

The Source of Our Confession

Unless we are men and women who are shockingly deceived, we must acknowledge that we stand “naked and exposed” before God “to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:12-13). His Word is the standard for our lives. We know that, apart from Jesus Christ, we would stand condemned (1 Corinthians 10:12). Our sins are ever before us; we’re helpless, in and of ourselves, to remedy our situation. We can’t hide our sin or our sinful motivations and yet God’s love, grace and mercy comes to his people every day! Why would he give so much to those who are completely unworthy? This series of articles will investigate Hebrews 4:14-16, a passage that focuses on prayer. Those who are blessed to be able to draw near to God in prayer are those who look to Jesus as:

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Hebrews 4:14-16 prepares us for an extended discussion in several upcoming chapters about the priesthood of Jesus Christ that’s briefly touched on in Hebrews 2:17 and 3:1. In 2:17 we’re told that Jesus is a “merciful and faithful high priest,” and that he has “made propitiation for the sins of the people.” That is to say that, by his atoning sacrifice, he turned back the *wrath of God* against those for whom Christ died. We also saw that he was “made like his brothers in every respect;” he took on humanity that “through death he might...deliver all us from the fear of death” (2:14-15). In 3:1 we’re told that Jesus was the “apostle and high priest of our confession.” As our “high priest” he “is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God.” (5:1).

From our passage in Hebrews 4:14 we learn that the “great high priest..., Jesus, has passed through the heavens...” Unlike earthly Jewish high priests that went in to the holy of holies in the Tabernacle and later the Temple to represent the people before God once a year, Jesus, the “great high priest,” has “passed through the heavens” and is continually in the very presence of God interceding on behalf of his people (Romans 8:34). With all of this being true, the writer of Hebrews exhorts us to “...hold fast our confession.” What is our confession? The apostle Paul lays out our confession very succinctly: “[I]f you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” (Romans 10:9-10). So it’s Jesus—his person and his work—who is the *source of our confession*. Our sins are forgiven in Jesus. He has robed us in his righteousness.

Jesus himself spoke of the importance of confessing him before men. Our confession of Jesus can never be in private words only—although it can never be less than that. Our confession must be in what we say as well as in the way we live before God and others. In Matthew 10:32-33 Jesus said: “Everyone therefore who confesses me before men, I also will confess him before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny him before my Father who is in heaven.” Sadly, many people have confessed that they

believe in Jesus only to renounce their faith when they found it difficult or inconvenient to stand for Jesus (Matthew 13:21). In contrast to that, throughout the history of the Church many have held fast to their confession even when it cost them their lives.

During the time of the Protestant Reformation, a young woman by the name of Anne Askew would often pass out tracts that spoke of salvation in Jesus Christ. She would talk with anyone who would listen about the glories of the gospel and her thankfulness for Jesus. She was arrested, tried and later convicted of being a heretic. She was beaten until many of her bones were broken and she fainted. Still, she was unwilling to recant her beliefs. She was sentenced to death by fire. Just before she succumbed to the flames she prayed these words: "Lord, I heartily desire of thee, that thou wilt of thy most merciful goodness forgive them, that violence which they do and hath done to me. Open also thou their blind hearts that they may hereafter do that right thing in thy sight...." Anne Askew was 25 years old. By God's grace, may we too "hold fast our confession" (4:14) in good times and bad. What a blessing to know that God delights to hear and answer the prayers of his people.

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