

ATTENTION: ASCENSION!

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This is not a Polemic Paper, but rather a positive Position Paper having to do with our **positional liberty** in Christ. It will set forth our **access to the Father and the Son for consistent fellowship and worship**.

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ." "God is faithful, by whom we are called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 John 1:3; 1 Cor. 1:9).

"For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (Phil. 3:3; John 4: 23,24).

This material is intended for those growing believers who know, at least doctrinally, that they have positionally died unto sin, and the first Adam. Now they are alive unto God in the glorified Last Adam, accepted in Him, complete in Him, crucified and ascended with Him who is now their Christian Life.

"Reckon ye also yourselves to have died indeed unto sin, but to be alive unto God in Jesus Christ." "To the praise of the glory of His grace, through which He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." "And ye are complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power" (Rom. 6:11; Eph. 1:6; Col. 2: 10).

As the Spirit of Christ ministers to us through the years, and we come to learn, believe, and know the above truths about ourselves as new creations in Christ, we are in the position to learn, believe, and know our position in Christ above.

"And [God] hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." "If ye then, be risen with Christ...set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1-3).

It is from this viewpoint, upon this heavenly ground, from this position in Christ, that we will consider some truths shared by one of the original Plymouth Brethren, Mr.

James Lampdon Harris (1793-1877). The title of his book is *Jewish Bondage and Christian Freedom, or Jewish and Christian Worship Contrasted*:

By way of contrast we are shown in Hebrews that those who are in Christ are made positionally perfect: "By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are [positionally] sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). Israel were "perfected" for a moment on the Day of Atonement; but even then not as "pertaining to the conscience"; the blood of their sacrifice could not touch that (Heb. 9:9).

Their worship, therefore, was in "the spirit of bondage unto fear" (Rom. 8:15). There could be no boldness (liberty) as we have by the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (p. 7).

Here we have a key issue. Anything pertaining to the Blood of the Lord Jesus is a crucial factor. Our position in the Holiest of All, in Christ before the Father, is procured by His shed Blood. Our rest in that heavenly position is maintained by that Blood. All is positional There. Our condition, no matter what its condition--even if sinless by moments--has nothing to do with that.

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who once were far off are made near by the Blood of Christ." "Having therefore, brethren, boldness [liberty] to enter into the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus" (Eph. 2:13; Heb. 10:19).

By the once-forever cleansing of the once-forever Christ-shed Blood on the Cross, we can rest in the Father's presence.

"Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." "The Blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.... If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (Col. 1:12; 1 John 1: 7,9).

Having "no conscience of sin" positionally before our Father is the basis for having a pure conscience before Him in our condition.

Liberty of conscience is the very essence of true worship. Not what men call liberty of conscience, but the ability to approach the Father without any sense of guilt upon the conscience. This, be it observed, is not presuming on innocence; neither is it the profession of unconsciousness of sin--for if "I know nothing of myself, yet am I not hereby justified"--but it is the fullest consciousness of sin, with the profession (let us hold it fast) that it has been forever put away by the one sacrifice of Christ offered once for all (p. 9).

All hinges upon our looking away from the indwelling first Adam, and by faith in the Word counting ourselves as new creations in Christ positioned at the right hand of the Father in heaven. As another early Brethren put it:

The desire of many is to connect the Lord Jesus with themselves on earth, instead of accepting their true position in Him where He is. When I look at this place, He is not here; and when I look at myself-naturally I am not fit for Him There. How happy then to know that I belong to the place and position where He is; and that through grace I am made suited to Him in the light as He is in the light; so that I set my mind and heart There, as the place and presence where my deepest joys are realized.

Where our position is concerned, all is based upon the finished work of the Cross.

No conscience can be at ease before the Father where anything depends upon what the person himself is doing or has to do. All must rest upon that which He has already, accomplished at Calvary. The worshiper must be once and forever purged by the Blood, or he must have conscience of sin.

The worshipers have been once and forever purged by His sacrifice once offered. By the will of God they have been positionally sanctified by the offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all. A living way has been opened for them through the Blood of Jesus into the Holiest of All. The place of worship is as much prepared for them to worship in by the Blood, as they by the same Blood are prepared to worship in it (p. 28).

John Darby's heart-burden was expressed over a century ago. Think of what it would be today:

It is the chief burden for me as regards the Church that they are as persons outside; not inside, entered through the rent veil, abiding in the light of the Father's countenance and gazing upon His Beloved Son in His own divine perfectness with the "eye" that the Holy Spirit gives.

It is not a matter of "conditioning" our condition for enablement to abide There, but rather abiding There where we are 'Blood-positioned'--from whence our condition is processed and developed. The "eye of faith" that the Spirit of Christ gives to the abiding believer is to be centered upon the Father and the Son.

