

Jesus: The Guarantee of a Better Covenant

Scripture: Hebrews 7:20-28

Code: 1618

Tonight we're going to study the Word of God in Hebrews, chapter 7, and we're going to look at verses 20 to 28 in concluding our study of Jesus and Melchizedek. Now, as we come to chapter 7, verses 20 through 28, concluding this chapter, the writer of Hebrews, whom we have assumed to be the Holy Spirit, since we do not know the human author, and we know the Holy Spirit penned it, the Holy Spirit is still piling up proofs in these closing verses that the priesthood of Jesus Christ is superior to that of Aaron.

The Jews, as you know, had put all of their stock in the Levitical priesthood, the priesthood that came through the line of Aaron and the tribe of Levi. And Jesus came as a priest of another order, the priesthood of Melchizedek, a man who predated Aaron, who was at the time of Abraham. Jesus, as a priest after the order of Melchizedek, is therefore a superior priest to all the priests of Aaron. And the point is simply to prove that Jesus is superior to everything in the old covenant, therefore the new covenant is better than the old, therefore the Jews ought to come to Christ and drop all of their Old Testament attachments that they're holding on to.

He is writing to Hebrews and saying, "Come to Christ." He is writing to Hebrew believers and saying, "Drop all the Jewish trappings. Jesus is sufficient. He is superior." And so part of the superiority of Christ is His superior priesthood. He is after the order of Melchizedek. The Judaistic priests are after the order of Levi. And Melchizedek's is a superior order.

Now, He has taken one text that He has used through this whole discussion, which really began clear back in the end of chapter 4. His text is Psalm 110:4, and He milks that text for every possible conceivable particle of truth. The text of Psalm 110:4 says that, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." It was a Messianic prophecy predicting that when Messiah came, He would be a priest, for a man needs a priest who bridges the gap between himself and God, but that He would not be a priest after the Aaronic line, but after the order of Melchizedek. Four times through what we've studied that statement is repeated. Four times He restates His text.

And the Holy Spirit is showing us that Jesus is a priest like Melchizedek, far superior to those Levites and those of Aaron's train. Now, His process is to establish the priesthood of Melchizedek first of all, and then show how it was better than Aaron and then show how Jesus is like Melchizedek. Thus, the new covenant is better than the old, for it has a better priest.

Now, this has been what He's doing all through chapter 7, so I'm not going to go into it. But the Spirit all through chapter 7 has been presenting Christ as the priest like Melchizedek. We saw that Aaron's priesthood was limited because it couldn't provide one thing that was primary. It couldn't provide perfection. And another term for perfection is what? Access to God.

Aaron's priesthood could not bring men to God. All through the ministry of Aaron and the Levites, the veil remained, right? There never was access to God. The one thing men needed most couldn't be provided by Aaron. Therefore, there had to come another priest who could bring access to God, a priest after a different order, and that is Jesus Christ.

And David, in Psalm 110:4, when he made the statement concerning Messiah, "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek," was prophesying that when Messiah did come He, indeed, would be a priest after a different order. And so Christ has come and provided the access that Aaron couldn't provide.

Compare verse 11, for a moment, to verse 19. Verse 11, "If, therefore, perfection were by the Levitical priesthood," skip the parenthesis, "what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek?" The point was that Aaron's priesthood couldn't bring perfection. If it could've, you wouldn't need another priest after a different order.

But in verse 19 it says, starting out with the word "but" and changing to "and," "and the bringing in of a better hope by which we draw near to God." In other words, He is talking there about Christ being the One who brings us to God. Access to God. Aaron couldn't do it. Christ could. That's the difference.

So Melchizedek's priesthood, the order of which Jesus is a priest, is superior. It's superior because of its character, and we went into all of that back at the beginning of chapter 7, because of its basic nature it's superior, and the fact that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, and all the priesthood of Aaron was in the loins of Abraham. So, in a sense, Aaron was giving homage to Melchizedek. It's superior because it could provide the access that Aaron's priesthood could not provide.

So then the Holy Spirit is saying the old covenant is set aside. It couldn't hack it. It couldn't make it. It couldn't provide. The new covenant replaces it. It's a change. It's not just added to the old covenant. The old covenant is done away. The new covenant supplants it.

