

Hebrews 7:25-28

Jesus Christ the Perfect Priest

Jesus' permanent priesthood is eternal because He abides forever.

In contrast to the Levitical priests who had to be replaced each time one of them died, Jesus Christ is the eternal High Priest. Jesus is superior to Aaron and the Levitical priesthood. If perfection could have come from the old order then a new priesthood would never have come into existence. On the cross the Righteous One died for the unrighteous. This gives great confidence that we will never perish. He is our security. There will never be an annulment of His new and better covenant. The writer of Hebrews calls it "the eternal covenant" (Heb. 13:20). Our righteousness rests upon His saving grace. The Christian is "justified by faith apart from the works of the law."

The old Levitical priesthood would pass away, but the priesthood of Jesus Christ can never pass away. God swore by an oath that it would be an eternal priesthood. "The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, 'You are a priest forever'" (Hebrews 7:21). Therefore, Jesus is our guarantee that His priesthood and our salvation will last forever. Jesus is the guarantee of a better covenant with God. This new covenant is based upon the perfect sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.

"Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25, NASB95). Unless otherwise noted all Scriptures are from the New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update.

The perfect priest provides a perfect salvation for sinners,

"He is able to save them to the uttermost." What a great Savior! "He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him" (NET Bible). Jesus is able to save the sinners "forever who draw near to God." Jesus is able to save believing sinners in totality to the point of an unending eternal salvation. He saves the whole person from the penalty of sin for all time and eternity.

The writer of Hebrews uses the word *aparabatos* which is a legal word meaning Jesus' priesthood is unalterable, non-transferable, and inviolable. He is able to do this because His priesthood is permanent, unchangeable, and perpetual. The priesthood of Christ does not pass to another because it is an everlasting priesthood. He continues forever because He holds His priesthood permanently. It will not be transferred to anyone else. This is His priesthood and no one else will ever receive it. It is not going to pass to another like the Levitical priests.

John Calvin said, "There is no death that prevents Christ from performing His office. Therefore He is the only and the perpetual priest." He is the one and only priest. No one can ever take His priesthood from Him. He lives to make intercession for us. "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

The apostle Paul said, "Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him" (Romans 6:9). The resurrected, ascended Christ spoke to John the apostle on Patmos saying, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades'" (Revelation 1:17-18). The power of His indestructible life makes Him an eternal priest. Death cannot bring His priesthood to an end.

How could we have assurance of salvation if we hoped to draw near to the eternal God through a priest who was subject to death? Jesus is able to save absolutely, totally, fully and completely. What a Savior!

But what if we sin? Will we lose our salvation? "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2). Only Jesus Christ is the all-sufficient Savior. How tragic if we depend upon our self, our own virtue, our good works, faithfulness, etc. as a guarantee for salvation. We are sinners, and will be until the day we die, but thank God there is a fountain that has been opened that cleans us from all sin (1 John 1:6-10).

The one who died as our substitute on the cross, rose from the dead, and now continues as our sole and ever living High Priest. This guarantees our salvation. The unbroken, never-ending intercession with the Father on our behalf is our guarantee of eternal life.

Our salvation is wholly based on the all-sufficient, once for all, completed death of Christ on the cross. The risen Christ is in the presence of the Father. Therefore His priestly work is unending. B. F. Westcott said, "The modern description of Christ pleading in heaven His passion, 'offering His blood,' on behalf of men has no foundation in the Epistle. His glorified humanity is the eternal pledge of the absolute efficacy of His accomplished work. He pleads, as the older writers truly expressed the thought, by His Presence on the Father's Throne."

The perfect character of our great High Priest Jesus Christ

"For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26).

Jesus alone is God's holy one.

The word "holy" (*hosios*) is a personal holiness. Jesus is pure in the eyes of God the Father. His holy life displayed the moral characteristics which honors God's holiness. This is not the word *hagios* that is used to denote consecrated, separated to God. We believers are saints, meaning we are separated to God. Jesus is *hosios* meaning He is morally perfect in the eyes of His Father in heaven.

The word has a messianic connotation. The apostles Paul and Peter picked up on this idea in their sermons on the death and resurrection of Christ. They both quote portions of Psalm 16:8-11 calling Jesus "the Holy One."

