

# **A Better Priest**

## **Hebrews 7:23-28**

Today we are coming to the last vista point in our long drive up the mountain of God's glory. We are arriving at the place where we get to drink in the beauty of the Son of God, who has been the sole topic and theme of the whole letter of Hebrews. He is now the singular focus for this week's text, and the beauty of what we see takes our breath away!

### **Hebrews 7:23-28**

*The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*

*For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.*

### **Permanence of the Priest**

The Writer is once again bringing into contrast Jesus' role as priest over and above that of the human institution of the Levitical Priesthood established by Moses. This time the contrast is on the power of the prayers of the high priest and the personhood of the priests.

The focus of the Writer for Jesus' being the guarantor of this covenant of grace is found in the fact of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. His resurrection is proof of His power as the priest, as well as the surest justification for His role as the perfect and sinless priest for His people.

Jesus' resurrection from the dead was something which gave the early Christians the greatest courage and zeal to spread the gospel and stand firm in the face of the trials that they would face. Before the resurrection of Jesus, they were afraid, hiding in their homes, fearful of being taken away and executed too. But after seeing Jesus raised from the dead, a physical body which could never taste death again since it passed through death and came out still alive, the disciples were full of courage, zeal, power, and joy!

The resurrection was not something which was doubted in the first century. It was widely accepted as fact, what was debated and doubted was the significance of the resurrection: what does it mean?

*Now, there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call Him a man, for He was a doer of wonderful works – a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to Him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ; after Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned Him to the cross, those that loved at the first did not forsake Him, for He appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning Him... – **Flavius Josephus***

So, what does it mean that Jesus rose from the dead under His own power three days later? What are the implications for this reality?

### **Resurrection Gives Permanence**

The first thing that the Writer tells us is that Jesus' resurrection give Him the permanence as the High Priest of His people. Because He lives and will never taste death again, He continues forever as our priest.

There is no other person that we must turn to for forgiveness of sins or hope than in Jesus. His resurrection brings the permanence to His office, securing it forever. The former priesthood was prevented from serving by death, their office as priest ceased at death. And theologically this is a great thing because if they were permanent in the way that Jesus is, that would mean that the Law they minister would be the permanent Law for God's people, and we have seen in previous sermons that this Law was weak and useless. How gracious that God would not allow this Law to be the prevailing covenant for His people, for it only compounded the death sentence for His people. How gracious it is that God would make permanent the High Priest of the Covenant of Grace, the primary way by which we now and forever relate to God!

Thanks be to God that the permanent covenant is the covenant of Grace! The permanent priest for His people is the One who is the guarantor for this covenant and that it is eternally secured through the resurrection!

### **Resurrection Brings Power**

*Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith – that I may know him and the power of*

*his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. – **Philippians 3:8-11***

Save us forever. There is no change in our position and status before God due to Jesus' resurrection. Just as His resurrection secures His office forever, it also secures our salvation forever. He is the firstfruit of what is to come for God's people. There is nothing in our lives which God cannot save, cannot redeem, cannot heal, cannot transform. No matter how vile we feel, no matter how entrenched sin is, no matter how seemingly impossible a situation is, Jesus saves to the uttermost!

## **Resurrection Guarantees Prayer**

### **Make Intercession**

#### ***For whom is Jesus interceding?***

*But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous... – **1 John 2:1***

This doesn't mean that the Father is constantly looking down at us with a frown, needing to be reminded of our reconciliation with Him, but it means that our Advocate has pleaded our cause so thoroughly, so satisfactorily, so convincingly that the Father is satisfied and pleased. Our Advocate defends our cause and is Himself the surest proof of our right standing before the Father. Notice that the word John uses is the word with, meaning along with the Father. Not before the Father, but in conjunction with the Father, Jesus is our Advocate; the One who can truly defend and represent us, being Himself one and the same as us. We have both Father and Son who are on our side, interceding for us. Is there anything more encouraging or empowering than to know that both the Father and the Son are for us, and that none can ever stand against us?

#### ***Against whom is Jesus interceding?***

### **Satan**

*And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world— he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb... – **Revelation 12:9-11***

Satan is constantly accusing us of our wrongdoing, our sin, our guilt, our shame. He seeks to consistently remind us of these things, and seeks to steal our joy, and cast

doubt on God's love for us. He has been doing this from the very beginning with Adam and Eve, and has continued to be his primary way of attacking God's people.