But the writer is not yet finished with His sermon about Jesus and Melchizedek. As much as He has covered, it almost boggles our mind to conceive of, He has yet more to come in verses 20 to 28. And here the Holy Spirit presents Jesus as a superior priest three ways...three ways. The surety of a better covenant, Savior to the uttermost and separate from sinners. Surety of a better covenant, Savior to the uttermost and separate from sinners. And you'll see those all through the passage.

The end of verse 22, "surety of a better testament," or covenant. Verse 25, "able to save to the uttermost," Savior to the uttermost. Verse 26, separate from sinners. Those are the three key statements by which He draws to a conclusion the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

Now, in our last message, we saw the key phrase, "draw nigh unto God," in verse 19. The goal of our faith is access to God. The goal of Christianity is to bring men into the presence of God. That Jesus Christ could do. Aaron could not. The veil always remained. But in Christ, the veil was what? Was rent, and access was made. And in verse 19 of chapter 6, we go into the presence of God, where our forerunner has entered, verse 20, and we are anchored there. That's something Aaron couldn't do.

So access to God looks, from our viewpoint, at the object of our...really the goal of our faith, or the object of our trust. The design for us is that we have access to God. Now, from God's standpoint, the phrase "save to the uttermost" in verse 25 describes it. That's like the other side of the coin. We from our standpoint are able to have access to God. From His standpoint He is able to save us to the uttermost. Two sides of the same truth. Jesus gives access to God from our viewpoint, and saves us to the uttermost from His viewpoint.

Now let's look at the three superiorities. First of all, Jesus is presented as the surety of a better covenant in verses 20 to 22. Let's look at verse 20, and follow very carefully so that you'll understand. "And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest, for those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord swore and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament."

Now, let me drop 21 out, because it's a parenthesis, and read 20 and 22. "And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest, by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." In other words, He was a surety of a better testament because He was made a priest with an oath. He says it in a negative way, "not without an oath." That's a double negative. The positive would be, God made Him a priest by an oath.

You say, "Well, this...well, so what?" Well, I'll get to that. That's what I said when I first read it. What's He saying? Well, He's saying this. There's something very important about God making an oath. What was God's oath, in verse 21? "For those priests were made without an oath." In other words, God never said what He said about Christ. But with this one, the Lord, what's the next word? "Swore and will not repent, Thou art a priest," what's the next word? "Forever." Now, he never said that to Aaron. God never swore an oath to Aaron that his priesthood would be forever? You see? That's what He's saying.

Because of that, that is not as significant as Christ's priesthood, because when God established Christ as a priest, He swore with an oath that it would be forever. Therefore, His is a better testament. You see? Aaron's was always temporary. It was designed to be temporary. God never swore that it would be eternal. But with Christ, He swore an eternal priesthood. When the Levitical priests were inducted into office, God took no oath. That's the point. God swore not. But when Jesus Christ was presented as priest, God swore and will not repent. In other words, God bound His Word by an oath.

Now, that doesn't mean that unless God swears and makes an oath, His Word is no good. It simply means that wherever God makes an oath, His Word has to do with an eternal transaction. Now, that's important.

The Old Testament priests had a transitory office, an office of imperfection and an office of decay. They ministered in the temple on a temporary basis. They kept dying off and their sons kept replacing them. They were sinful and had to always be offering sacrifices for themselves, so forth and so on. They never could bring access. They never could bring perfection. And perfection in the Book of Hebrews has to do with, really, salvation. They couldn't bring it about. They could only cover sins, not do away with them. And so the priests couldn't really do it. Therefore, God never designed them to be an eternal priesthood.

And here, the writer is saying to the Jews, your own Old Testament says God had ordained an eternal priesthood of a different kind. The Old Testament priesthood was based upon God's Word, an expression of His sovereign power. But it never had an eternal quality by God's oath that it be forever.

Now, when God gives His oath, that means that it is a guaranteed thing, permanently. Go back, for example, to Hebrews chapter 6, and there's a great illustration of this. "Now God," in verse 13, "made a promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself." The Old Testament saints used to swear by God. "As the Lord liveth, so will I do this." But if you always swear by the greater, but who's greater than God? So He has to swear by Himself. "When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself. And He said Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." Now, when God said that to Israel, that was an eternal covenant. God would never go back on that. He bound Himself with an oath.