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." "This I say then, Walk in

[dependence upon] the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (2 Cor. 3:17,18; Gal. 5:16).

To walk in the Spirit is to be centered in Christ in glory. The first-Adam life is not to be overcome, but, as alive unto God in Christ, we are to count ourselves as having died unto it. "I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20).

Are we not often false to Him in this matter? Do we not often harbor the thought that something yet remains to be done--either by ourselves or by Him in order to our drawing nigh? Do we not often thus become occupied with the circumstances of worship rather than the Object, the Substance, the Lord Jesus? Are we not often false to Him in questioning our title to draw nigh, because we find distance in our own hearts, as if it were the warmth of our affection, rather than the Blood of Jesus which brought us nigh? (p. 33).

The Great High Priest is abidingly in that place of worship; no ministration is wanting; He is the minister of the Sanctuary and of the true Tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. What then remains but for us to use our high privileges, and to listen to the Word: "Let us draw near" (Heb. 10:22) (p. 29).

If we are not yet established in the truth that we have died to sin, and are now alive unto God in Christ Jesus, we will be unable to rest in Him as positioned in the Holiest of All. And this is to be remembered and heeded when we are leading another along--no rushing ahead, no skipping over the progression of growth truth.

The Holiest of All is alone open to those who have been once and forever purged. If our faith and hope spring not from that within the veil, where is our steadfastness? Where is our peace and rest? Where is our face-to-face fellowship with the Father and the Son? Everything short of that may be shaken--and will be shaken. If therefore we know not accomplished righteousness in Christ, fitting us now for the Holiest of All, the peace of our souls must be unsteady (p. 40).

Our hope of resting in our position is independent of ourselves--all hangs on the immutable faithfulness of our Father--it is secured by the Blood of His Beloved Son, and it is already made fast within the veil. Beware of mock humility, which is only the cover of unbelief and self-dependence. Look at yourself and you are hopeless; look at the Lord Jesus and know your sure hope. Let this check all wavering, and answer every doubt and every difficulty. In spite of all feelings and appearances, hold fast the profession of hope without wavering (p. 42).

None of the key truths and phases of our growth, such as our acceptance, our completeness, our crucifixion, our reckoning, our ascended position in Him at the

Father's right hand, is an end in itself. It must be from position to Person! The goal is that we may know Him, that our fellowship and worship may be in the presence of the Father and the Son.

Each ongoing truth and development is predicated on the former, to the end that all may be centered in the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. Many contemporary ministries claim to include the positional truths, but their focus is upon self, or the law, or the kingdom, or Satan and his demons.

How needful for us in our resting in our position of worship in the Holiest of All to remember that we have died to self, sin, Satan, law, and the world--and that we are now alive unto the Father in the Son. All that is contrary to this heavenly life has been set aside in the death of the Cross. "For ye died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). And it is only as alive from the dead that we rest in Him where He is (p. 38).

Mr. J.B. Stoney, another of the early Brethren, asked and answered the plaintive question:

Why do saints enjoy hearing of all that Christ is to us and at the same time are, apparently at least, uninterested in all that He is in His own heavenly circle of things? Because they like Him to come to their side, but are not drawn to His side (*Letters III:112*).

And do we not see that Christians regard the teaching and preaching with which God blesses them far more highly than fellowship with and worship of Him? This is a sure consequence of not remembering the Holiest of all--our position for a life of growth, service, fellowship, and worship (p. 126).

As for the maturing Christian life, the Holy Spirit builds all upon the rightly-divided truth, and that centered in the ascended and glorified Lord Jesus Christ. The clearer the truths are seen, the simpler the faith.

Put yourself in the place of a believing Hebrew on a solemn feast day in Jerusalem--one of the three thousand converted by the first sermon of Peter. Multitudes from all quarters would be assembled around him--Jerusalem filled with worshipers--while he would be apart from all that which attracted them. But would not his soul have many a struggle in keeping away from the festival and its religious throng? Would he not have appeared an enemy to his country and to the temple? But was it really so?

Think further of the contrast he must in his own soul have seen between the upper chamber, or any other unpretentious locality, and the splendid temple. Must it not

have required much simple faith in the Lord Jesus, to meet together for worship with a number as unaccredited as himself, without any visible priest to order their worship, any sacrifice, any incense, any altar?

Would not the multitude keeping holy-day give as it were the lie to the worship he had been engaged in, as if it had been no worship at all? Surely there is great force in the words, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10:25) (pp. 45,46).

The Lord Jesus' death on the Cross and His ascension into Glory were not only to save us from hell, but to bring us to Himself, and that even now. "For our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20).

