

The Wednesday Word, February 8, 2023: The Priest Who Brings Us Near

1 Peter 3:18, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God,...."

Let me ask you a question. Are you more conscious of your sins than you are of the fact that they have already been punished and taken away? Too much focus on self is unhealthy! As gospel-centered believers, we need to concentrate, not on our sins, but on Jesus and the fact that He has already been punished for them.

It is because of Christ and Him alone that we are forgiven, accepted and redeemed! But there's more. Not only has the Lord Jesus taken away our sins, He has also introduced us to the Father. (1 Peter 3:18)! This is exceedingly good news. We could never get to God by our frail, faulty and futile efforts, but Jesus, by His person and performance, and on our behalf, has succeeded where we failed.

And there's even more good news to think about! He, the Lord Jesus, our Great High Priest, is at this precise moment exercising His High Priestly ministry for our benefit! By the ministry of His priesthood, He now sustains, keeps, maintains and protects every one of His blood-bought people. Our High Priest, Christ Jesus, has now given us free and open access to the Father. He has brought us near to the Father. He has introduced us to the Father. (John 14:6).

Someone asks, "Exactly how near to God has Christ actually brought us?" The Hymn writer answers that question well when He writes,

*"So near so very near to God I nearer cannot be.
For in the person of His Son, I am as near as He."*

I like that!

We are a redeemed people whom He has purchased for Himself so that we would be with Him forever. Jesus, speaking to the disciples, promised it like this, "... *that where I am, there ye may be also*" (John 14:3). We, therefore, will lose this nearness to God only when Christ loses His and that will never happen for Christ is God manifest in the flesh. (1 Timothy 3:16).

We may at times fail, fall and act with inconsistency ... we say this to our shame ... but our High Priest retains our nearness to God in Himself! The religious and self-righteous reject this statement. However, the truth is that access to God is not founded upon any Law or system based upon our performance.

Our nearness to God is based on Christ and His performance alone. In virtue of the doing and dying of Jesus, God acts in our favour, according to the value He puts on Christ's work and person!

Christ by His shed blood has purchased nearness to God. My friend Keith Lamb observes, "*Justification is altogether by blood and has nothing to do with how I behave. We will never be*

any more righteous than the blood of Christ has made us." The same truth can be said about nearness to God. We will never be closer to God than we have been already made in Christ.

By divine grace, Christ now exercises His priesthood as He ever-lives to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25). He applies His word to us and, in the face of every trial, difficulty, heartache and suffering, leads us on to our destiny.

We are perfectly suited to having Christ as our Priest for we always need Him! There is never a moment when we are so perfect in ourselves that we can dismiss Him.

Our greatest danger is that our natural tendency is to quickly forget the gospel. We must, therefore, constantly live in the light of the finished work. The more we count on the facts that we have forgiveness and that in Christ is our nearness to God, the more sin and its effects will lose their grip on us.

"Turn then, my soul, unto thy rest!
The merits of thy great High Priest
Have bought thy liberty;
Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee!"
Augustus Toplady.

And that's the Gospel Truth!