Our great High Priest is holy and only He can make us holy in the eyes of a holy God. The only High Priest capable of officiate before God on behalf of desperately wicked depraved sinners was one who was holy. Jesus was absolutely pure in His nature. There was no human depravity in Him. Jesus could say clearly "the ruler of the world is coming, he has nothing in Me" (John 14:30). There was nothing in Christ to which the evil one could make an appeal. Jesus was the Holy One.

Jesus is "innocent" or "blameless."

He is free from all evil (*kakos*). His life is absent of all that is bad and wrong. He is blameless, innocent, and guileless. We by contrast are inescapably evil because of our depravity. The idea is an entire absence of evil thought and there is not the slightest taint of malice in this attitude and thinking. He has no evil in His heart. He was pure in heart.

Our "innocent" (*akakos*) substitute became our sin-bearer. There is no evil in Him. He is guileless, free from malice and evil. The apostle Paul declared, "He [God the Father] made Him [Jesus His Son] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). And Peter has the same conviction when he says Christ was sinless when He bore our sins in His body on the cross.

Then he adds, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit" (1 Peter 3:18).

Jesus was "undefiled."

Amiantos tells us Jesus is absolutely free from any blemish that would keep Him from entering into the presence of a holy God. Nothing impure hindered His priestly work. A blemished lamb could not be offered as a sacrifice. The Levitical priests became defiled when they came in contact with dead bodies. How significant that Jesus raised the dead! There was nothing about Jesus that would impair His sacrificial offering for our sins. He was without defilement, stainless, untainted.

Because the Levitical priests were stained with sin they had to first offer a sacrifice for themselves before they could offer one for the people. Jesus could offer Himself as a perfect sacrifice because He was undefiled as "a lamb without blemish or spot." The apostle Peter wrote, "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19). The sacrifice of Jesus was wholly acceptable to God as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Jesus was "separated from sinners."

Jesus lived among sinners and came away unscathed. The depravity of the world had no effect upon Him. He came through sinless. Earlier the author said, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus is not a sinner. John Calvin said, "He is described as separated from us, not because He rejects us from His society, but because He is uniquely distinguished from us in that He is free from all defilement."

John Owen wrote, "He was every way, in the perfect holiness of His nature and His life, distinguished from all sinners." Moreover, he may have in mind the moral separation in which His entire life was separated from the contamination of our depravity. He did not buy into our world system. He came to do the Father's will and seek first the Kingdom of God. Everyone is a sinner, and He is the exception. He is free from all uncleanness. Jesus had no need to be set apart in a ceremonial way because He was morally separated from sinners.

Jesus touched the lepers and they were cleansed. He came into contact with death, and the dead came back to life. He was tempted by the Devil for forty days, and Jesus came away spotless and undefiled.

How could Jesus have offered that perfect sacrifice for sin if He were not separated from sin?

Jesus is "exalted above the heavens."

No doubt the author has in mind the resurrection, ascension, exaltation, glorification and eternal reign of Christ. It is the realm in which Jesus now lives. The writer of Hebrews began his work saying when Jesus "made purification of sin, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3). No one or anything is exalted more highly than our great God and Savior! (Phil. 2:9-11)

Only the sinless Savior can save sinners.

The perfect priest offered the perfect sacrifice for sin.

Jesus "does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself" (Hebrews 7:27). In this verse I think the writer has in mind both the daily sacrifices of the priest and the great sacrifice of the Day of Atonement. He blends the two sacrifices in his general description for emphasis so he can contrast the perfect offering of Christ. The contrast by emphasis is the one perfect sacrifice, the sinless Son of God offered once and

for all when He offered Himself as a sacrifice. The focus is on the finality of Christ's offering; He does it "once for all."

Jesus did not need to offer a sin offering for Himself because He was sinless.

Jesus had no need to daily purify Himself and renew His sacrifice like the other priests. Because they were sinners the Levitical high priest in Judaism had to first offer a sacrifice to cover his own sins and the sins of his family. "Then Aaron shall offer the bull for the sin offering which is for himself, that he may make atonement for himself and for his household. . . . Then Aaron shall offer the bull of the sin offering which is for himself and make atonement for himself and for his household, and he shall slaughter the bull of the sin offering which is for himself" (Leviticus 16:6, 11).

