

Of the Intercession of Christ.

by John Gill

Christ's intercession is his vital act of pleading on behalf of his people before God, seeking to obtain blessings and benefits for them.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:12, Luke 23:34, John 11:41-42, John 17:9, Romans 8:34, Ephesians 1:3, 1 Timothy 2:5, 2 Timothy 1:9, Hebrews 7:25, Revelation 8:3-4

Topics: "Assurance of Salvation", "Intercession of Christ"

Description

John Gill emphasizes the significance of Christ's intercession as a vital aspect of His priestly office, illustrating how Christ was appointed to intercede for His people, asking for their salvation and blessings from the Father. He explains that Christ's intercession is not only a present reality but has been active since before His incarnation, and it continues in heaven where He advocates for believers. Gill highlights that Christ intercedes specifically for the elect, ensuring their conversion, comfort, and ultimate glorification, while also detailing the types and prophecies that foreshadow this role. The sermon underscores the unique and perpetual nature of Christ's intercession, which is effective and essential for the believer's relationship with God.

Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 5--Chapter 11

OF THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST

Secondly, another branch of Christ's priestly office is his intercession; and this may be considered much in the same method as the former, by showing, 1. That Christ was to be an Intercessor, or was to make intercession for his people: when Christ was called to the office of a priest, and invested with it, which was done in the council and covenant of grace; he was put upon making request on their behalf; he is bid to ask them of his Father, as his portion and inheritance, to be possessed and enjoyed by him; which is promised him on making such a request as he did, and they were given him (Ps. 2:8; John 17:6), and he not only asked them, but life for them, spiritual and eternal life, with all the blessings and comforts of life; which, upon asking, were given; God gave him the desires of his heart, and did not withhold the request of his lips: all blessings were bestowed upon his chosen in him; and grace, which is comprehensive of all blessings, was given them in him before the world began (Ps. 21:2,4; Eph. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:9), and this

asking, or requesting, is a species of Christ's intercession, and an early instance of it, and of his success in it; and a specimen of what was to be done by him hereafter.

The intercession of Christ was spoken of in prophecy in the books of the Old Testament; Elihu, in Job 33:23 not only speaks of him in his prophetic office, as an interpreter of his Father's mind and will; but as an advocate, pleading on the behalf of the man to whom he shows and applies his righteousness; that he be delivered from the evil of destruction, from wrath and ruin; since he had found a ransom, a ransom price, and redemption by it; as in Hebrews 9:1-28 and 12:1-29 and therefore insists, in point of right and justice, that he be secure from condemnation and death: again, in Psalm 16:4 which is a Psalm concerning Christ, whose dead body would not be left in the grave so long as to see corruption; but be raised and shown the path of life (Ps. 16:10,11), now two sorts of persons are spoken of in it; one who are called saints, excellent ones, in whom was all Christ's delight (Ps. 16:3), and another sort, that "hastened after another god", another savior, and not Christ; concerning whom he says, "I will not take up their names into my lips"; that is, he would not pray or make intercession for them; and has the same sense as the words in John 17:9.

"I pray for them; I pray not for the world": and saying that he would not take the names of some into his lips, supposes that he would take the names of others; that is, pray and intercede for them: but what most clearly foretells the intercession of Christ, and is a prophecy of it, is a passage in Isaiah 53:12 "and made intercession for the transgressors"; that is, would make intercession for them, according to the prophetic style used in that chapter; and which was particularly fulfilled, when Christ upon the cross prayed for his enemies (Luke 23:34).

The types of Christ's intercession are many. As Abel's sacrifice was a type of Christ's, so his speaking after his death was a type of Christ's speaking since his death: it is said of Abel, that he, "being dead, yet speaketh" (Heb. 11:4), so Christ, though dead, is alive, and lives for ever, and makes intercession, and speaks for his people; as Abel's blood had a voice in it, so has the blood of Christ; but with this difference, the blood of Abel cried against his brother; Christ's blood cries for his brethren, on their behalf: Abel's blood cried for vengeance on the murderer; Christ's blood calls for, and speaks peace and pardon to guilty men (Heb. 12:24).

