

Hebrews 7:11-19

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[0 : 00] Let me invite you to join me in your copy of God's Word in Hebrews chapter 7. We had yesterday a 10-year family reunion for the church, and I'm tired.

! Maybe that's why words aren't coming out of my mouth the way they should. Our text for this morning is Hebrews chapter 7, verses 11 through 19 as we continue our verse-by-verse study. Of this letter. Before I read it, beloved, let me remind you this is God's Word to us written for His glory and our good. So we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and to obey its commands.

Verse 11 of Hebrews chapter 7. Now, if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood, for under it the people received the law, what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?

For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar.

[1 : 17] For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe, Moses said nothing about priests. This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.

For it is witnessed of him, you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness, for the law made nothing perfect.

But on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. Before we begin our consideration of this morning's text about Melchizedek, I would like to re-deliver the summary I gave you last week of the author of Hebrews, when he begins mentioning Melchizedek back in chapter 5.

Recall that the author first mentioned him in speaking of Jesus' earthly priesthood. He goes on in Hebrews chapter 5, verse 11 to say, about this we have much to say.

And he's referring to Jesus' Melchizedekian priesthood. And it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

[2 : 43] So he stops to rebuke this little, tired, suffering church. This letter is meant to be pressing them on in their faithful endurance.

And he stops at this point and rebukes them. He says, you have become dull of hearing. And he warns them against apostasy, against abandoning the faith altogether.

And he then exhorts his hearers to faithful and patient endurance to inherit the promises, chapter 6 and verse 12. And he roots the surety of those promises in Jesus' person and work.

Chapter 6, verses 19 and 20. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul. A hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain.

Where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf. Having become a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. So we've been following an arc, I pointed out to you last week, over about seven or eight weeks.

[3 : 54] Beginning in chapter 5, verse 10. Being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. To, verse 20 of chapter 6.

Having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. He picks back up that theme here again. So, we've come back to our author.

Explaining the significance of what it means that Jesus is a Melchizedekian priest. In the beginning of chapter 7, we saw last week that Melchizedek foreshadows Christ's offices.

That he foreshadows Christ's qualifications. And that he foreshadows Christ's superiority. And the author is driving his original hearers and us in our study this morning.

To this point found in Hebrews chapter 7 and verse 25. Consequently, he, being Christ, is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God.

[5 : 01] Through him, being Christ. Since he always lives to make intercession for them. This is the case that is being built.

It's that Christ is able to save forever. To be able to save perfectly all those who come to God through him because he lives.

And because he lives, he intercedes for us. You see, the Hebrew believers were being tempted through their suffering to abandon their faith.

And go back to the comfort of Judaism. And the author of this letter wants them to avoid doing so. Out of a great pastoral care for them.

He's saying, don't go back. Don't make shipwreck of your faith. Continue to pursue Christ. He wants to see them and us faithful to the end.

[6 : 04] The question for us is, will we persevere? Will we persevere? Now, if we are Christ, we most certainly will.

But we are living in that time right now. Will I be faithful to the end? Now, we most likely will not be tempted to turn to Judaism.

But we very well may be tempted in the trial of life, in the discomfort of living as a people for the praise of God, to turn to some other religion of the world.

And this is the simplicity of it. You have two basic religions in the world. And everybody ascribes to one of the two. The one that we're commending this morning is to place your faith in Jesus Christ. Saving faith. To throw all of yourself on Him. Turn from your sin. And plead His person and His work for the salvation of your soul. The other, in whatever form it takes, merely works to be found right before God.

[7 : 20] Whether a person recognizes that there is a God, will be good enough in some measure, will live by their own command and their own rule. Everyone who doesn't place believing faith in Christ, who doesn't recognize that nothing they can do can make them accepted, can make them right, is following this way.

And Judaism is that. It fits in that category. So we're not so different from the Hebrew believers. Temple worship was meant to point to something greater.

It was meant to say to the Hebrews, not this, but this is a dress rehearsal for something much grander. We want you to see what you really need as this ironic worship is carried out.

Now, an example of a failure to persevere, as far as we can tell, has come to light just in the past couple of weeks.

Some of you may be familiar with Josh Harris. Wrote half a dozen books. *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* is the most popular of them. Not the best of them, but the most popular of them.

[8 : 39] Pastored a Sovereign Grace church for 14 years, I believe. He recently announced on social media that he was divorcing his wife.