"And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise," that Abraham did. He endured until he was very old, and finally he got the son that was the beginning of the promise. "For men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife." In other words, when a man sets a seal of an oath, when he convinces you by swearing that he is meaning the truth, that kind of doubly makes it real.

Verse 17, "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability," or the unchanging character, "of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath." Now, God wanted Abraham to know that this was a promised, eternal kind of covenant. "I will bless you. I will multiply you." And He went on even to say He would bless those that blessed him and curse those that cursed him, and through Abraham the families of the earth would be blessed.

And it was through Abraham Messiah came. And the eternal blessing that comes upon every man throughout all of eternity is a fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. And so when God made an eternal covenant, He bound Himself with an oath. That's how you can tell the eternal character of the covenant. Jesus' priesthood is just that eternal. It is based on an oath, the priesthood of Melchizedek. But the priesthood of Aaron is not.

Now, the very idea that God would take an oath is a startling thing, in a sense. The only reason for God to take an oath is because...not because His Word's no good, but because there is a unique and extraordinary importance attached to those places where God does this. And mark this thought. They are always connected with Christ. Whenever God takes an oath in relation to a promise, it is always connected with Christ, who is the eternal fulfillment of all of His promises. So whenever God makes a promise that relates to Christ, He can add an oath to it, giving it eternal character.

Another illustration would be the promise to David that Christ would sit on the throne and reign as king of kings and so forth and so on. That also was given with an oath, because that is an eternal promise. Christ is an eternal king. So the promise of God that is attached to the eternal fulfillment of Christ is given with an oath. Therefore, when God gave this indication that there would come a Messiah who would be after the order of Melchizedek, He swore by it, because His priesthood was to be how long? Forever, or eternal.

So Jesus is a permanent priest, sworn by God to be forever. Because of this, verse 22 is true. "By so much," or because of that fact, "Jesus is made a surety of a better covenant." The covenant that God made with Jesus is better than the old one, because the old one is temporary and the new one is what? Eternal. It's just that much better. Just that much better. A better priest brings a better covenant.

So Christ, then, is the guarantee. The word "surety" means guarantee. And we'll talk about it. But Christ is the guarantee of a better covenant because He's a better priest. He's an eternal priest with an eternal covenant. Aaron's thing was temporary.

Now, notice this. The covenant is between God and man, and Christ is the guarantee of it. The Greek word means just that, a person who guarantees. Christ is the guarantee of a better covenant from God with man, one that can do everything the first covenant couldn't do. The first covenant

couldn't save to the uttermost, could it? It could only cover sin. The first covenant couldn't give access to God. It only gave a temporary kind of relationship. But Jesus can do what the first could not.

And I want you to notice this. He is not saying that the first covenant was bad. The word "better" is a comparative, right? All of you English teachers know that. The word "better" is a comparative of what other word? Bad? Bad, better, best? What? Good, better, best. The old covenant was very good. It just wasn't better. It was very good.

In some respects, the old covenant was indeed good. It was good in itself as the product of God's wisdom, as the product of God's righteousness. It served a very good purpose, for it restrained sin and it promoted godliness to certain degrees. Its design was good. But it pointed toward Christ, and when He came there was a better one. And there doesn't need to be a best, because the better is the best. There are only two. So the new covenant is better.

Now, there's a beautiful illustration of how Christ guarantees this new covenant, I think, found in Genesis 43, verses 8 and 9. Just jot it down and I'll read it to you. Genesis 43, 8 and 9. "And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go." Now this is the lad being Benjamin, going to Egypt. "That we may live, and not die." Remember, the famine was going on. "Both we, and thou, and also our little ones. I will be surety for him. Of my hand shalt thou require him. If I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever."

Now, you remember that all of the brothers went down to Egypt, and Joseph had been made one of the mucky-mucks down there, and he had a lot of the grain and stuff that his family needed. And so they went down there to Egypt to get in on some of the goodies that were there, and they went without Benjamin, who was the baby of the family. And so Joseph wanted to see Benjamin, so he sent them all back and said, "Bring Benjamin."

