

CHRIST'S ROYAL PRIESTHOOD SUFFICIENT ENCOURAGEMENT FOR FAITH

Heb. iv. 14 - Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

Our blessed High Priest has the names of believers engraven on these three parts of His precious person: He has them engraven in His heart; which points out His infinite love and boundless condescension. This is to answer that which was typified of Him by the high priests under the law, who had the names of the twelve tribes of Israel engraven on their breast-plates of onyx-stones. And Christ has the names of believers engraven on His shoulders; which holds out His strengthening and supporting them in all their temptations and assaults of the devil that they meet with. This is to answer that which was typified of Him by the high priest under the law, of having the names of the twelve tribes engraven on their shoulders, to be a memorial before the Lord. Christ has the names of believers engraven on the palms of His hands; which points out His everlasting remembrance of them. No doubt this respect ought to engage our hearts, when Christ cannot catch by force, He will catch us by deceit. Christ's love has not only an omnipotency, but also a divine deceit and guile: "Therefore, behold I will allure her into the wilderness"; or, as the word may be

rendered, "I will deceive her in the wilderness."

There are these three parts of Christ's office, His kingly, priestly and prophetic office. His kingly office points out His absolute dominion, and infinite sovereignty. His prophetic office points out His infinite wisdom in teaching sinners; amid His priestly office points out His boundless compassion and goodwill towards us. There is a great difference betwixt our high priest and the high priest under the law, betwixt the high priest under the New Testament and the Old Testament; for our High Priest was both the sacrifice and the sacrificer. You know that Christ got and bought all the lives of the believers, on His promise and bond, before God dealt so with them, that He should suffer for them. Justice suffered Him a little, but at last He perfected His work. Is there any difference betwixt them that were born under the law and them that are born under the gospel? For ye know that, under the law, there were sacrifices in Adam's time, in Noah's and Abraham's times; and for four thousand years there were sacrifices, and the fire upon the altar drank up the blood of lambs and goats; yet divine justice was never satisfied till that spotless Lamb sacrificed Himself. Justice fristed [postponed] Christ four thousand years; but at length He came and perfected the work of our redemption.

There is a great difference betwixt man's first and second creation. We confess there was much love and wisdom

manifested in man's first creation; but that was all accomplished by a word of command. In the second creation, however, there was not only infinite love, and wisdom, and power, but much suffering and acting in this creation. But blessed be His name, He has now perfected our redemption, and is now requiring that all these, for whom He has laid down His life, and paid that ransom, may be in heaven with Himself.

But to come to that one thing which we intend to speak to, which is, Christ's priestly office, we are not intending to prosecute these words any further, but as they give us ground to speak to this part of Christ's office, which I may say is the foundation of religion. And we shall speak to these things:

First, what Christ's priestly office does comprehend, and how He executes it.

Secondly, we shall speak to this. What are the properties of this our great high priest Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, what advantage follows to a Christian from Christ's priestly office.

And, lastly, we shall speak a little to the properties and qualifications of Christ's priesthood.

And as for the first. His priestly office comprehends these two things;

first, His offering up Himself a spotless sacrifice for our sins. This part is pointed at, Heb. x, 4, 5, 6, 7. “Then said I, lo I come, I delight to do thy will, O Lord.” Heb. v, 7, “Who in the days of his flesh offered up strong prayers and supplications to him who was able to save him from death.”

The second thing, His offering up Himself for us imports, that He has taken upon Him the office of high priest, blameless and harmless, and is made higher than the heavens. Heb. vii, 16, “Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.” And it is from this that Christ is called the Prince of Peace, in purchasing that precious peace betwixt God and sinners; for in that day that there was a woeful diversion made betwixt God and sinners, Christ did then begin His peace and reconciliation betwixt God and us.

Now that which we shall speak to from this shall be to some considerations, that may make this act of Christ most mysterious to you. And there are more mysteries in this one act than we could well explain, though we had eternity to make a commentary on it. The first consideration is this, to look on that divine harmony and sweet consent that was among all the persons of the blessed Trinity, that Christ should accomplish this work of dying for sinners; there was not one negative to this. Was not the Father, the first Person of the blessed Trinity, most willing for this? Hence it is called the Father’s will,

Psalm xl, 8, "I delight to do thy will, O my God"; and in Heb. x, 7, 9, "Then said he, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O Lord."