Jesus was sinless; therefore He did not have to offer a sin for Himself. He was the perfect High Priest who offered the perfect offering. Jesus is the priest and He is the offering.

Jesus offered the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Because Jesus was sinless and undefiled He could offer one perfect sacrifice for sinners. It was once-for-all, never to be repeated. What a contrast His sacrifice of Himself is to the old covenant sacrifices that had to be repeated year after year.

Jesus is the sinless Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29, 36). The apostle Peter declared: "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

The constant repetition of animal sacrifices could not take away sin. They could not pay the sin debt. Only the Messiah could offer the one sacrifice that could pay our sin debt. He was anointed of God to take away sin. He did it once for all. The word "once" in verse 27 means "once for all."

The author of Hebrews gives us beautiful summary statement. "For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever" (Hebrews 7:28). The "oath" God made came long after the giving of the law. David wrote Psalm 110 centuries after the law was given by Moses. Thus, the appointment of Christ as High Priest is complete and permanent.

This present tense indicates that when this letter was being written the Levitical priesthood was still functioning at the Jerusalem temple.

Jesus is able to save for all eternity those who call upon His name. Are you carrying a heavy load of guilt? Have you become weary of your load day after day, night after night? "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). There is no one else to turn to. Only Jesus saves. Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). That was the conviction of the apostle Peter as he concluded one his great messages just after the resurrection of Christ. "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Believers alone enjoy the salvation Christ gives. We come to God through Him.

Jesus offered Himself as the payment for sin when He died on the cross. That was a once for all sacrifice that can never be repeated. "Nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him" (Hebrews 9:25-28). He will again write a little later:

"By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. . . but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:10, 12, 14).

By His death Jesus draws sinful men to God. He cleanses and forgives and brings us into the presence of the Lord God. "He made purification of our sins," and "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3).

Jesus, the Son of God incarnate is still our High Priest who is exalted to the right hand of Majesty. He is ever active in the presence of God the Father for us. The great purpose of God in the mystery of redemption by Jesus Christ is the salvation of His elect unto the praise of the glory of His grace. Listen to the words of Jesus. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

He is listening for your voice right now. Have you called upon His name for salvation? He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for you. He does this continually. He is always ready to hear your voice.

Not only does He want to, He is also able to save you. All power is His, abundant sufficiency of ability to fulfill what He has designed by grace. He is not powerless. He has never left an unfinished project, and you are His project.

He is also listening for the voice of every believer. His office is all-sufficient to meet every need of His people. You and I cannot live the Christian life. It is forever Christ living His life in and through us. The only way we can live the Christian life is to put into practice the promises of God's Word through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Christ is seated on His priestly-kingly throne making intercession for you and me right now. I have wonderful Christian people tell me consistently I am praying for you Wil and your ministry. I pray for you every Sunday morning as you speak on the radio. I pray for your evangelism workshops and conferences. I appreciate that. But there is someone else who is praying for me right now. It is my great intercessor and mediator, the Son of God. He is making intercession for me. He wants me to succeed today. He wants you to be all that He has designed for you to be in Him. A complete salvation is an everlasting one. What God began He will continue. He will see it through to its completion.

The apostle Paul tells us the goal Christ has for every one of His children. "God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me" (Colossians 1:27-29). You and I cannot do that by ourselves. But God in His grace has made provision for us through our great High Priest. Christ will not accomplish part of our salvation and then leave what remains to us or to others to accomplish. It is His work, all of it.

John Owen said, "Christ is able to save unto the uttermost, yet all are not saved by Him." It may be that you have never called upon Christ to save you. You can right now because He is listening for your voice. He knows your heart and He is ready to save you this very moment. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." The apostle Paul said, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). Only those who come to God by faith in Christ are saved.

John Own said, "All false religion is but a choice of other things for men to place their trust in with a neglect of Christ. And all superstition, instances of it, be they great or small."

Series: Hebrews

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