Well, Judah says to his father, "I want to bring Benjamin," and his father says, "Not Benjamin, my beloved Benjamin." And he says, "Look, I will be the surety of Benjamin." And he says this, that's the very word, "surety," "of my hand shalt thou require him. If I bring him not unto thee and set him before thee, let me bear the blame forever." You see, he guarantees the promise that he will return Benjamin. He stands as the surety of the promise.

Judah was faithful to his agreement to care for Benjamin, and even before Joseph this is what he said, in chapter 44 of Genesis. "For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father forever. Now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad." He even says, "I'll be a bondsman to my lord and let the lad go with his brother." And he pleads the case of Benjamin as the guarantor of Benjamin's safe return. And so we see Judah as a surety of a better covenant, and a type of Christ.

There's another beautiful example. There's a little book in the New Testament, and I think one of these months we're going to do a study of it. Philemon. It's only one chapter, and probably a lot of people don't even know what's in there, but it's a beautiful story about a slave by the name of Onesimus, who was really giving problems to his master, named Philemon. Now, Paul volunteers to be the surety for Onesimus, and in verses 18 and 19 of Philemon says this. "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account. I Paul have written it with mine own hand. I will repay."

Now, what happens? Paul says, "I will guarantee everything in the behalf of Onesimus." So in like manner, Jesus Christ Himself, engaged as the guarantor in the service of the Father, says to the Father, "Charge to my account whatever my people do, and I will fully pay their debts. Whatever they owe, I'll pay it." He's the guarantee, so that our covenant with God can never be violated. Every time we bring a debt to bear, Jesus pays it. And therefore the covenant is maintained. You see?

Our covenant with God cannot ever be broken, because as soon as a debt exists, Christ pays it. Is that a fantastic thing? Wrapped up in that is the security of the believer. He pays every debt instantly upon its being owed. He is the surety of a better covenant. And, dear ones, there was no such surety in the old covenant. When you blew it, you had to come crawling back all by yourself. But in Jesus Christ, we have the surety of a better covenant. He is our guarantee.

Not only is He willing to be, better than that, He's able. I like that part, right? God is completely satisfied with His performance. The only question remaining is, are you satisfied with Him? He is the surety of a better covenant. If you're satisfied with Him and what He's done in your behalf, that's all you need. He takes care of the covenant.

You know, there are some Christians who think they have to maintain the covenant. Did you know that? "Well, I've got to work and make sure I don't get disconnected from God," you know, and running around, stirring up all kinds of works. Stop being satisfied with your works. Stop being satisfied with your good deeds, your church attendance, your resolutions and your baptism. God is satisfied with Jesus. You're wasting your time.

And He takes care of all the debts. He's the guarantor of the covenant. That's all you need. He is our surety, securing the covenant, securing that it is a better covenant providing access. You know, we think of Jesus often as a mediator, and it's nice to have a mediator, but it's better to have a surety, isn't it? It's great to have a mediator who carries on the functions of the covenant. It's better to have a surety who guarantees the eternal character of the covenant. So all of God's promises in the new covenant, then, are guaranteed to us by Jesus, who is the guarantor, who pays our debts immediately upon their being owed.

All right, He's the surety of a better covenant. That doesn't even begin to discuss that subject. I hope you understand that. That's just initiation. But the second point. Oh, I hate to go on. Anyway, Savior to the uttermost. Savior to the uttermost. Verses 23 to 25 introduces us to the second term describing Jesus. From verse 25, it says, "Where he is able also to save them to the uttermost." This is a fantastic point, and, oh, this is rich.

Verse 23, "And they truly were many priests." Now He's back to Aaron and his Levite priests again. "There truly were many priests." I mean, they just kept coming, you know, one after the other. Why? Because they were not allowed to continue by reason of death. They had this problem. They kept dying, see. That disqualified them, always. Whenever you died, you were immediately disqualified. Every one of them kept being disqualified because they kept dying, you see.