There are these three things that may evidence the Father's consent to this blessed work.

First, that God the Father manifested much love to His Son, because of His doing this work, John x, 17, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life": as if Christ would have said, "The Father loved me; and the reason why He loved me is, because I lay down my life for my sheep."

There is this second thing that speaks the Father's consent to the work, viz., these great promises were given to Christ in the covenant of redemption, if He would lay down His life an offering for sin, as Isa. liii, 10, "He should see his seed, he should prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand."

And there is this, lastly, that points out the Father's consent to this work; and it is this, the great reward that He gave to the Son after the accomplishment of this great work. Phil. ii, 9, 10, "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven and in earth." As likewise it is clear from Heb. ii, 9, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour."

And was not the Son, the second Person of the Trinity, most willing to accomplish this work? We hope none will dispute His willingness, for oftentimes He says, speaking about this work, "I delight to do thy will." And Luke xii, 50, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened, till it be accomplished?" As it were, He could not tell the pain He was in till He was in pain; He longed to be lifted up between heaven and earth, and to have that said, "It is finished." And was not the third Person of the blessed Trinity most willing and content? Which He doth evidence, not only in that He furnished Christ with all gifts for this work, Isa. xlii, 1, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him:"; but likewise He manifested His will in this, that when Christ was under His sorest exercises, He was comforted by the consolation of the Spirit of God.

There is this second consideration to point out the mysteriousness of this act of offering up Himself for us, and it is this - Consider the highness of this person, and the deepness of His sufferings. Put these two together, and this will make you fall into a sea of wondering. O beloved, was not this mighty condescension, that He who was clothed with light as with a robe, and that He who was clothed with the garments of immortal glory, that He should have clothed Himself with that clothing of the nature of man? That He who was dwelling in light inaccessible, that He should now dwell in the tents of mortality?

And is not this a mystery, that He should descend into hell that we might ascend into heaven? And that He lay three days in the grave, that we might live with Himself in heaven through all the ages of eternity? And is not that a mystery, that the Ancient of Days, and Father of Eternity should become a child, and know an end of life and beginning of days? O Christians, bathe yourselves in the sweet thoughts of God incarnate; and if any of you come to plumb this deep, ye shall be like the shipmen, Acts xxvii, 28, the more and the farther ye go into this deep, ye shall see the more wonders there.

Then there is this last consideration that makes this act of Christ more mysterious, and it is this - What was the end of Christ's coming into the world, and of offering Himself up for us a sacrifice? It is set down in Rom. viii, 3, "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Might not Christ have come to condemn sinners? But, O, here is infinite love! He came to condemn that which condemned us. And I would only say this to you, shall neither the conquering grace of Christ, the restraining grace of Christ, nor the pardoning grace of Christ, provoke you to love Him?

Now that which secondly we shall speak to shall be this, to point out these advantages that flow to a Christian from this part, viz., Christ's priestly office, His dying for us. And there is this first advantage, Christ's death is the

evidence of our justification, and the cause of our sanctification, and the pledge of our glorification, and the hope of our eternal and complete victory, and the door of hope that shall make you sing, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” There are these four streams whereby we are brought to paradise. There is His justification, whereby He justifies us; there is His sanctification, whereby we that lay among the pots are made white as a dove; and His wisdom, whereby we are conducted to heaven; and His redemption, by His complete victory. And for the first, is it not clear that Christ’s death was an evidence of our justification? Heb. ix, 12, “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” And in verse 26, “But now once in the end of the world, hath He appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” By the solid faith of Christ’s death we may answer all objections. If ye could multiply objections throughout eternity, ye could have no answer but this, Christ hath died and is risen again. His resurrection is a great pillar of justifying faith; Rom. v. 1, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” All objections are answered in this, Christ has died and, risen again, Rom. viii, 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, making intercession for us.” Chapter v, 10, “For while we were enemies, we were reconciled by his death.” Faith’s great pillar, whereon it

