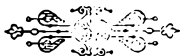


THE
PRESENT PRIESTHOOD
OF CHRIST.



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BEFORE speaking of the present service of the Lord as our "Great High Priest," let us see from the word of God for whom the priesthood and intercession of Christ are exercised. Many think that Christ is interceding before God for the unconverted, for *sinners*, and that therefore He will forgive their sins and save their souls. This thought is quite contrary to Scripture, and gives a wrong thought of God Himself and His blessed gospel, and thus the peace of many of His saints is damaged. It is as though God were against the sinner, instead of *for* him, and as if it required a great deal of persuasion and entreaty to induce Him

to save a soul, though at last, through the intercession of Christ, He would consent to do it. If we turn to the scripture in John iii. 16, we read, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." It was *God* who first thought of the sinner, and so *loved* as to give His Son to die on the cross; thus proving that God is not *against*, but *for* the sinner, and needs no one to move His heart towards him. We also read, in that beautiful passage in 2 Cor. v. 20, "As though God did beseech by us." God Himself condescends to beseech sinners to be reconciled to Him; thus it needs no one to intercede for them.

Let us look at Heb. vii. 24, 25, and there we shall see for whom the priesthood is: "But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." Whom does He make intercession for? Not for the unconverted, but for those who "*come unto God by*

Him." And who are they? Saints of God, perfected for ever by the "one offering." The expression, "Come unto God," has given many the idea that it means a sinner coming to God for salvation; but that is not the thought in this passage. The word "come" is the same as "draw near" in Heb. x. 22, which speaks of *saved* ones; for a sinner could not "draw near" in his sins to a holy God. Before we go further, let us see from the Scriptures the ground upon which we can draw near to God, as many of the Lord's people never grow in the knowledge of the things of God, because they have never got the question of their sins settled, and do not know what it is to be in His holy presence in perfect peace.

Reader, do you know what it is to be in God's holy presence without fear? and can you say, "I know my sins are put away for ever before Him"? Heb. x. 1-22 brings out how a soul can thus draw near to God with the knowledge of the forgiveness of his sins; and it is beautiful to see the mass of evidence

which the Spirit of God brings together to assure our poor hearts that our sins are put away, and that we are "perfected for ever" before God, and how He invites us to draw near into His holy presence. We find the whole Trinity, so-called, engaged with the question of our salvation. God the Father wills our salvation (*v.* 10); God the Son came to accomplish it (*v.* 9); and God the Holy Ghost is the witness to us that the work has been accepted, and that our sins are gone for ever. (*vv.* 15-17.) If you will read verse 12 you will see, "But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins" (or one sin-offering), "for ever sat down on the right hand of God." And now turn to Lev. iv. 27-31, where you will see, if a Jew sinned, and it came to his knowledge, "then he shall bring his offering." (*v.* 28.) The law said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" and if the man had sinned, death was the penalty. Was he slain then? No; God provided a substitute, and told him he could bring a kid, and lay his hand on its head, which meant that his sin was transferred to the kid; and

God, so to speak, said, "I will accept the death of that kid instead of your death for the sin you have committed;" and thus we read, "He shall slay the sin-offering." (v. 29.) The animal died instead of the man, and he could go free.

But this sacrifice was only for *one* sin; and if he sinned again, he had to bring another sacrifice. How beautiful is the contrast in Heb. x. 12, "But this man (Christ), after He had offered *one* sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." Do you, dear reader, believe that not only *one* sin, as in the case of the Jew, but *all* your sins, were laid upon Christ on the cross; that He bore the judgment of them before God, and put them all away once for all? Because if they were not put away then, they never can be, as there is only one sacrifice for sins, and Christ can never die again.

It is not a question of past, present, or future sins; for when Christ died they were *all* future; and by that "one offering," we read, "He hath perfected for ever

them that are sanctified" (Heb. x. 14); not for a month, or a year, but "*for ever.*" Sanctified here means those set apart by God for salvation. But now the question arises, If our sins are gone, and we are perfected for ever by the "one offering," what need is there of a priest? Although we are saved, and the question of our sins is settled for ever, and we are "seated in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. ii. 6), we are not in the glory yet; and there is the wilderness journey, full of difficulties, and trials, and dangers, in between, and the power of Satan on every hand; thus He is there at God's right hand to represent those who are saved before God, and to uphold them in their path through this world, obtaining all necessary grace and help in time of need, and to save them through all the difficulties and dangers of the wilderness journey, till each believer enters that "rest that remains for the people of God." He undertakes (so to speak) for every saint of God till they are safely through the wilderness journey. But mark, the priesthood of Christ in

Hebrews is not for sins, as He is only "Priest" for those whose sins are put away for ever, which He did once for all when He offered up Himself.* (Heb. vii. 27.) In Heb. viii. 1, 2, we see that He is now on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, and at the same time "a minister" (servant) "of the sanctuary." It is wonderful how the Holy Ghost leads us up in the Hebrews to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and unfolds His varied glories to us! Chapter i. brings out His divine glories; chapter ii. His glories as man; then He goes on to show how superior *His* priesthood is to that under law; and then in chapter viii. He sums it up with, "We have such an High Priest." Reader, have you ever contemplated the glorious person of Christ as He is now,

* The question of a child of God sinning after conversion is not taken up in Hebrews, as it would be out of character with the truth brought out in chapter x.: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." The advocate with the Father in 1 John takes up that blessed side of the intercession of our Lord.

at God's right hand, a living, glorified man (although God as well), crowned with glory and honour? Can you say, as in Heb. ii. 9, "I 'see Jesus'?" Where? No longer on earth, not in the grave, not risen again on the earth, but "crowned with glory and honour" at God's right hand. There are many of the Lord's people who know about the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross, but who do not think of the glorious person who did the work, now "on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;" and then, when a soul has grasped the glories of that person, how wonderful to find it written, in Heb. viii. 2, "a minister" (servant) "of the sanctuary." What a thought, that that Blessed One loved us, and gave Himself for us, and now actually lives to serve us in the courts above!