Melchizedek, as he was a type of Christ, in his kingly and priestly offices, so in that part of the latter which respects intercession; he prayed for Abraham, that he might be blessed both with temporal and spiritual blessings, with blessings both in heaven and on earth (Gen. 14:19), so Christ prays and intercedes for his people, that they may have all the blessings of goodness here and hereafter bestowed upon them. Abraham likewise was a type of Christ in his intercession, when he so warmly interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah, at least for the righteous in those cities; in which he so far succeeded, that righteous Lot and his, were delivered from destruction in them.

Aaron being a good spokesman, one that could speak well, was a type of Christ, who has the tongue of the learned, and can speak well on the behalf of his distressed ones; and who can plead their cause thoroughly, effectually, and infallibly: so was Moses, when the children of Israel had sinned in making the golden calf, and were threatened with destruction, he interposed in their behalf, and pleaded they might be spared; or otherwise, that he might be blotted out of the book of life, or die: and such is the love of Christ to the spiritual Israel of God, that he has died for them; and pleads his death that they might live.

Particularly the entrance of the high priest once a year, with the blood of beasts, with a censer of burning coals, and an handful of incense, was an eminent type of Christ's entrance into heaven, and his intercession there; who went in thither, not with the blood of beasts, but with his own blood; and so to a better purpose: the burning coals were emblems of his painful sufferings; and the incense put upon them represented his powerful mediation and intercession, founded upon his sufferings and death, and satisfaction for sin made thereby.

Likewise the high priest going into the most holy place, with the names of the children of Israel on his breastplate, and bearing their judgment before the Lord, and taking away the sin of their holy things, typified Christ as the representative of his people in heaven; appearing in the presence of God for them, presenting his sacrifice for the taking away of their sins, even those of their most solemn services; (see Lev. 16:2,12-14; Ex. 28:29,30). 2. Christ is an intercessor; he has executed, he is executing, and will continue to execute this office; and the inquiries to be made concerning it are: where, when, and in what manner, he has made, or does make intercession? for what he intercedes, and for whom; and the excellency and usefulness of his intercession? 2a.

First, Where, when, and in what manner his intercession has been and is performed? And it may be considered as, 2a1. Before his incarnation: that he then interceded, and was a Mediator between God and man, is evident from that access to God which was then had: upon the sin and fall of our first parents they were driven from the presence of God, and no access could be had unto him, nor communion with him, on the foot of works; none, but through Christ, the Mediator, who is the only Mediator between God and men; there never was, nor never will be any other; through him both Jews and Gentiles, Old and New testament saints, have access to God; those under the former dispensation put up their prayers to God through Christ, and for his sake; and through his mediation and intercession they were heard and accepted.

So Daniel prayed to be "heard for the Lord's sake"; that is for Christ's sake (Dan. 9:17). Christ was then "the Angel of God's presence"; who was not only in the presence of God, but appeared there for his people, and by whom they were introduced and admitted into the presence of God, had audience of him, and acceptance with him (Isa. 63:9). We have an instance of Christ's intercession for the people of the Jews, when in distress, who is represented as an angel among the myrtle trees in the bottom; signifying the low estate the Jews were in; and as interceding and pleading with God for them; "and the Lord answered the angel that talked with me, with good and comfortable words": his intercession was acceptable, prevalent, and succeeded (Zech. 1:11,12,13).

But a more clear and full instance of Christ's intercession for his people in distress, through sin, is in Zechariah 3:1-4 where Joshua, a fallen saint, is represented as greatly defiled with sin; and Satan standing at his right hand, to accuse and charge him, and get judgment to pass against him; when Christ, the angel of the covenant, appears on his behalf, rebukes Satan, and pleads electing and calling grace in favour of the criminal; and, on the foot of his own sacrifice to be offered, satisfaction to be made, orders his filthy garments to be taken away, and him to be clothed with change of raiment, his own righteousness, and dismissed. 2a2.

Christ acted as an intercessor in his state of humiliation. We often read of his praying to God, and sometimes a whole night together, and of his offering up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, especially in the garden and on the cross; which might be chiefly on his own account, though not without regard to his people: at other times we find him praying for particular persons; as at the grave of Lazarus, where he wept and groaned in Spirit, and inwardly put up supplications, which were heard; for he

thanks his Father for hearing him; and declared he always heard him (John 11:41,42).