is founded, is Christ's resurrection. And is not the death of Christ that which is the cause of our glorification? Itch. ix, 14, "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?" And Gal. vi, 14, where, speaking of the cross of Christ, he says, "By whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Also 1 Peter, i, 18, 19, "For as much as ye know, that we were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ," and 2 Cor, v. 14, 15, "For if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not live unto themselves, but unto God." Likewise is not Christ's death the pledge of your glorification? Did not Christ wear a crown of thorns, that ye might wear a crown of immortal glory? And did He not wear a purple robe, that ye might wear that robe of His righteousness? If Christ ascended up, then certainly He will draw all His members after Him. And likewise, Christ's death is the door of hope that ye have, to overcome your lusts. There is this that speaks Christ's victory, that He has in His person overcome principalities and powers, and has made an open shew of them. He has likewise overcome death and the grave; and that is an evidence of your victory and overcoming; for there is a great correspondence betwixt the head and the members.

There is this second advantage that comes to a person from Christ's death, and it is this - It may be a strong

argument to embrace and entertain Christ. It may stir us up to that duty, Song v. 2, “Open to me, my sister, my spouse, for my head is filled with the dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.” If Christ has died and now risen again, will not that persuade you to love Him? O what arguments will do with you? Does not the five wounds of His blessed body preach this doctrine to love Him?

There is this third advantage, that if the sufferings of Christ were believed, it were a compendious way to bring your souls under the constraining power of His love, 2 Cor., v. 14, “For the love of Christ constraineth us.” There is a sweet constraint of His love that it layeth upon the judgment, and that it lays on the affections: Christ’s love lays a constraint on a Christian’s judgment, that he thinks Him alone excellent; and it lays a constraint on his affections, and makes them burn within him, for love to enjoy the person loved.

There is this fourth advantage, that the way to heaven is now made manifest through the sufferings of Christ, Heb., viii, 8, 9, “I will make a new covenant with them, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers.” Believe it, there was a greater difficulty for Christians to go to heaven under the Old Testament dispensation than under the New. Christ is now crucified before your eyes; so that we are not to exercise faith in Christ as yet to come, but as already come; and certainly the sin

against the gospel shall be greater than it was under the law.

The fifth advantage is this, that if once ye believed that Christ died for sinners, then your unbelief would be put to an end. 1 Tim., 1, 15, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” and then he subjoins, “of whom I am chief.” And the great ground on which we say this is one of these two: If once you believe that Christ came over that infinite distance that was betwixt Him and man, how easily, think ye, that He will come over that infinite distance that is between you and Him? And there is this ground likewise, that Christ’s love is that which will bring your souls to the necessity of this love, and the impression of the preciousness of Christ, of Him who has perfected the work of your redemption.

The last advantage that comes to the person from Christ’s death is, it is an excellent way for a Christian to bring his soul to a divine detestation and hatred of sin, 2 Cor. v. 15, “That we should not live unto ourselves,” “For as Christ hath suffered for us, let us arm ourselves with the same mind, to cease from sin.” And there are these two things in Christ’s death to make sin most hateful to you: First, if ye look to the burden of sin, think ye not that it was a heavy burden that made Him cry out, “I am troubled, and exceeding sorrowful”? And was it not an infinite weight that made Him say, “If it be possible, let this

cup pass from me”? And the second thing which may make sin hateful to you is, to look on these sufferings because of sin. May ye not suppose that the justice of God was highly offended? Isa. liii, 10, “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him.”

Now, to shut up our discourse, we shall say to you these things: First, that Christ, s dying, is the immediate object of justifying faith. And the grounds of this assertion are these: That which formally justifies a sinner, must be the proper object of faith; therefore, it is Christ considered as dying. And there is this ground likewise, that Christ, as dying, is the proper object of justifying faith, and it is, that Christ, as in His relative excellencies, is the object of faith more than in His absolute excellencies; that is, Christ as He is God to us in these excellencies, more than the excellencies in Himself.