And then this is a characteristic of the Levitical priesthood that God even wanted the Jews to be aware of. Their bodies were always being buried. The successors followed. But one of the interesting things that God wanted to use to point this out, and I think, in a sense, God was running way ahead of Himself in their understanding. They didn't understand, probably, what was going on. We do, and it's a beautiful picture. But Aaron was getting ready to die. Of course, God knew exactly when he'd die. The timetable was all set in God's mind. But the death of Aaron was arriving in Numbers, chapter 20.

So verse 23 tells us this, "And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor by the border of the land of Edom saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people," that means buried, "for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah." Aaron's going to die, He says.

Now, here's what you do. "Take Aaron and Eleazar his son." Now, Aaron is the high priest. Who's going to succeed him? Eleazar, his son. "Bring them up unto the mount, and strip Aaron of his garments," take all his priestly regalia off, "and put them upon Eleazar his son, and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there."

"And Moses did as the Lord commanded. They went up into mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation." Now, that's the whole point. God wanted everybody in Israel to see that priests of the Levitical order kept dying. So He made Aaron's death totally public, so nobody would think that Aaron just kind of floated off into never never land, you know, or went off like Elijah in a whirlwind or whatever. No, in a fiery chariot. Not at all. They wanted them to know. God wanted them to know that this was a dying priesthood.

And so they brought them out in sight of all the congregation. "Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son. Aaron died there in the top of the mountain," in view of

everybody. "And when the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel." Aaron was dead, and everybody knew it. And that was God's point.

God, from the very beginning, with the very first priest, let everybody know this was a dying, temporary priesthood, and that there would just be priest after priest after priest rolling right along. And none of them could ever finally bring that perfection. None of them could ever get them all the way to God. None of them could ever save them to the uttermost. Because long before they got to the uttermost they kept dying.

Many priests, many priests. There were at least 83 of them from Aaron to 70 A.D., 13 under the Tabernacle prior to Solomon, 18 under the first temple, and the remainder until the final destruction in 70 A.D., but at least 83 of them, and that's a lot. And death was the reason for all of them.

Now, this limited them. Now, you can imagine. For example, let's say you were a Jew, and you loved your high priest. And I'm sure many of the people of Israel dearly loved the high priest. They would go in, you know, and they were always offering sacrifices, week in, week out, week in, week out, all the years of their lives. Maybe you had a high priest who understood you. And you just loved that man. He was a precious man. He felt your needs. He knew you by first name. He cared for you, and he ministered to you, and you dearly loved him. And one day he died. He died. That was the end of your high priest.

And maybe he was succeeded by his son, and maybe his son was a good son. But in your mind you said to yourself, "You know, he's a good son, but he'll never be like his father was to me. He's so young, and he wouldn't understand me. And, oh, his father understood me, and we had this wonderful relationship. And it'll just never be like it used to be. My priest is gone." And it would be a very sad thing.

And then even worse if his son was evil. I mean, can you imagine the poor people who were...who were in love with Eli, waiting for Eli to be succeeded by his cruddy sons. And the prayers were rising daily in Israel, "God, don't let Eli die." Because his priesthood was going to be cut off, and he was going to be replaced by two who were...one of the two who were inadequate.

But, you see, it had nothing to do with spirituality. It had only to do with physical things. Right? It was the law of a carnal commandment. We studied it last time in verse 16. So it was a physical issue. Death kept hindering their ministry.

You want to know something about our high priest? He never dies. You see? He never dies. You see? That's why He can save us from the beginning to the uttermost, because it's never broken. There is no stopping His salvation. It goes all the way into access with God, anchors us there and

holds us forever, because He's a forever priest. That's the meaning of verse 24. "But this one, because He continues ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." You see? You see the difference?

Jesus is the great high priest, and He has no possibility of end, and there is no possibility that He will ever be succeeded by one who couldn't measure up to Him, because He'll always be the only high priest. "He continueth ever."

And then you notice the word "unchangeable." Oh, that's a tremendous word. Aparabitos. It means indissoluble, the idea that it can never come to a conclusion or an end. It describes something which belongs to one person and can never be transferred to anyone else. A certain medical writer uses it in ancient script to describe absolute scientific law which can never be violated, the principle on which the very universe is built, he says. So the writer is saying that Jesus Christ has a priesthood that is absolutely incapable of ever being altered. It can't be supplanted. It can't be replaced. It is eternal.