And he prayed for Peter particularly, when tempted, that his "faith" might "not fail", and was heard; for though he fell by the temptation, he was at once recovered (Luke 22:32). He prayed for all his disciples, in John 17:1-26 which is a specimen of his intercession in heaven for all his elect: yea, he prayed for his enemies, and such of his elect who were then in a state of enmity; and who, in consequence of his intercession, were converted and comforted; though they had been concerned in taking away his life (Luke 23:34; Acts 2:36-41).

Such virtue is there in his blood, and in his intercession founded upon it! 2a3. Christ is now interceding in heaven for his people; he is gone to heaven, entered there, and is set down at the right hand of God; where he ever lives to make intercession (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25), for so his intercession is sometimes represented, as after his death and resurrection from the dead, and session at God's right hand; and which is performed, perhaps not vocally, as on earth; for as he could request and intercede before he assumed an human nature, even in the council and covenant of peace, without a voice, so he can now in heaven; though it is not improbable but that he may make use of his human voice at his pleasure; though it cannot with certainty be affirmed, yet it is not to be denied: however, it is certain that he does not intercede in like manner as when on earth, with prostration of body, cries, and tears; which would be quite inconsistent with his state of exaltation and glory, being set down at the right hand of God, and crowned with glory and honour; nor as supplicating an angry Judge, and entreating him to be pacified, and show favour; for peace is made by the blood of Christ's cross; and God is pacified towards his people for all that they have done: nor as litigating a point in a court of judicature; for though Christ has names and titles taken from such like procedures, as counselor, pleader, and advocate; yet not as engaged in a cause dependant and precarious: but the intercession of Christ is carried on in heaven, by appearing in the presence of God there for his people; it is enough that he shows himself, as having done, as their Surety, all that law and justice could require; by presenting his blood, his sacrifice, and righteousness: Christ is gone with his blood into the holiest of all, and sprinkled it on the throne of mercy, before God; and where he is in the midst of the throne, as a Lamb that had been slain; his sacrifice being always in view of his divine Father, and his righteousness always in sight; with which God is well pleased, because by it his law is magnified and made honorable, and his justice satisfied: all which, of themselves, speak on the behalf of his people.

Moreover, Christ intercedes, not as asking a favour, but as an advocate in open court, who pleads, demands, and requires, according to law, in point of right and justice, such and such blessings to be bestowed upon, and applied unto such persons he has shed his blood for; he speaks, not in a charitable, but in an authoritative way, declaring it as his will, on the ground of what he has done and suffered, that so it should be; a specimen of this we have in the finishing blessing of all, glorification (John 17:24).

Christ performs this his office also by offering up the prayers and praises of his people; which become acceptable to God through the sweet incense of his mediation and intercession (Rev. 8:3,4; Heb. 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:5). Once more, Christ executes this office by seeing to it, that all the blessings of grace promised in covenant, and ratified by his blood, are applied by his Spirit to the covenant ones; and so he sits as a Priest on his throne, and sees the travail of his soul with satisfaction; when, as those he engaged for are reconcile by his death, so they are saved by his interceding life; are effectually called by grace, and put into the possession of what was stipulated and procured for them. 2b.

Secondly, The next thing to be considered is, what Christ makes intercession for more particularly? For the "conversion" of his unconverted ones: "Neither pray I for those alone", says he, meaning his disciples that were called; "but for them also which shall believe on me through their word" (John 17:20). And for the comfort of those that are convinced of sin, distressed with a sense of it, and need comfort; in consequence of his intercession, he sends the Comforter to them, to take of his things, and show them to them, and shed abroad his love in them, and so fill them with joy and peace in believing; insomuch that they have peace in him while they have tribulation in the world.

And particularly for discoveries and applications of pardoning grace and mercy; "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father"; not that he pleads for sinning, nor that any may be connived at in it; but that he may have a manifestation and application of the pardon of it, in consequence of his blood shed for it. And as Christ has a fellow feeling with his people under temptations, and helps them that are tempted; this is one way of doing it, interceding for "strength" for them to bear up under temptations, to be carried through them, and delivered out of them; and so that they might have "persevering grace" to hold on, and out, unto the end; he prays not that they be taken out of the world, but that they may be kept from the evil of it (John 17:11,15).