*There is nothing that so characterizes all the activities of Satan as his subtlety. His is not only able and powerful, he is subtle... The one thing he desires to do is to ruin and destroy the work of God; and there is no work of God which he is more anxious to destroy than the work of grace in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, from the moment we become Christian, we become the special object of Satan's attention... The moment we become Christian the devil is particularly concerned to get us down, and he has no more successful way of doing that than to make us miserable... it is because we belong to God that the devil will do his utmost to disturb and upset us. He cannot rob us of our salvation, thank God, but while he cannot rob us of our salvation he can make us miserable. He can, if we are foolish enough to listen to him, seriously limit our enjoyment of our salvation. – D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. – John 10:10*

## **Ourselves**

At times we need to be defended against ourselves. How often are we the most critical of ourselves. You have heard the saying I am my own worst enemy. This is true for most all of us. We know our greatest faults, sinful proclivities, twisted motivations, strongest fears, and hidden desires. It can be so easy to condemn ourselves for ourselves, yet this stifles godly enjoyment of salvation, and kills the good fruit of the Spirit. This does not mean that we do not have a right or correct estimation of ourselves, but that we must see that in light of the grace of God in our lives and the work of God's grace through His Spirit and the various means of that grace. We need Jesus to intercede for us when we viciously and savagely accuse ourselves. The role that the Spirit plays in this is to pray for us when we do not know how to pray

*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God... – Romans 8:26-27*

The will of God for us is to live as His beloved children, in joy, delight, and dependence. This means that we must take in God's truth and believe it for ourselves. We must take God at His word that we are forgiven and free. We must take God at His word that He actually loves us, that He is actually for us, that He actually gives to us all that we need and more! Who are you listening to in your life? Satan? Yourself? The World? Or our Father who knows us more intimately than we will ever know ourselves, and loves us more fiercely and faithfully than we will ever know?

# Personhood of the Priest

## Fitting: Beauty and Rightness

### Punishment Fits the Crime

Right that sin is dealt with the way God planned

Beauty in seeing a man die for His friends to set them free

*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.  
– John 15:13*

### Praise for God's Glory

Brings beauty to God in making Jesus the High Priest and Sacrifice for the elect

### People of God's Delight

God looks on us with beauty to see us free and reconciled!

*For you are a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth... – Deuteronomy 14:2*

*He rescued me, because He delighted in me. – Psalm 18:19*

*As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. – John 15:9*

*When I draw life and meaning from any source other than my belovedness, I am spiritually dead... – Brennan Manning*

### Jesus is Holy

*The earliest traceable form of the Semitic root of the word holy, reaching to a Canaanite source, carried the meaning to divide. Anything that was holy was divided or separated from all other things. This meaning pointed to the difference between the ordinary and the extraordinary, the common and uncommon, the average and the great. In religious terms, the word holy divides God from all other things to put Him in a category that is sui generis (in a class by Himself). The Holy One is the One who possesses the supreme perfection of being. He transcends or is divided from all things creaturely. He is the most majestic, most exalted, most awe-provoking being. – R.C. Sproul*

*What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are– the Holy One of God. – Mark 1:24*

## **Jesus is Innocent**

*Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, I find no guilt in this man.*

**– Luke 23:4**

## **Jesus is Unstained**

*He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. – 1 Peter 2:22*

He is pure. He is unblemished and unmarred by sins corruption.

## **Jesus is Separate**

*He made Him who knew no sin... – 2 Corinthians 5:21*

Not separated in the sense of not being made like us, but separate from us in that He does not *know* sin. He is not intimately acquainted with sin's wiles or chains. He is separate from that because He never engaged in it. This makes Him far more than able to save us and set us free since He is not bound to sin.

***Because Jesus is these things, we are these things as well!***

## **Jesus is Exalted**

*Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name... – Philippians 2:9*

Jesus is exalted in the highest heavens! There is no other name which bears the weight and glory of exaltation as that of Jesus! What a sweet name to deliver so great a salvation. All the angelic beings, even fallen ones, recognize and bow to the exaltation of the Son of God.

Is He exalted, lifted up, in your life? Does He occupy the throne of your life? Does He make your lips to shout for joy and sing with gladness? Does He guide your decisions and motivations for your life? We always praise that which is beautiful and lovely. Is Jesus beautiful and lovely to you? Do you praise Him in the quietness of your heart? Do you praise Him in the great congregation? Do you praise Him in difficulty and trial? Do you praise Him in your suffering? Do you love Him even when it hurts and when you can't see His face or feel His presence?

*There is an Almighty and Divine One in heaven who ever lives for our highest benefit. Let us adore Him most lovingly... – Charles Spurgeon*