the most high reigns among the armies of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay his hand or say unto him, "What doest thou?" There is no chance. There is no luck. There is God. The terms chance and luck as they are used in modern speech at least, are simply words that are used by men who don't want to acknowledge God. They're bluff words. They talk about luck, what does it mean? It means nothing. But rather than acknowledge God as the governor of all, they use these meaningless terms. God governs everything. He governs all and he governs all for the good of his people.

That's what the verse says, "And we know." I hope the people of God here do know. People miss that beginning of the verse, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." What a comfort to know that our God rules all for our good. The Lord Jesus Christ is head over all things to the church, the scripture says. That means he's head over all things, he governs everything in the interest of his church. No mistakes. The people of God can rest in his love. The unbeliever can't because that God in whose hand his breath is, is his judge. He's not at peace. If you're not a Christian, that's true of you. You live daily under the curse of God, under the condemnation of God. When you sit in your house, when you go to your bed to sleep, when you wake up in the morning, when you eat your breakfast, when you go out to work, the sentence of God hangs over you all the time and he has the right at any point to say, "This night thy soul is required of thee." But the people of God, their sins are forgiven. They are at peace with God and this sovereign God who governs all is their God and their Father in heaven, doing all for their good, even tribulations.

Joseph in the Old Testament was sold into slavery in Egypt, and then at the end of the whole thing when he'd become Prime Minister of Egypt and his brothers were with him in Egypt and they were afraid of him after Jacob's death, he says, "Ye meant it for evil but God meant it for good that he should preserve much people alive as of this day." When King David was fleeing from his rebellious son Absalom and a man, a wicked man called Shimei cursed him from the hilltop, he said, "Let him alone for the Lord hath bidden him." He didn't mean that the Lord approved of what Shimei was doing but it came about in the providence, the plan, the purpose of God. In Acts 2:23, we looked at it the other night, on the day of Pentecost, talking of the Lord Jesus Peter says, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Their hands were wicked but it was the determinate counsel, the eternally ordained plan of the God of heaven that it should be so. And all that wickedness in the crucifixion of the Lord of glory, all that activity of Satan entering into Judas so that he betrayed him, and the wickedness of Pilate, the unprincipled, unscrupulous wickedness of Pilate, the rage of the Jewish leaders, the callousness of Herod, all of that was in the plan of God and for this glorious end that Christ should redeem his people through his death and deliver them from all iniquity.

In Psalm 76:10 we read, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." That means wrath in the sense of man's malicious raging, and God unleashes it or restrains it according to his own good pleasure. He unleashes it to fulfill his glorious purpose, but the remainder of wrath shall thou restrain, and that's why the people of God are here described at the end as more than conquerors because even their tribulations are ordained of God, not simply that they should get through them but that they should work for the good of God's people because through tribulation, tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience hope. Fiery trials strengthen faith and hope and confidence in God.

To be loved of this sovereign God who governs all things, to be loved by him who ordains whatsoever comes to pass, that is blessedness. To know that whatever happens is ordained of God for our good, the people of God can know that. Thirdly, it is a love that has its source and cause in God, not men. Its source and cause in God, not men. Verse 29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." The word "foreknow" here, it doesn't just say knowing about. God knows everything about everybody but this is a distinct body of people, whom he did foreknow. Not who he knows about, he knows about every single one of us, but whom he did foreknow, something is true of them that is not true of others. God knows about everyone. Nor is it referring to God merely foreseeing that they would believe. The reason God knows the future is because he has ordained it, he's planned it.

Foreknowledge and foreordination go together. What is being spoken of here is not simply God foreseeing something about them, it is rather know in the sense of setting his special love upon them. So Amos 3:2, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." Romans 11:1, "Hath God cast away his people?" whom he foreknew. It's sometimes used even of physical love. You remember Mary answering the angel. She's told that she would be with child and she says, "How shall these things be seeing I know not a man?" Luke 1:34.

So here to foreknow is in the sense of to eternally set his love upon. This love proceeds from God and it's not based on any loveliness in those loved. It's not that they're better than others and it's certainly not that they measure up to God's standard. God knew all about them. There are no skeletons in the cupboard that God may discover and everything will change. God knew their rottenness when he set his electing love on the heirs of salvation and they will be called, brought to faith in Christ, justified, forgiven, and glorified with Christ.

Fourthly, it is a love that has been supremely demonstrated. A love that has been supremely demonstrated. Verse 32, "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?" It is a love that has been supremely demonstrated. The Christian's testimony, like the Apostle Paul, is this, Galatians 2:20, "The Son of God loved me and gave himself for me."

