



**BETHEL**  
PRESBYTERIAN

# MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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## An Anatomy of Salvation, Part 6

In 1988, Janet and I packed-up and moved to St. Louis, Missouri to attend Covenant Theological Seminary. Now upon my arrival I learned that at Covenant there was one class and one professor whose name brought chills to every student who loved life and sought good days. It wasn't

- Systematic Theology.
- Biblical Theology.
- Historical Theology.

It was Homiletics: Preaching class.

As a new student, I would sit in the cafeteria and listen to the horror stories about this class. Dr. Rayburn was a man of God who strove for excellence and expected the same from his students. As such, it was not unheard of that in his critic of a pupil's sermon, he could revert the best and most able student to the state of a child.

Now of all the emphasis of Dr. Rayburn, he was known most for this statement: "As you leave this institution and enter a pulpit, I want you to picture me in the back of the sanctuary, arms folded, asking one question, 'So What?'" That God is holy, "So what?" That the church is the bride of Christ, "So what?" That David killed Goliath, "So what?" It was this question that served as the final test of any sermon, "So What?"

Brothers and sisters, the passage we are looking at is Paul's response to this very question in reference to the Gospel. "So what?" The source of our salvation can be traced back to God's foreknowledge and pre-choice of us, "so what?" That we have the hope of glory in the hereafter, "so what?" That we have been justified in Christ, "so what?" What difference does this make in our lives today, specifically as it relates to the benefits of the gospel?

It is in anticipation of this question, that Paul closes his discussion of the anatomy of salvation with an analysis of its consequences or byproducts. He shows the implications of the gospel truth that we are saved by grace through faith. He shows us how the gospel speaks to these issues:

- When my job is threatened.
- When I go through suffering or persecution.
- When conflict abounds.

The message of this passage is that the Gospel is relevant when it comes to any opposition we might face in this life

- Physical.
- Circumstantial.
- Emotional.

## Triumph Over Judicial Opposition

Notice the text and Paul's analysis of the Gospel's relevancy when it comes to *Judicial* Opposition.

Romans 8:33, "**Who shall lay anything 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 is it that will condemn us?" Paul asks in his identifying the nature of the opposition that we will face, God's judgment. He uses the term *charge*, a legal, technical term for presenting an accusation in a law court. Here it literally means, who will summon us before the bar of justice. Paul in essence is asking "Who can accuse God's children?"

The term *condemn* is also a forensic term, which denotes not only the giving of a "sentence of guilty" but also the meeting out of punishment. So, when it comes to our standing before God, is there any who can accuse or condemn us? Is there any who can charge us with sin?

### Satan Our Chief Accuser

While the implied answer to these questions is "No!" that doesn't mean that the child of God doesn't have judicial opponents. Scripture is replete with examples of God's children being accused by ones who would seek their ruin. As Christians our chief accuser is Satan.

Revelation 12:10, “And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren [Satan] is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.”

Job 1:8-11, “And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.”

Satan lives to accuse us before God! In fact, the very name “Satan” means “accuser.”<sup>1</sup> Satan is the “accuser of the brethren.”

### **Accusers in the Church**

Then we have accusers in the church. Let us not forget that in the Apostolic age, it was the church who

- Brought accusations against Christ, Matthew 12:10; Mark 3:2; 15:3; Luke 6:7; 23:2.
- Accused Paul before Rome, Acts 24:2, 8, 13; 25:11.

Because the church consists of both tares and wheat or the fleshly and the Spirit-filled we expect persecution in the form of accusation to arise within the church against all genuine children of God. And this is why we read these passages:

- Luke 12:11: of the promise of God's people being accused and “brought before” the authorities of the ancient church.
- 3 John 10: of Diotrephes who “loves to be first” how he “unjustly accused” John and the brethren of wicked words.
- 2 Corinthians 6:7-8: of genuine believers accusing and “defrauding” other believers.

Even the church contains those who would accuse and condemn the child of God!

### **We Condemn Ourselves**

And if all of this were not bad enough, we ourselves often times accuse ourselves before God. Though we have come to Christ and have been saved by His grace, nevertheless at times we stand before God as ones who are guilty. Don't we?

- When we've committed that sin for the 20th time?
- When we've failed regarding an obligation or duty?

It's at these times that we stand before God condemning ourselves, even embarrassed to ask for forgiveness! Thomas Brooks in *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*, describes one of Satan's devices accordingly, which also is a device of our unbelieving heart.