And then he uses the term continues, paramine, which means permanence. Paramine, from which we get, basically, permanence. It sounds very much the same. It means to remain for good. You say, "Well, what about when Jesus died?" When He died, His priesthood was never even stopped, never even ceased. You read carefully, and you find in the New Testament that when His body was dead on the cross, His Spirit was alive, and He was maintaining His eternal priesthood.

He is still my priest today. He is my priest until the day I die. He was the priest of Paul. He was the priest of every Christian who has ever lived. And He'll be the priest of every Christian who ever lives, and He'll be my priest throughout every possible conceivable point in eternity, because He has an unchanging, continuing ever priesthood. And I'll never have to sadden my heart with His death and think, "Oh, I wonder what the next one will be like." His is eternal.

Therefore, He is the priest of a better covenant. And the point is, therefore, to the Jews, come to Christ. He's all that your priesthood isn't. See the point? His priesthood is unbroken. It is forever. He is the last high priest.

Verse 25, "Wherefore, because of this, He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Because He lives forever making intercession, He takes us to the uttermost extreme possibility of salvation. He never stops. We go all the way, as far as there is to go.

His priesthood is absolute. His priesthood is final. He is able to fulfill completely the ideal office of the priest, which is to save to the uttermost. Can you imagine if there had ever been a priest in Israel who could have done that, who could've taken those people all the way to the fullness of salvation, brought them into the Holy of Holies and seated them on the lap of God on His own throne? What a priest he would have been. There was none. Only Jesus Christ can take us all the way to God, and,

as the end of chapter 6 says, anchor us there.

Now, let's look at this just a moment in verse 25, because this verse is one of the greatest verses in the Scripture. What does it mean when it says, "Wherefore He is able also to save"? What does it mean to save? Well, the doctrine of salvation is the main theme of Scripture. The main theme of revelation here in the Word of God is salvation. That's what the Bible's all about.

I noticed in an article in the paper today about the big theological conclave in Los Angeles, that they said salvation, and they used the term, salvation is important, but certainly we don't want to overdo it. We can learn some things from nature. We can learn certain things from nature, and we call that natural revelation. You can learn, Paul says, in Romans 1, from looking at nature about the eternal power of God and His Godhead. But the birds don't sing redemption's song, and the waves don't pound out the gospel, and the stars declare the glory of God, not the four spiritual laws.

In order to understand salvation, you must get off of natural revelation and get into special revelation. That's why, when people say, "Well, I worship God at the beach," or "I worship God in the mountains," very superficial, because you cannot understand God apart from special revelation in His salvation and revelation. And what we learn in the Bible is the story of salvation. That's the theme of the Bible.

Now, this morning, we mentioned the word "salvation" and told you that it means deliverance. When you go back, for example, to Exodus, chapter 14, verses 13 and 30, you find Israel delivered from Egypt. And there is the basic meaning of the word "salvation," to deliver. The kind of deliverance the Bible presents is not temporal. It's not transient deliverance. The kind that Christ gives is spiritual and eternal deliverance from sin. That's what He does. He delivers men from sin and its consequence.

The danger which men face, in which they live all their lives, is sin, with its terrible consequences of guilt, the curse, slavery to Satan, death and final Hell. This is sin, with all of its implications. It is from that which Christ saves. He saves us from sins, from guilt, from Satan, from death, from the wrath to come, from Hell.

And, you know, that wasn't easy to do. It was not easy to subdue Satan, to fulfill the law, to remove the curse, to take away sin, to satisfy God, to procure pardon, to purchase grace and glory, but He did it. And He did it to the uttermost, so that He could take us all the way to the fullness of salvation. He didn't have to let us off somewhere along the line to find our way the rest of the path through another source.

Now I want to look for just a minute at the detail of this verse. If you're looking for a good evangelistic sermon, here are all the points you need, in verse 25. Let's look first of all at the basis of uttermost

salvation. What is its basis? The word "wherefore." "Wherefore" is the basis. "Wherefore" takes us backwards to His unchanging priesthood. The reason He can save us to the uttermost is because He is a forever priest. You see? He can take us all the way because His priesthood is eternal. Other priests fell short, because they kept dying. But based on His unchanging priesthood is His ability to save us to the uttermost. That's the basis.