Prior to that, he had just repudiated a bunch of his writing. He's divorcing his wife, and just here recently, has decided that he's no longer a Christian. I want to read to you, this is the post that he put on Instagram, and I do this with a heavy heart.

I don't, none of this is standing in judgment of Josh Harris, but to help you to see the danger, outward appearance.

Who would have ever thought, who would have ever thought we'd be reading these words written by Josh Harris? He says, My heart is full of gratitude. I wish you could see all the messages people sent me after the announcement of my divorce.

They are expressions of love, though they are saddened or even strongly disapprove of the decision. I am learning that no group has the market cornered on grace. This week, I have received grace from Christians, atheists, evangelicals, ex-evangelicals, straight people, LGBTQ people, and everyone in between.

[9 : 50] Of course, there have also been strong words of rebuke from religious people. While not always pleasant, I know they are seeking to love me. They have also been spiteful, hateful

comments that angered and hurt me. The information that was left out of our announcement concerning the divorce is that I have undergone a massive shift in regard to my faith in Jesus.

The popular phrase for this is deconstruction. The biblical phrase is falling away. By all the measurements that I have for defining a Christian, I am not a Christian.

And I appreciate he's at least intellectually honest. He's willing to take the Bible as the framework for Christianity. But he's saying, I can't call myself that any longer.

He goes on, Many people tell me that there is a different way to practice faith. And I want to remain open to this, but I'm not there now. Then he quotes Martin Luther, which is interesting.

But he says, Martin Luther said that the entire life of believers should be repentance. There's beauty in that sentiment regardless of your view of God. I have lived in repentance for the past several years, repenting of my self-righteousness, my fear-based approach to life, the teaching of my books, my views of women in the church, and my approach to parenting, to name a few.

[11:06] But I specifically want to add to this list now to the LGBTQ plus community, I want to say that I'm sorry for the views that I taught in my books and as a pastor regarding sexuality.

I regret standing against marriage equality, for not affirming you and your place in the church, and for any ways that my writing and speaking contributed to a culture of exclusion and bigotry.

I hope you can forgive me. Now, there's certainly a lot of sentiment in there that's good and healthy. There's some things he says that you can say, yes, well, we would want to apologize for contributing to cultures of bigotry, to be sure.

But you can see the way in which it seems as if he's entirely abandoned the gospel of Jesus Christ, even at his admission. Now, we cannot know with any finality what is going on in the soul of Josh Harris.

I'd invite you to join me in praying for him. He has many close friends who are walking beside him and working with him. I've even seen him tongue-in-cheek say they're welcome to hang out with him because now it would be considered evangelism.

[12:13] We would like to think that Josh has come to just a low place in his life and he is, in fact, in Christ. But, either way, this points to the reality that the danger is real.

The temptation is out there. He, as a public figure, got a lot of heat. And he found himself, rather than standing firm in Christ, Christ being the anchor of his soul and pressing on in truth, abandoning faith.

Abandoning it for something else. The temptation is there. And as you continue in your pursuit of a life pleasing to God in Christ Jesus, you will experience trial and you will experience discomfort. Hold, beloved. Hold. This is the message of Hebrews. And this morning's text makes this point by showing us two things.

Number one, the insufficiency of the Aaronic priesthood and the Old Covenant. And two, the sufficiency of the Melchizedekian priesthood and the New Covenant.

[13:36] If you're taking notes, you could just say insufficiency, O-T, insufficiency, N-T. First, the insufficiency of the Aaronic priesthood and the Old Covenant.

See this in verses 11 through 14. Now, if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood, for under it the people received the law, what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek rather than one named after the order of Aaron?

For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. For the one of whom these things are spoken belong to another tribe from which no one has ever served at the altar.

For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah and in connection with that tribe, Moses said nothing about priests. Now, we talk about this a bit at length about the different order and why it was that Christ came from the Melchizedekian order versus the Aaronic order and he's just continuing to make that point here.

He's saying, if the law had been able to make us perfect, then why not just have another priest in the order of Aaron?

[14:52] But because it couldn't, verse 11 is making this point, if perfection had been attainable, they couldn't bring about perfection, then a different type of priest was necessary.

A different priest that came from a different line. Jesus coming from, verse 14, the line of Judah was not allowed to serve as an Aaronic priest, a Levitical priest, but he was appointed by God, not

because he was in a lineage of man, but because God appointed him a priest.

