

Sunday, February 19th sermon: "Our Great Intercessor -- The God of All Comforts (Pt 6)"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS,
by John Pittman Hey

Hebrews 2:16-18; Isaiah 53:12

God comforts His people, primarily by forgiving our sins, cleansing us from all unrighteousness, and reconciling us to Himself. Judgment is taken away, and everlasting life is promised!

One of the greatest metaphors God uses to comfort His people is that of the Shepherd and His sheep.

The metaphor refers to sheep being scattered, wandering away, and fleeing due to fear. These are pictures of the sins of the Lord's people, that cause them to disobey Him and leave Him.

But Christ is made like His people, so that He could die in our place, judged by God for our sins laid upon Him.

Because it is necessary that our Redeemer be made like the ones He will die to save, Isaiah points out this truth, that in some way, our Good Shepherd is made like His Own sheep!

Christ never sinned like His sheep do, or went astray, or turned to His Own way.

Rather, Isaiah lamented, that our Shepherd, our Savior, our Substitute, died like a sheep!

But in His humanity, our Lord Jesus is suited not only to die in our place, but also to intercede for us unto God. He is the God-man, Who is the ideal high priest for His people unto God.

Job lamented, during his great time of sorrow, confusion and oppression, that there was no intercessor between himself and God, to act on his behalf, to appeal for him unto God. Job despaired over the infinite disparity between God's crushing power, and Job's own weakness.

Christ is that longed-for "man in the middle" between us and God. Only Jesus is qualified to intercede for us to God, because only Jesus provides a perfect satisfaction in answer to all that God has against poor sinners.

Christ's sacrifice at Calvary puts away forever the wrath of God for our sin.

In Hebrews 2, Christ as God incarnate in human flesh is revealed both as the sacrifice to save His people from the power of death, and as the perfect High Priest to make reconciliation to God for us.

Christ is identified as the promised "seed of Abraham" by which God promised to bless all the nations one day.

Note the perfect efficiency of Christ, as both the man sacrificed unto God to take away our sins, and as the intercessor, the priest to present that sacrifice to God, and to plead its efficacy and sufficiency unto God.

Jesus in His humanity knows our weakness, our frailties, our temptations. He is at once the offering for our sin, and the presenter of that offering unto God. Thereby, He makes reconciliation for the sins of His people.

Christ reconciles us to God! He takes away the dispute God had against us for our sin. Truly, the "old account was settled long ago" by Jesus Christ!

Because Christ both offered Himself as God's Lamb, and presents as our High Priest that offering to God, He is able to ensure to us, that God is now satisfied with us for Jesus' sake.

Indeed, this conjoining of Christ as offering and priest was foretold in Isaiah 53. After Jesus was made the Lamb to die for the disobedient sheep, He was exalted to the heights of glory and honor by God on account of it!

But Isaiah concludes, that Christ's honor and reign are not only due to His offering for sin, which justifies us.

No, Christ is also exalted because He makes intercession for the transgressors.

Christ's work isn't done without interceding for His people! He presents and argues the perfection of His offering unto God on behalf of His sinful people, His lost sheep.

Jesus is both the intercessor, the High Priest presenting the offering to God, and He is Himself that offering for our sin.

Who is more qualified to represent the sacrifice as a perfect and sufficient offering to God, than His dear Son, Who made that offering to begin with?

The Father saw the travail of Christ's soul at Calvary, and was satisfied, and therefore it justified His lost sheep.

Christ then presses that satisfaction before God on our behalf as our intercessor, our advocate, our great High Priest.

Christ already had begun His intercession the night He was betrayed, when He prayed for Peter, that his faith wouldn't fail when the devil attacked him and caused him to stumble.

One final observation: at the cross, Jesus offered Himself "like a lamb led to the slaughter," in silence. He died like a quiet, docile Lamb for us!

But now Jesus speaks strongly for us! He intercedes for us! He pleads His Own body and blood on our behalf!

Charles Wesley put it best:

Arise, my soul, arise;
Shake off thy guilty fears;
The bleeding Sacrifice
In my behalf appears:
Before the throne my Surety stands;
My name is written on His hands.

He ever lives above,
For me to intercede;
His all-redeeming love,
His precious blood to plead;
His blood for sin did once atone,
And now it pleads before the Throne.

Five bleeding wounds He bears,
Received on Calvary,
They pour effectual prayers,
They strongly plead for me:
"Forgive him, O forgive," they cry,
"Nor let that ransomed sinner die!"

The Father hears Him pray,
His dear anointed One;
He cannot turn away
The presence of His Son;
His Spirit answers to the blood,
And tells me I am born of God.

I now am reconciled;
God's pard'ning voice I hear,
He owns me as His child,
I can no longer fear;
With confidence I now draw nigh,
And, "Father, Abba, Father," cry.