There is this second thing that I would say, and it is this, that a Christian should be much in the consideration of the eternity of this design of Christ’s dying, to be much in the consideration of the depth, and height, and length, and breadth of this design, that, ere ever the mountains were brought forth, this was decreed in heaven, that Christ behoved to die. And would ye know what was Christ’s exercise before the world was made? Ye may see it in Prov. viii, 30-31, “Rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth; and his delights were with the sons of men.” O! the believing of this would bring us to the faith of

these two things; to the faith of the infiniteness of His love, and the freeness of His love.

Likewise consider the height of His love, and the depth of His love; and that shews itself in this, in fixing such desires of His on such wretches as we are. Do ye not think, that if Christ should come a-suiting, He should have wooed such as were more fit than we were? But that He should have pitched His love on us who were clothed with sinfulness and necessity, having only these two ornaments to commend us to Him, who were wallowing in the mire; Ezek. xvi, 7, 8, “Thou has increased and waxen great, and art come to excellent ornaments, whereas thou wast naked and bare; and when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness.”

Then consider the breadth of His love, which vents itself in this, that He should have chosen us of all nations to be His first-born, and to set His delight upon us.

And now we shall shut up all with these three words:

(1) Were ye ever, through the consideration of His death, constrained to sit down and put your mouth in the dust?

(2) Were ye ever, on consideration of His death, constrained to love him, and cry out, “His love to us has been wonderfully great, passing the love of women!”

(3) Were ye never constrained to wonder at that union betwixt Him and us? Was never the death of Christ an effectual means to unite you to Christ by these two chains, faith and love?

And now I would point out the difference betwixt faith and love uniting to Christ.

And, first, faith is as the nail that unites the soul of a Christian to the soul of Christ, and love is the hammer that rooves [drives home] that nail, and fastens it.

The second difference is this; faith does draw the first lineaments and image of Christ upon a soul, but love perfects this image.

The third difference is, faith is that grace that is most sober in its actings; but love is most impatient in its actings. And faith may be called a rational grace. Believe it, it is no blind bargain to take Christ upon implicit faith. We shall give you this description of love. Love sets the soul in a sweet travelling towards God, as the centre and sweet rest of all. Love can find no rest in anything besides God.

And the last difference is, faith is that grace that first discovers the excellency of Christ to a Christian; but love solaces itself in these discoveries. Loves is born blind, and it knows nothing of itself, but when faith has discovered the excellencies of Christ, and cries forth, "It is good

for me to be here, and to make a tabernacle,” then love subscribes and seals that with an oath. Love has two idols, impatience and desire; it is impatient till it enjoy, and desires when it is enjoyed. Love is like the horse-leech, it cries, Give, give. It knows not what it is to be satisfied.

And would ye know when shall the first day of love’s satisfaction be? Certainly it shall be in that day when we shall be standing within the gates of the new Jerusalem. That day shall be the first day of love’s satisfaction. This is clear from Psalm xvii, 15, “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.” And that shall be when faith passes into possession, and hope into fruition and enjoyment of Jesus Christ, and faith and hope shall flee away and be no more; when we shall be made to walk by sight and vision, and not by faith. Christ was content to live thirty-three years amongst us, that we might live an eternity with Him. When they were going to make Christ a king, John vi, 15, He fled unto the mountains; but when they were going to put acrown of thorns upon His head, O how willing was He to that! And with what a divine submission and delight took He it! And yet how is Christ undervalued and slighted by us! Is He not wonderfully undervalued when He is sold for thirty pieces of silver! I fear there are many here that would sell Him for thirty pieces; yea, I fear, many would sell Him for less; only I would say to such, let them beware and stand in awe any

more to slight Jesus Christ. O slights and under- valuers of God, beware lest your destruction and everlasting desolation be suddenly approaching and drawing near. O Christians, shall never Christ be accounted precious by us? Blessed be the person whose portion and lot Christ is, and let all the congregation say, Amen. But cursed be that person by whom Christ is not accounted precious, and let all the congregation say, Amen.