In chapter ix. 24, He "appears in the presence of God for us;" that is, He in all the blessedness of His person represents us there, and is our abiding righteousness before God. We find a beautiful picture of this in Aaron. (Exod. xxviii. 9-12.)

The names of the children of Israel were engraved upon the two onyx stones which were placed on Aaron's shoulders, and also on the twelve stones which were on the breast-plate; and could not be rubbed out. This breast-plate, with the engraved precious stones, was inseparably connected with the ephod, which was the priestly garment; so that Aaron could not exercise his office of priest without bearing the names of the children of Israel "before the Lord continually" (v. 29); thus Aaron could not go into the holy place without God's continually remembering Israel. The Lord Jesus, "our great High Priest," bears the name of every believer "before the Lord continually," representing us before God. A plate of pure gold was on Aaron's forehead, on the mitre, and on it was engraved the words, "Holiness to the Lord." (v. 36.) Gold, in Scripture, generally means divine righteousness. Pure, unsullied, divine righteousness and holiness to the Lord, was what typically met the eye of God when Aaron went into the tabernacle. And now we see Christ, in

all the glory of His person, in perfect righteousness before God. With what complacency does God look at Him! God's light can search Him through and through, and not find a spot or stain upon Him—nothing but what answers perfectly to the divine glory. And every believer can look up and say, "That blessed One represents *me* before God."

Many of the Lord's people are so occupied with their callings or work that they have not much time to read or study the word of God, and necessarily their thoughts have to be much in their everyday work. How blessed to know that, although we have to be occupied with things down here, yet the Lord is "continually" representing us before God. Some may be so weak in body, or racked with pain, that they cannot recall any comforting passage of God's word. The Lord is faithfully bearing the name of that suffering saint before God. God cannot look at Christ without thinking of you and me, because He bears our names continually before Him. If we get away from Him in our souls, or get occu-

pied with the things here, He does not forget us, but ever lives to make intercession for us ; not an occasional thing, like the advocacy in 1 John ii., " If any man sin," but " He ever lives," &c. He not only represents us before God, but He sympathizes with us, and through Him we " obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need " (Heb. iv. 15, 16) ; and He also makes intercession for us " (chap. vii. 25), not for our sins in this epistle—that question was settled at the cross—but for our weaknesses and infirmities, continually upholding us ; for " He is able to save them to the uttermost " (*i.e.* all through the dangers and difficulties of the way) " that come " (draw near) " unto God by Him." As in Peter's case, the Lord prayed for him that his faith might not fail. The Lord has been a man here, has trod the path of faith, has been tried in every way. He knew what it was to be weary, to suffer hunger and thirst, to groan in His spirit, and to weep ; He was also tempted of Satan. We are drawn away by our

own lusts, and enticed, because we have sin in us. He was tempted from without, never from within. It would be blasphemy to think it, as He was holy from His birth, and without sin. Thus the blessed Lord, having gone through the temptation of Satan, and the trials to which we are subject while walking through the wilderness, can sympathize with us now in them; "for in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." Suppose you are led by the Spirit of God into a certain path, and Satan tempts you to give up that path on account of difficulties, &c., the Lord can sympathize with you, as He has been tempted here as man, and will succour as well as sympathize with you in the temptation. We have also access to the throne of God Himself, because "we have such a High Priest." (Heb. iv. 14-16.) We do not go to the priest, but to the throne, and find it a throne of grace, and obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. What a wondrous place to

get help from, the very throne of God Himself.

There is another thing connected with the priesthood of the Lord, and that is the place He occupies in our worship. Will you compare Exodus xxviii. 38 with Hebrews xiii. 15? Aaron bears the iniquity of the holy things. The Christian sacrifice is praise and worship. When we come together to worship as Christians we truly are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Still we have sin in us; and how often are there imperfections and sin mixed with our worship. But how blessed to know it all goes up to God by Him; *i.e.* He presents our praise to God in all the fragrance and acceptability of His own person. It is not as it goes out of our lips. It may be only a few stammering sentences, but said with a true heart, which Christ takes up and presents to God. Thus a simple soul, thanking God for what He has done in blessing Him, is a sacrifice of praise, and that goes up to God by Him. When we get home there

will be no need of a priest, as the wilderness journey will be over, and every son brought to glory and to that eternal rest that remains for the people of God. May the Spirit of God, dear reader, lead you to consider the High Priest of our profession in all His glory, and to praise His grace that has loved us and given Himself for us, and is unceasingly occupied with us now in leading us through the wilderness, and ever faithfully representing us before God, and living to make intercession for us, till each one is brought to glory, and He will see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied.

R. F. K.