“Device 7... Saith Satan, 'Thy heart is not right with God; surely thy estate is not good; thou dost

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<sup>1</sup> Compare Zechariah 3:1

not flatter thyself to think that ever God will eternally own and embrace such a one as thou art, who complainest against sin, and yet relapsest into the same sin; who with tears and groans confessest thy sin, and yet ever and anon art fallen into the same sin?"<sup>2</sup>

"Device 2... 'Ah!' saith Satan, 'as thou art worthy of the greatest misery, so thou art unworthy of the least crumb of mercy. What! Doest thou think... that ever Christ will own, receive, or embrace such an unworthy wretch as thou art? No, no; if there were any worthiness in thee, then, indeed, Christ might be willing to be entertained by thee. Thou art unworthy to entertain Christ into thy house, how much more unworthy art thou to entertain Christ into thy heart?"<sup>3</sup>

These are the thoughts with which we often-times accuse ourselves before God!

- I am no good!
- I am not worthy of forgiveness anymore!
- How could God still love me after I did such and such?

And so, accusations against God's elect are numerous in their content and source. And yet notice, the nuance of this passage is that every accusation with which we might be charged is as nothing to the child of God. Why?

Let me ask you a very important question: As you think of your sin, whose accusation ought you most to be concerned?

- Satan's?
- A church leader?
- Your own self-accusation?

## God's Accusation

Whose accusation ought you to fear most? GOD'S! Speaking of the final judgment we read this:

Romans 2:4-6, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds."

Brothers and sisters, you must see that our greatest fear/concern is NOT what others think of us or what we think of ourselves, but what GOD thinks of us! He alone is the only one who has a VALID accusation against us.

2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

The day is coming when every one of us will stand before God and receive that which we deserve. And

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Brooks, [Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices](#), Jonathan Ponder, Philadelphia, 1810, page 171 (also available from Puritan Paperbacks, Banner of Truth Publishing, 1968, ISBN-10: 0851510027)

<sup>3</sup> Brooks, page 222

thus, Christ exhorted us thus:

Matthew 10:28, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Brothers and sisters, the greatest concern of our soul- in fact, the only concern that we could/should ever have- is NOT, "What does the

- World.
- Satan.
- The church.
- Or even ourselves.

at any time think of us?" But, "What does God think of me?" A. W. Tozier, referencing this truth, wrote this:

"The man who comes to a right belief about God is relieved of ten thousand temporal problems... [and yet] even if the multiple burdens of time [are] lifted from him, the one mighty single burden of eternity begins to press down upon him with a weight more crushing than all the woes of the world piled one upon another. That mighty burden is his obligation to God... And when the man's laboring conscience tells him that he has... from childhood been guilty of foul revolt against the Majesty in the heavens, the inner pressure of self-accusation may become too heavy to bear."<sup>4</sup>

## **Our Triumph**

Indeed, there is no greater question in this life than, "How does God view me? Am I guilty or innocent before Him?" That brings us to our triumph.

Romans 8:33b-34, "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."

God is the one who justifies. A sinner like you and me can stand before a holy God and receive His approval because He has justified us!

Now, this is the forty-fourth time we have seen this word and/or its derivatives in this epistle. Justification is an objective forensic judgment regarding the innocence of someone. Justification is

- The sinner standing before the Judge of this universe, guilty of a multiple of sins.
- And yet, God pronouncing that justice has been satisfied and we are "Not Guilty!"

Now, on what basis can God declare us "Not guilty"? Does He simply overlook our sin? No!

It is Christ Jesus who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. The basis upon which we stand before God is the work of Christ. Notice here that it is described in a fourfold way.

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<sup>4</sup> A. W. Tozier, [Knowledge of the Holy](#), page 10-11 (also available from Harper One, 1978, ISBN-10: 0060684127).

1. Died. The implication behind this is that Christ died FOR US! Recall again the Old Testament sacrificial system in the course of the offering, the sin of the guilty was symbolically transferred to the innocent animal whereupon the animal bore the punishment of the guilty, which was death. And thus we read speaking of the sin offering, "And he [the one guilty of sin] shall lay his hand on the head of the male goat, and slay it... before the Lord; it is a sin offering" (Leviticus 4:24NASB).

Listen, God can "declare us not guilty" because Christ died on our behalf! "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21 NASB). And so, we can stand before a holy God as one's not guilty of sin because Christ died in our place! And yet, Paul goes on.

2. Raised. This is an important qualification. Did you know that if Christ had simply died for us we still would be in bondage, even though we would be forgiven? That's right.

Acts 2:24, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."

Indeed, it is the resurrection of Christ that secures our resurrection.

Romans 6:5, "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."

And so, God can declare us "Not Guilty" because not only has Christ died for us, but we now live with Christ- His life is our life! And yet, Paul continues.