And this idea of perfection, we very quickly think of it in terms of maturity, being grown up in. Now, certainly, if you were able to keep the law perfectly, you could attain to such perfection.

But the meaning is a bit broader than that, and we get a clue of that as we look further down in the text, the parenthetical in verse 19, where the writer of Hebrews says, for the law made nothing perfect.

Same Greek word. And he ties it into this idea of being able to draw near to God. So it's an ability to have unfettered access to God.

[16:21] And the law could not accomplish this. Now, that does not exclude the ability of the God-worshippers under the Old Covenant to draw near to God, but the author is driving us toward and speaking of a better hope.

They had a fettered access to God. We now, in Christ, because he is the better hope, have an unfettered access.

God dwelt in a tabernacle, in an inner place called the Holy of Holies, and then in a temple, in an inner place called the Holy of Holies. This is where his presence was.

It wasn't amongst and in his people. It was in a place. And they could draw near by visiting the temple. They had to remain outside the Holy of Holies through much sacrifice, through much cleansing, all of these rites and rituals that were meant to point to a greater sacrifice, meant to point to a greater cleansing.

And I wish, I wish that we could just get an injection of understanding, a feeling of the weightiness of that temple worship. We are so far removed from that.

[17:43] Our minds, when we see that there's a better hope in drawing near to God, go, okay. these people would have had much, they would have been consumed with this idea of being able to draw near to God.

And this was tied in their minds, most often and regularly to the temple. We can see this all throughout the Psalms. C.S. Lewis in his work Reflections on the Psalms wrote this, these poets knew far less reason than we for loving God.

Yet they express a longing for Him, for His mere presence, which comes only to the best Christians or to Christians in their best moments. They long to live all their days in the temple so that they may constantly see the fair beauty of the Lord.

Psalms 27 in verse 4. Their longing to go up to Jerusalem and appear before the presence of God is like a physical thirst. Psalm 42. From Jerusalem His presence flashes out in perfect beauty.

Psalms 50 verse 2. Lacking that encounter with Him, their souls are parched like a waterless countryside. Psalm 63 verse 2.

[19:08] They crave to be satisfied with the pleasures of His house. Psalm 65 and verse 4. Only there can they be at ease like a bird in a nest.

Psalms 84 and verse 3. One day of those pleasures is better than a lifetime spent elsewhere. Psalm 20.

So, they seem to comprehend these inspired psalmists. The beauty of being in the presence of God and they tied it to this place.

Beloved, we don't have a place. We are a people. Praise God that He now indwells us and gathers us together for times such as this.

The law could not atone for sin, grant a clean conscience, or provide unfettered access to God. The author of Hebrews makes this point throughout the letter.

[20:13] The law could not atone for sin, could not pay the price that was due our sin. The law makes us painfully aware that the price needs to be paid.

That none of us have perfectly kept the law of God. And it is a good law. It is a law that ought to be commended and obeyed. None of us have kept it.

Most of us have been guilty at every point of it. And there's a great unfathomable debt that is due because we are rebels against the most holy God.

The law serves us in this way. It says to us you need atonement. There needs to be a penalty paid for your rebellion.

But the law itself could not atone for sin. This temple practice, this Aaronic priesthood was all about making atonement.

[21 : 15] And it was constant. It was always ongoing. Blood flowed constantly off the temple mount. Again and again and again.

There were sacrifices of all kinds. And there were sacrifices made for the sins that you weren't even aware that you made. It was meant to be a system built to show that there was a greater sacrifice necessary.

The author of Hebrews chapter 10 verse 4 says, For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. And then in verse 11 of chapter 10, And every priest stands daily at his service offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sins.

being a Levitical priest sounds exhausting. I feel like at the end of your shift you would just be like, What are we doing? We're going to have to pick it up and do it again tomorrow.

You would have hoped of all people that the Levitical priests would have been in the scripture and been longing for that perfect sacrifice that would take away the sins Of the world.

[22 : 25] So the law could not atone for sin. The law also could not grant a clean conscience. We won't spend much time talking about and thinking about conscience. But we have experienced a guilty conscience.

We have experienced doing something that was offensive to God and carrying the weight of that offense. The law heaps guilt on the conscience to drive us to Christ.

It cannot clean. The conscience. Hebrews chapter 9 last half of verse 9 says gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper.

Also the law could not provide unfettered access to God. And that's the point being made in verse 11. Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood for under it the people received the law.