The text here says, "He that spared not his own Son." Now that means not simply that he didn't spare to give his Son but it also means he did not spare his Son the full infliction of the just punishment due to sin as he acted as the substitute of his people in all ages. He was not spared. The wrath of God was poured out without mixture upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And the love of the Father in the giving of his Son, and the love of the Son in coming to save sinners are entirely at one. God the Father spared not his own Son. It's not that Christ was loving and had to convince the Father. No, the Father sent the Son. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." And this being so, will he withhold anything else from his people having given his Son for them? You see, the argument is from the greater, indeed the greatest, to the lesser. Will God give his Son for them and then, as it were, be niggardly and tightfisted with anything else that they need? The idea is absurd. He's given his Son and he'll give them all that they need to be kept in this world and glorified in that which is to come. The full inheritance is sure. They will be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed. He has begun a good work in them, he will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. He will hold them up his power and keep them from falling and present them faultless before the throne of his glory with exceeding joy. The God who gave his Son to redeem his people from all iniquity and who has called them according to his purpose, he will not withhold, keeping grace or anything else that they truly need.

Fifthly, it is the love that has secured an irreversible verdict. The love that has secured an irreversible verdict. Verse 33, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. 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." Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? We've seen over and over justification is the opposite of condemnation. Outside of Christ we're condemned. In Christ we're justified. It is God, God that justifieth, God who declares not guilty those who believe in Jesus. He is just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. The last word is with God.

Perhaps you worry a great deal about what people think of you. In the end what does it matter? The question is are we justified by God or are we condemned by God? Are you guilty or not guilty before the tribunal of God? That's what matters. It doesn't matter if the whole countryside thinks you're a splendid fellow or whatever. Of what use is that if you're condemned of God? Of what use is that if you're living under the wrath of God? If the sword of his justice hangs over your head ready to fall at any time and yet you concern yourself with whether people think you're alright. God's verdict beyond which there is no appeal is all important.

Without Christ you're condemned, your every sin stands before the brightness of God's face, your secret sins that you'd be ashamed of others to know about, God knows them. They're all there before God, set in order before the brightness of his face. But for those who are in Christ there is no condemnation. It is God that justifies. This holy God, this majestic God, this righteous God who hates sin, he justifies, declares not guilty those guilty sinners who believe in Jesus.

So it is a love that secures an irreversible verdict. Those who are in Christ shall never enter into condemnation for they have passed from death to life. Then sixthly, it is the love that lasts when separated from all else. The love that lasts when separated from all else. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." The apostle quotes Psalm 44. What was happening to the people of God then is no different from what was happening to the people of God in the Old Testament times when that Psalm was written.

But in verse 37, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." He could have just said nothing will separate us but he gives this list to make it absolutely clear that he does mean nothing. Nothing. Nothing in the physical world. Nothing in the spiritual world. Nothing in the present. Nothing in the future. Nothing.

But he begins with death, that neither death nor life nor angels and so on. Death in the scripture is called the king of terrors. It separates. It separates from loved ones, from friends, from familiar places, from possessions. If you're not a Christian, death separates from everything that you live for. What is it that motivates you? Family? Possessions? Status? When death comes, they'll all go. If that's all you have, you have nothing that lasts except your guilt before God.

All those things and all those people you love, death will break the ties and you must face God but in Christ, those who are in Christ, the one thing that goes beyond death, the love of Christ, union with Christ, fellowship with Christ, those who know fellowship with Christ in this world, they know that it's wonderful but they also know that it's imperfect. Our fellowship with Christ is marvelous but it's fluctuating in its strength and in its consistency. We're still sinners but the only change in our fellowship with Christ when we leave this world is that it will be perfected. That which is our chiefest joy in this world will be our perfected joy in that which is to come. We know not what we shall be but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is.

The people of God must take courage. We have what lasts, an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. But for those of you who are not in Christ, those of you who have never sought him, let me urge you to do so negatively and positively. Your guilt is real. Your danger is great. The hell you deserve is eternal and unspeakably dreadful. The pleasures of sin are real but they're desperately short-lived. The devil does not bless those who serve him, nor does sin satisfy those who love it. Why is that? If the natural man is enmity against God, if he loves sin, why is he not satisfied with sin? The answer is because he was created by God and even though he has a sinful nature that loves sin, sin cannot satisfy sinners.

But Christ can take away the guilt of sin. There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Christ can fit us for heaven. Christ is the light and glory of heaven and Christ is so glorious, excellent and lovely in himself and sinners must seek him. You must seek him. There's no one else who can deliver you from your guilt, from the fear of death, or prepare you for that great day. It is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment. But he will be found of those who seek him. This glorious Redeemer whose love is set forth in this chapter as the one who delivers his people from the guilt, the pollution, the bodily effects, the creation effects of sin, and makes them more than conquerors, and bestows on them an inheritance forever in his presence and in his glory, this Savior is made known to you. And he said to the woman of Samaria, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Christ can give eternal life. You must seek him. You must seek life everlasting in Christ Jesus. You must seek. You must come to him and say, "Lord, save me or I perish!" Not, "Lord, save me or if not, well, I've got some other fallback plan that might work just as well." But, "Lord, save me or I perish!" You must come to him knowing that no one else, no one else, no church, no minister, nobody, and definitely not you yourself can deliver you from your guilt and make you accepted with God.

Only the Lord Jesus can save and he can save and he does receive sinners. Only his gospel is the power of God unto salvation. He receives sinners. Those who come to him will not be cast out. This glorious, gracious, loving Savior says to sinners, says to you while you're in this world, "Come unto me. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest." The word of God is clear, "Let him that is athirst come and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Amen.