3. Right hand of God. In the Bible, this is the position of highest honor. That Christ is on the "right hand of God" means that what He did on this earth was acceptable in God's eyes. Now, if Christ is acceptable before God, who received OUR sins on the cross, don't you suppose that we who have received the spotless life of Christ likewise are acceptable in God's sight?
4. Intercedes for us. In the Bible, there are two activities of a Priest: Sacrifice and intercession. That Christ died on our behalf and prays for us implies that He is our High Priest that is the point of Hebrews 7, 10. Now listen it is unthinkable that ones for whom Christ died and now prays for daily could someday stand before Christ and receive the declaration of "Guilty" on account of the sin for which Christ, through His life, death, resurrection and ascension, nullified!

And so, on account of Him who died, rose, ascended and now reigns at God's right hand, the child of God receives the declaration of

- "NOT GUILTY."
- THE PRICE HAS BEEN PAID!
- GOD AS OUR JUDGE IS SATISFIED!

Now based upon this we ask, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect?" Will

- Satan?
- The World?
- The Church?

- Ourselves?
- **GOD?**

The answer is “NO ONE! WE HAVE BEEN DECLARED, 'NOT GUILTY' on account of the cross of Christ! There remains no other ACCUSATION that could be charged against? And so, a second byproduct of the gospel is that in Christ we triumph over all judicial opposition!

Turn with me to John 8. Though most definitely this passage is NOT Scripture, it was clearly added late, nevertheless it reflects the truth/teaching of Scripture and so the teaching of our text this morning. Accordingly, I want you to look at this with me NOT as if it is Scripture BUT as an Illustration and an ancient one at that, of the teaching of our passage.

John 8:2-5, “And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?”

John 8:7-9, “So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.”

John 8:10-11, “When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”

The consequences of the gospel us the securing of the benefits of this chapter, first of which is “no condemnation.” Brothers and sisters, listen to the word of God.

Colossians 2:13-14, “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”

Hebrew 9:13-14, “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

Romans 8:1, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Romans 8:33-34, “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.”

All that is necessary for our **acceptance** before God and thus in the Body of Christ is the Cross! All that

is necessary for our **well-being** before God and thus in the Body of Christ is the Cross! All that is necessary for our **approval** before God and thus in the body of Christ is the Cross!

This passage teaches that

- As we approach our God we do so on the basis of Christ- not our efforts.
- As we approach one another we do so on the basis of Christ- not our efforts.
- As we evaluate the salvation we have received from God we do so on the basis of Christ- not our efforts!
- To stand on any other ground but the cross, is to trample under-foot our Savior's blood!

And yet, this is not to say that we do not look for obedience on the part of the child of God. Indeed, 1 John 2 says that obedience is a mark of genuine faith in Christ. And thus, in Scripture we are called to exhort one another unto obedience.<sup>5</sup> Rather, it is that all obedience is understood to be that which flows from God's declaration of, "Not Guilty!"

"Who will bring a charge against you?"

- The World?
- The Church?
- Yourself?
- Satan?

Listen, "If God is for us, who is against us?"

### **Satan's Accusation**

I do not doubt that each of us have at times been floored by the thought of Satan, this angel of darkness who was created so marvelously and yet, became proud such that he was cast out of heaven. To lie in bed at night in an empty room and to think of this "accuser" standing over us is enough to make the boldest of all men quiver.

And yet, imagine, this foe standing before the Supreme Court of this world, the bench of God, serving as the prosecuting attorney states His case:

- He has seen your evil activity.
- He knows your evil words.
- He is well able to present a case for your condemnation against which you could never defend.

What would you say?

This is the scenario described in Zechariah 3:1-4.

Zechariah 3:1, "And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him."

What would you say if you were Joshua? How could you defend yourself? Amazingly, you wouldn't say a word for your Lawyer, Jesus Christ, would speak on your behalf and say:

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<sup>5</sup> Compare Matthew 18:15



Zechariah 3:2, "And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

On what basis would Christ say these things? Notice...

Zechariah 3:3-4, " Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment."

When God justifies a person, ALL accusations at once lose their validity! And so listen, if the chief "Accuser" is left speechless before God, who is there that can bring a charge against God's elect?

### **About Bethel Presbyterian Church**

*The Bethel Presbyterian Church Ministry of the Word* is published regularly.

### **VISIT US WHEN IN Broomfield, COLORADO**

Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10<sup>th</sup> Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

All our sermons can be accessed via the World Wide Web. The recording for this sermon and these notes can be found at [Who Can Charge God's Elect?](#) The web address for all sermons at Bethel Presbyterian Church can be found out as follows: <http://bethelpresbyterian.sermonaudio.com>

### **About the Preacher**

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on December 7, 2008. Greg is the preacher at Bethel Presbyterian Church.