

More than Adam Lost

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Jesus reigns adored by angels, Man with God is on the throne; Mighty Lord, in thine ascension, We by faith behold our own. (Christopher Wordsworth)

I stood on the touchline, hoping I would be chosen to play for my school. I loved the hot, physical game, of Rugby football and had been training hard, hoping to be included in the school team. But Gareth was better at scrum-half than I was, so until now my chance had never come.

As the season had progressed, many besides me had seen Gareth's performance slipping. It was clear he had lost form and now the school selectors were considering changes. Suddenly, I heard my name. I felt great! I was walking on air. I'd been chosen to play scrum-half!

As I looked at Gareth, I saw his face darken. He was angry with me, as though I were to blame for his not being chosen. For the rest of that season he did everything he could to beat me into the mud at games practice. He changed character completely and seemed willing to stoop to any foul that would enable him to win. At times I felt he was deliberately trying to injure me.

None of this escaped the notice of the team trainer, who finally dropped Gareth from reserve position, keeping me on the team for another full season. People who lose position in life often resent those who take their place. Even though they may have lost it because of their own failings, they tend to shift the blame and take it out on those who fill their former position.

That's how it is with the devil, who hates hearing us give praise and worship to God.

Long before God created humankind, or this world as we know it, he created the angelic orders. There is an intriguing biblical suggestion that those angels were led in worship by Lucifer, a superb musician and choir director: 'You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones' (Ezekiel 28:14).

Lucifer had a privileged position near the throne. With outspread wings he conducted angelic worship until expelled from God's presence for his proud and rebellious heart. Having experienced the pleasure and power of worship more than any other creature, the devil has become envious of the privileges enjoyed by redeemed men and women and is filled with bitter memories of the position and joys he has lost.

After Satan fell (Isaiah 14:11-15), Adam came crashing down, too, and the fountain of praise from his once-innocent lips was stopped. A blight fell upon his sinful progeny:

man's capacity for praise and worship was decimated. But man's fall has not changed God's creative purpose for him-whose chief end is to glorify and enjoy God for ever.

God has stepped into millions of lives bent on self-destruction and changed their grief and hurt to praise. One such was Alan. I had just closed the Sunday morning meeting and the musicians were putting their instruments away when suddenly this young teenager bounded up to the platform. He threw his arms around me, held me tightly and sobbed and sobbed. I didn't quite know what to do other than hold him and let him cry.

After a few minutes I looked at young Alan and said, 'What is it, son?' He began to pour out to me the hurt, the rows that had gone on between his mum and dad and the deteriorating home situation until finally, that week, his dad had left. He didn't know where his dad had gone, and he didn't know if he was ever coming back.

Looking at me, Alan reminded me, 'You said today that God is a God of love. You said God loves us and wants us to be happy and blessed. You said that God would give us our longings. I want my dad to come back home.'

'Alan,' I replied, 'let's ask God together for that, and I promise that if you trust him you won't be disappointed.' We knelt together by the chair on the platform and as I put my arm around him he began to pray a tearful prayer.

Finally, when he had finished, I remained for a few minutes with my arm around his shoulders and we thanked, praised and worshipped God. There is a wonderful liberation of the soul in worship.

Ten or twelve days later I got a phone call from young Alan to say his dad was home and they were all coming to the church meeting. That Sunday they stood in the meeting, Alan radiant, mum and dad looking sheepish but still managing to give me a smile.

As I closed the meeting in prayer the whole family walked forward. I went down to speak with them and had the joy of leading the father to Christ. Together we worshipped.

Redeemed men and women all over the world enjoy more in Christ than Adam ever lost. For in Christ we have risen higher than Adam ever was, and praise before the throne is now our permanent privilege. As Isaac Watts so aptly expressed it:

***In Christ the tribes of Adam boast
More blessings than their father lost.***

More blessings in the sense that Adam was the earthly man whereas we are of heaven (1 Corinthians 15:47-48). Adam was confined to earth in his rule-we are seated in heavenly places in Christ. Adam had a walk and talk with God each evening in Eden-we are indwelt by God and our fellowship never ceases. It's all day, every day!

To Adam, God was always outside. Much as he enjoyed God's presence and felt the compatibility of his nature with God's, his was never the joy of the redeemed.

We have a song to sing of mercy and grace that has brought us from a condition lower than that in which Adam was created and given us a place higher than Adam ever experienced. Ours is the privilege of being at home in heaven and on earth. In the Spirit we have access to the highest heavens at any time, and we have the privilege of enjoying God on earth in any situation, at any moment, because he dwells within.

What would dare stop us going on to experience the fullness of such blessing, exploring the extent of its possibilities, breaking into new realms of its power? This is what God wants for all of us-that we progress in our union with him.

Nothing will enable us to do that more effectively than preparing ourselves through worship for the working of his Holy Spirit. Closing in with God in wonder, love and praise where he can at any time speak, direct and move. Climbing beyond Adam's best to limitless dimensions of praise and worship-here and now.