If it could have what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek? The law also cannot give us unfettered access to God.

[23 : 49] However, praise the Lord that this text speaks secondly to the sufficiency of the Melchizedekian priesthood and the new covenant.

The Aaronic and the old meant to point us to, to make us aware of our need of the other. Verse 15 through the end of the text.

This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek who has become a priest not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.

For it is witnessed of him, this is Psalm 110 verse 4, you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness, for the law made nothing perfect.

But on the other hand, a better hope is introduced through which we draw near to God. So remember last week, we talked a bit about this Melchizedek.

[24 : 56] He is a rather obscure character in the Bible. We read about him in Genesis chapter 14. You can get much of that information right here in the beginning of Hebrews chapter 7.

Abraham goes out, fights a battle. On his return from that battle, he meets with this priest king Melchizedek and he offers to him a tithe of his spoils of war.

And this priest king blesses Abraham. And then he disappears from the pages of scripture until in Psalm 110 and verse 4.

There's this inspired revelation of who Christ would be, where he says, you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

And I praise God for our inspired text, for the New Testament that gives us so much explanation of the Old Testament, that the writer of Hebrews was shown what all of this means for us.

[25 : 57] It's incredible. So remember that Melchizedek foreshadows Christ's offices, the offices of king and of priest. Verse 2 chapter 7.

He is first by translation of his name, king of Melchizedek, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem. That is king of peace.

He, being Melchizedek, foreshadowing Christ, was one who could hold both offices. And the Levitical priests could not be kings, and kings most certainly could not be Levitical priests.

Much judgment was brought upon kings who tried to serve in that role. So they're unique, and they're appointed uniquely. Secondly, Melchizedek foreshadows Christ's qualifications.

He had no genealogy, that is no genealogy by which to show himself a Levitical priest. He was from the line of Judah. Verse 3, he is without father or mother or genealogy.

[27 : 02] We have no record of this in the text about Melchizedek, and has no beginning or end. Again, interpreting from silence, we know not anything about Melchizedek's beginning or end, and this is meant to show us something of Christ.

Right? But resembling the Son of God, verse 3, he continues a priest forever. And in our text today, this is where the author is still going.

That's why I'm reminding you of this. Because in verse 16 and 17, he's making that point once again. Right? He didn't become a priest on the basis of a legal requirement from the old covenant, but by the power of an indestructible life.

Right? Put to death on the cross but raised again three days later. He's a priest forever, verse 17, quoting Psalm 110, verse 4. A priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

So significant. Which is the third thing that Melchizedek foreshadows for us about Christ. Christ's superiority over Abraham, over Melchizedek, over all.

[28 : 17] We see that the inferior tithes to the superior and secondly the superior blesses the inferior verses 4 through 7. All of this is driving us to understand the superiority of Jesus Christ.

So Jesus Christ, our forever perfect priest, atones for sin, he grants a clean conscience, and he provides unfettered access to God.

Why would you go back to the old is what the author of Hebrews is saying. Why would you do that? It was insufficient. But Christ is sufficient.

Jesus Christ atones for sin. Hebrews chapter 10 verses 12 14 when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins.

He sat down at the right hand of God waiting from that time until his enemy should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

[29 : 29] So here again is this idea of perfection. Having the ability because we have Christ's righteousness to draw near to God. And by what?

What atones for our sin in order to bring us to God? The sacrifice of Christ. A single sacrifice. Not continued sacrifice. Not all day never ending sacrifice. But a single sacrifice. He offered himself as a perfect sacrifice that we might be perfect in him.

And the last half of verse 12 is so significant because the temple had nowhere to sit down. There was no sitting furniture for the Levitical priests. Why?

Because they didn't have time to sit down. When they were working their shift they were busy making sacrifice making sacrifice making sacrifice sins piling up sacrifices being made.

[30 : 33] It was never enough because it wasn't meant to be. It was meant to point us to the perfect sacrifice of Christ. So the last half of verse 12 says he sat down.

We know he declared it is finished and he sat down at the right hand the place of honor of God the Father.

One sacrifice for all. First Peter chapter two verse twenty four says the same he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree.

He took the punishment that was due us. He took it on himself. God couldn't overlook the sin. He had to punish the sin. He punished it in Christ that we might die to sin and live to righteousness by his wounds you have been healed.

Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone atones for sin. The law cannot accomplish this. It points us to his accomplishment. Second Jesus Christ grants a clean conscience.

[31 : 43] Having had our sin atoned for we no longer have to bear the guilt of our sin. Hebrews 9 verse 14 how much more would the blood of Christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself without blemish to God purify our conscience!

from dead works to serve the living God. What a glorious thing it is that if we are in Christ the sins that we continue to commit our flesh wields its ugly head.

we forget who we are in Jesus and we still sin that that sin was also covered by the blood of Christ. Brother, we don't need to do penance. We merely need to do repentance. And repentance when we sin is a merely going that was sin. Praise God for the cross of Christ.

Many of us who take sin seriously want to spend a period of time mourning our sinfulness. We want to spend much time beating ourselves up over what we have done.

[33 : 02] And I've been asked the question, how long should I mourn! my sin? My answer is only as long as it takes to get you back to the cross of Christ. Flee to it and flee as fast as you can.

Mourn the sin on your way there, but when you're there, recognize that this too was covered by the blood of Christ. Have your conscience made clean.

Don't bear the guilt that's not yours to bear that Christ died for you. Jesus Christ grants a clean conscience. The law could not do this.

I imagine going through the ritual practice of it, living living in that day and the outskirts of Jerusalem and making the trek up the mountain and buying the sacrifice and taking the sacrifice to the Levitical priest and him going through the practice of making the sacrifice and turning around and feeling the exact same way.

Feeling nothing. These people would have had a faith that went beyond the sacrifice itself.

Somehow God is pleased as I'm doing this. Looking to the ultimate sacrifice.

[34 : 20] Looking to the hope of a clean conscience. Third, Jesus Christ provides unfettered access to God. There's nothing that restrains this access.

You have to remember it is so massively significant that when Jesus died the temple curtain which was the curtain that divided the holy place from the holy of holies was dividing where people could go to where only one person could go one day a year the presence of God and he wasn't there in Jesus' day by the way.

He had left long ago. It was just an empty space. But there was a curtain still there and it signified something. You're unclean.

You can't come in here. This curtain was as thick as a man's hand. My hand's not very thick. It was thick. And it was torn from the top to the bottom.

Christ gives us access to the place of God. God is saying you will no longer worship me in this way. There's a better hope for you to draw near to me.

[35 : 35] Verse 19 for the law made nothing perfect. But on the other hand a better hope is introduced through which this is Christ that he's talking about.

We draw near to God. Verse 25 consequently he is able to save to the utter most those who draw near to God through him since he always lives.

Remember this is where we're headed. He always lives to make intercession for them. Beloved if you're in Christ there's a reality that Jesus right now is speaking to the father on your behalf.

God in his holiness his perfect justice has a white hot wrath that burns against those who are rebels against him. And Jesus sits at his right hand and says but not that one he's mine not her she's mine.

Yes they're wretched. Yes they've been rebels right but they believed in me right I took their punishment on the cross I've given them my righteousness right they are in me and I am in them they belong to us forever God's wrath passes on it's the beautiful picture of the Passover as the people huddled in their houses and the angel of death passed over Egypt because of the sacrifice of that perfect lamb put on the doorpost the angel of death would pass over their houses right God's judgment moving beyond right because the blood of Christ protects us John chapter 14 in verse 6 Jesus said I am the way and the truth and the life and no one comes to the father except through me

[37 : 42] Christ provides this unfettered access for us to God he is a better hope so whatever the temptation may be to a cultural version of Christianity thing that calls itself Christian but isn't at all to some other philosophy of the West to some other religious form it won't be Judaism I don't think maybe Judaism maybe that becomes the temptation for you whatever it may be will you persevere because everything else is insufficient it has the same insufficiency of the Aaronic priesthood and the old covenant to save your soul but faith by grace and the person and work of Jesus Christ will save you forever you cannot be saved by your works you must be saved by the work of

Christ he is the sufficient Melchizedekian priest he is the sacrifice that takes away our sin he is the perfect law keeper that we might have his righteousness and this is the new covenant the beauty of walking in Christ drawing near to God because of his works and not because of our own I want to conclude in reading another text from Hebrews this is chapter 10 verses 19 through 23 and I am eager to preach this text let me just read it and I'll close this in prayer the author writes therefore brothers since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain that is through his flesh and since we have a

great priest over the house of

God let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for he who promised is faithful join me in a word of prayer