

## Saved to the Uttermost

Hebrews 7:23-28

We have been speaking from the little letter of the Hebrews for the past few weeks and the author wants his readers to remember that Jesus is all they need. He is Lord of All, He is our superior high priest, and now the writer reminds us that Jesus saves to the Uttermost.

However before we get into the sermon I need to share a little about my weekend. I went to Indianapolis for an Administrative Committee meeting. We serve as the board for the office of our General Minister and President, Rev. Sharon Watkins. One of the things we discussed was whether we should measure the effectiveness of our ministry by the number of people who worship each Sunday. As I look out over our congregation I know that our ministry touches many more lives than are in the pews. We touch the lives of the people at Carriage Town Ministries, and our worship and communion service at American House North, and the children that will be blessed by our Angel Tree ministry and the mitten tree. You see, it is not just who shows up on Sunday.

I must also tell you that I had to spend the night in Chicago because of a missed connection. However I was not worried because I know most of you could have spoken this morning about how Jesus saves to the uttermost and what He means in your lives. As I was rushing to get here this morning I had to pleasure of meeting a medical missionary who was coming home for a month of vacation and study after serving the past two years in Haiti and Dominican Republic. She explained that her husband's request was that she not remarry and that she fulfill her dream of becoming a missionary. After her husband's death she asked God to show her that

she was making the right decision. One of the requirements was that they missionary be debt-free to join that particular ministry. In two months she had a buyer for her house, and they paid cash. Her sister, a realtor said that was unheard of and it was a clear message from God. We exchanged email addresses and she reminded me that God had allowed us to meet and share our stories. Nothing is an accident, our lives are ordered by God.

I know this was a sermon itself, but our scripture reminds us that Jesus saves to the uttermost and I must share what I learned. The writer to the Hebrews is filled with the thought of Jesus as high priest. He uses many words to explain how great Jesus is:

(i) He says that Jesus is holy (*hosios*). Holy always describes one who faithfully does their duty to God. It describes one, not so much as they appear before others but as they appear before God. Holy has in it the greatest of all goodnesses, the goodness which is pure in the sight of God.

(ii) He says that Jesus was blameless. This describes one who is so cleansed of evil that there is nothing left in them but good. It describes a person's effect upon others. Sir Walter Scott claimed for himself as a writer that he never corrupted any man's morals or unsettled any one's faith. The one who is blameless is so cleansed that their presence is like an antiseptic and in their heart there is nothing but the loving kindness of God.

(iii) He says that Jesus is undefiled. This describes one who is absolutely free from any of the blemishes which might make it impossible for him to draw near to God. The blemished victim cannot be offered to God; the defiled person cannot approach him; but the one who is undefiled is fit to enter into God's presence.

(iv) He says that Jesus is separated from sinners. This does not mean that Jesus was not really a man. He was different from sinners in that, although he underwent

all a man's temptations, he conquered them all and emerged without sin. The difference between him and other men lies not in the fact that he was not fully man, but in the fact that he was manhood at its highest and its best.

(v) He says that Jesus exalted above the heavens. This stresses the perfection of his divinity. He who was a man amongst men is also he who is exalted to the right hand of God.

The writer to the Hebrews tells us of another aspect in which the priesthood of Jesus is far superior to the Levitical. Before the High Priest could offer sacrifice for the sins of the people, he had first to offer sacrifice for his own sins, for he was a sinful man.

It is of the Day of Atonement that the writer is specially thinking. This was the great day when atonement was made for all the sins of the people, the day on which the High Priest performed his supreme function. Usually it was the only day in the year when he personally carried out the sacrifices. On ordinary days they were left to the subordinate priests but on the Day of Atonement the High Priest himself officiated.

The very first item on the ritual of that day was a sacrifice for the sins of the High Priest himself. He washed his hands and his feet; he put off his gorgeous robes; he clothed himself in spotless white linen. There was brought to him a bullock which he had purchased with his own money. He laid both hands on the bullock's head to transfer his sin to it; and thus he made confession: "Ah, Lord God, I have committed iniquity; I have transgressed; I have sinned, I and my house O Lord, I beseech thee, cover over the sins and transgressions which I have committed, transgressed and sinned before thee, I and my house."

The greatest of all the Levitical sacrifices began with a sacrifice for the sins of the High Priest. That was a sacrifice Jesus never needed to make, because he was

without sin. The Levitical High Priest was a sinful man offering animal sacrifices for sinful people; Jesus was the sinless Son of God offering himself for the sin of all humanity. It was the law which had appointed the Levitical High Priest; it was the oath of God which gave Jesus his office; and because he was what he was, the sinless Son of God, he was equipped for his office as no human High Priest could ever be.<sup>1</sup>

Occasionally we read a story in the newspaper about the illegal handling of a will. Perhaps some unscrupulous relative or business partner managed to get their hands on a will and use it for their own selfish purposes. I spent the weekend with an attorney from Florida who deals with probate, making sure that the wishes of the deceased are carried out. She said this practice is regularly attempted today. But this could never happen to Jesus' "last will and testament" in which He wrote in His own blood. He wrote the will and then died to make it take effect. But He arose from the dead and ascended to heaven, and there He is "probating" His own will!

The fact that the permanent Christ continues as High Priest means that there is an "permanent priesthood" (Heb. 7:24). Permanent means "valid and unalterable." The word was used at the end of legal contracts. Our Lord's priesthood in heaven is "valid and unalterable." Because it is, we can have confidence in the midst of this shaking, changing world. Because He is the ever-living and permanent High Priest, He is able for all times to save to the uttermost, complete and forever those that approach God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. It is true that Christ can save any sinner from any condition; but the

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<sup>1</sup> Barclay, William, lecturer in the University of Glasgow (Hrsg.): *The Letter to the Hebrews*. Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975 (The Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. Ed), S. 79

emphasis is on the fact that He saves completely, forever, all who put their faith in Him. Because He is our High Priest forever, He can save forever.

Not only was the Levitical priesthood imperfect, but it was also interrupted by death. There were *many* high priests because no one priest could live forever. The church has one High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, who lives forever! An permanent priest means a permanent priesthood, and this means security and confidence for God's people. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). "Thou art a Priest forever" (Ps. 110:4).<sup>2 3</sup> No matter what you have been told, Jesus saves completely and no one and nothing can take away our salvation. Thanks be to God!

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<sup>2</sup>Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Heb 7:11

<sup>3</sup>Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:799