Lastly, he intercedes for their "glorification"; one principal branch of which will lie in beholding his glory (John 17:24). This was the joy set before him, and which he kept in view in all his sufferings; and for the sake of which he endured them so cheerfully; and it is that which is uppermost in his heart, in his intercession for them; nor will he cease pleading till he has all his people in heaven with him. 2c. Thirdly, The persons Christ makes intercession for are not the world, the men of it, and all that are in it; for Christ himself says, "I pray not for the world"; but for those that were chosen and given him out of the world; and who, in due time, are effectually called out of it by his grace: the objects of Christ's intercession are the same with those of election, redemption, and effectual calling; to whom Christ is a propitiation, for them he is an advocate (John 17:9; 1 John 2:1,2).

The high priest bore upon his heart, in the breastplate of judgment, only the names of the children of Israel; and they are only the spiritual Israel of God whom Christ bears upon his heart, whom he represents and intercedes for in the holiest of all; and not for those only who actually believe, but for those who shall hereafter; even who are, for the present, enemies to him, and averse to his rule over them; as his prayers in the garden, and on the cross, show (John 17:20; Luke 23:34).

It is for all the elect Christ intercedes, that have been, are, or shall be, scattered up and down in each of the parts of the world, and in all ages and periods of time, that they be partakers of his grace here, and be glorified with him hereafter; hence says the apostle, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" since not only God justifies them, Christ died for them, is risen again, and is at the right hand of God; but makes intercession for them, and answers to, and removes all charges brought against them (Rom. 8:33,34), and for those even though and while they are sinners and transgressors; for so it is said of him in prophecy; "and hath made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12), and as he died for such, yea, the chief of sinners, and calls them by his grace, and receives them into fellowship with himself, it is no wonder that he should pray and intercede for them. 2d.

Fourthly, The excellent properties and use of Christ's intercession. Christ is an only intercessor; "there is but one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5), though the Spirit of God makes intercession for the saints, it is within them, not without them, at the right hand of God; and it is with groans unutterable; not so Christ in heaven, saints in heaven are no intercessors for saints on earth; they

are ignorant of their persons and cases, and therefore cannot intercede for them; nor angels, as say the papists, who distinguish between mediators of redemption and mediators of intercession; the latter they say angels are, and Christ the former: but the Scripture knows no such distinction; he that is the Redeemer is the only Intercessor; he that is the Propitiation is the sole Advocate; and he is every way fit for it: being the Son of God, he has interest in his Father's heart; being the mighty God, he is mighty to plead, thoroughly to plead the cause of his people; and having offered up himself as man, to be a sacrifice for them, he has a sufficient plea to make on their behalf; and having the tongue of the learned, can speak well for them; and being Jesus Christ the righteous, the holy and harmless High Priest, is a proper person to be the "advocate" for those that sin; as such he is with the Father, at hand, and to be called unto; is ready to defend^[1] the cause of his people, and deliver them from their adversary: and he is a "prevalent" advocate and intercessor; he is always heard; he was when on earth, and now in heaven; his mediation is always acceptable, and ever succeeds (John 11:41,42).

And he performs this his office "freely", willingly, and cheerfully; he never rejects any case put into his hands, nor refuses to present the petitions of his people to his divine Father; but is always ready to offer up the prayers of all saints with the much incense of his mediation (Rev. 8:3,4). And his intercession is "perpetual"; though he was dead he is alive, and lives for evermore; and "he ever lives to make intercession for them" that come unto God by him (Heb. 7:25).

Many are the benefits and blessings of grace derived to saints from Christ's intercession for them; such as access to God through him, acceptance with God in him, both of persons and services, communications of grace from him, the application of every blessing of the covenant to them; for though the impetration of them is by the death of Christ, the application of them is owing to his life (Rom. 5:10). ENDNOTES:

[1] "Advocatus appellatur, etiamsi nihil dicat, neque agat, sed qui tantum paratus sit defendere", Vallae Elegantiar. l. 4. c. 12.

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