The Great High Priest is alone suitable for those who have come to the Father through and in Him. Into what an elevated position then has that one Sacrifice brought us! No place under heaven is suitable for our worship. [He does not come here into our midst; we are to rest in Him There for that, and all else.] Worship therefore should ever be from our position in the ascended Lord Jesus Christ (p. 73).

The blessedness of the ministry of Him who ministers for us in the true Tabernacle is, that it is entirely independent of us. What could be contributed to that? It is by Him for us. He is the faithful minister, ever performing His function in a manner well-pleasing to the Father, whether we realize the value of what He is doing or not.

Every saint is upheld by His intercession, even in his most thoughtless mood. Priesthood is part of the work of grace--grace that provides for the putting away of every sin, and aiding in every infirmity, and bearing our every waywardness, in order that we may never be out of the presence of our Father (p. 99) .

His ministry on our behalf is marked by the same grace now as when He was on earth. His intercession is of the same grace; it is according to His own divine and gracious estimate of our many and constant deeds. In our practical danger, weakness, and foolishness, He knows the Father sees us--and He makes intercession for us accordingly, maintaining us There in His own fragrant perfection (p. 101).

As always, the great need today is to rightly divide the Word of truth, and to allow Paul to establish us in our heavenly position in Christ. No Scripture outside the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews was designed for that. We are not to neglect any part of the Word, but not all has to do with our heavenly position in Christ.

There was a worldly sanctuary; there is yet, in the coming dispensation, to be a worldly sanctuary; but now there is none. Existing systems are variously

compounded of things proper to these three periods. Some have drawn from the past, some from the future, some, it may be, mostly from the present; but all involves sad confusion--the sin of mingling things heavenly and things earthly (pp. 110,111).

It is indeed difficult to have to wind one's way through things so perplexing as the religious systems of our own day (1860). We have to avoid, on the one hand, systems more characterized by anticipation of things future. We have to allow that such things were once given by God, and that they will yet again be introduced by Him, while firmly contending that they are positively opposed to His present workings.

If the order of a worldly sanctuary is introduced, our worship must be degraded, and our souls become lean. Such results must ensue if we take for our pattern the worldly sanctuary, instead of by faith in the Word, and as led of the Spirit, entering into that which is heavenly. There all is done--there we have subject for thanksgiving and praise only (p. 127).

If the Word of truth is rightly divided (2 Tim. 2:15), the result will be heavenly, Christ-centered worship. Anything less than that is a tragic landfall, a shortfall.

Paul teaches us to give "thanks unto the Father who hath made us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12). This shows the true position for thanksgiving and praise to be what grace has accomplished for us in Christ. But if this is not seen and remembered, worship must become a burden rather than our highest privilege (p. 128).

A few more closing thoughts to provide further encouragement to rest in Him where He is:

Two things that mark the Christian in this world are fellowship with the Lord Jesus in His death here where He died, and fellowship with Him in His life where He is now. If anyone is truly in the first (2 Cor. 4:11), his only rest is in the second, and therefore abiding in Him is the "anchor of the soul." --J.B. Stoney

Deliverance from our unfruitful condition will be occupation with the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6), and, by the enabling of His Spirit, a refusal to be occupied with ourselves. --Doleman

The moment we begin to rest our peace on anything in ourselves, we lose it. And this is why so many saints have not settled peace. Only by having it in the Father's own way can we have peace--by not resting it on anything, even the Spirit's work within us, but on what the Lord Jesus has done wholly apart from us.

Then we will have peace; conscious unworthiness, but yet peace. The more we see the extent and nature of the evil that is within, as well as that without and around, the more we will find that what the Lord Jesus is, and what He has done, is the only ground at all on which we can rest. --J.N. Darby

The heart that is captivated by an object can never rest until it is with the one who has won it; for satisfaction you must be where He is. Love really does not think of anyone but its Object; and then, at rest about itself, it studies the mind and heart of its Object. --J.B.S.

I find that the Lord Jesus loved me and gave Himself for me when I was in a most unattractive state; but He makes me positionally suitable to Himself, and I am assured of the permanency of His love and of my association with Him that my heart is free to learn of Him. The more I am in His company, the more I acquire the tastes and characteristics which answer to His heart and mind (2 Cor. 3:18). --J.B.S.

The work of the Lord Jesus now is to occupy me with Himself. It is clear that in spirit I am up There in all His beauty and acceptance, and now I am to live down here, not as a comely and excellent man, but as the Lord Jesus manifest in my body (2 Cor. 4:10). And He who sustains me up There in all the brightness of His glory, is the same One who has to do with me in all my weakness and need down here in this scene of darkness and death. --J.B.S.