Then the nature of uttermost salvation. What is its nature? The word "save." He is able to save, in the fullest sense. Now, the word "salvation," and you know this, has three parts, past, present and future, three tenses to salvation. The past tense has to do with deliverance from sin's guilt. The present tense, deliverance from sin's power. And the future tense, deliverance from sin's presence. The first is done at the cross, the second at the throne as He intercedes and continues to cleanse us, the third at the Second Coming as He comes and translates us. And so salvation has three tenses.

In fact, in Titus, I'm thinking in 2:11 there, 12 and 13, all three tenses are listed. Titus 2:11, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." We have been saved. "The grace of God that brings salvation," we have been saved. Secondly, the present tense, "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age." There's the present concept of a godly life as we're being saved or being kept saved. The future, in 13, "looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ." There are the three tenses. We have been saved. We are being kept. And we shall be redeemed, in the full sense.

And so the nature of salvation, uttermost salvation, is total. It is salvation past, present and future that is ours in Christ. Then look at the power of uttermost salvation, and I love this word. "Wherefore, He is," what's the next word? "Able." Oh, that's good. Because the other priests weren't. But He is.

You know something? I bet the other priests wished they were. I'm sure they did. All power is His. You go back to chapter 2, verse 18, in Hebrews, and you have that same statement. And we could pass it by so easily. It says, "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to help them that are tempted." Oh, it's not just that He's willing. It's that He's able. It's that He's able.

This dear friend of mine has a little boy who recently they found out has leukemia, four years old. I went to the Children's Hospital the other night and went in the room, and it's a hard thing, you know. It's very, very hard for a parent. I know, because I have a four-year-old boy. And he was just...it was a heartbreaking thing. They found out the little fellow had leukemia. Just, he was just not feeling well one day. A couple days later he had leukemia and he was in the hospital for 30 days of treatment and tests before they'll know anything.

I went in there, and you know something? I wanted to make him well. Do you know that? I...all the time I want to do that. I tell people very often, if I was only a doctor I could give you a prescription,

you know, for your spiritual problem, and it would be all over. But I can't. And even when I see a physical problem, I say, "I wish I could do something," but I can't. I am willing, but I'm not able.

I have a man that I've prayed for for 13 years to come to Jesus Christ. I am so willing for him to be saved. But I am not able. I'm not able. It reminds me of my oldest son, Matt, who's 8, one time trying to carry out the trash. He was willing. He was not able. Oh, do I rejoice in the prospect of the day that he is able. He is willing. He is ever saying, "Dad, I'll carry it." I get off the airplane with all my bags. "I'll carry them, Dad." And he can't. He's willing. He's not able.

Our great high priest is not only willing, but He's what? He's able. Aaron was willing, but he wasn't able. Praise God for Christ, who is able. That's the power of uttermost salvation.

The extent of uttermost salvation? To the uttermost. As one guy said, from the guttermost to the uttermost. This has a double kind of meaning, the idea of uttermost. It means that He will bring us to full salvation, something the priests couldn't do, and it means that He will hold us there forever. Salvation is both perfect and complete. It is eternal and forever. He is able to save exhaustively and forever, comprehensively and eternally, all the way.

Then we have the objects of uttermost salvation. Who gets this salvation? "Wherefore He is able to save them." Which them? "Them that come unto God by Him." That's the object of uttermost salvation. Perfection is open and available to them that come unto God by Him. There's no other way. Jesus said, "No man comes unto the Father," what? "But by me."

Oh, you hear these people so many times, meet them on campuses everywhere. "Well, you fundamentalists go around, 'Well, there's only one way. You gotta be,' don't you realize there are all these people in the world believing all of this and all of that, and aren't there a lot of ways to God?" "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." And I always say, "Look, I could tell you that and you'd be happy, but it's a lie, so I'd rather tell you the truth." There's only one way. Only one way. He is able to save all, but all aren't saved, only them that come unto God by Him. And Jesus Himself said, John 5:40, "Ye will not," what? "Come, that you might have life." That's the problem. That's the problem.

He doesn't say that He saves to the uttermost those that are baptized. It doesn't say that He saves to the uttermost those that are church members, or any of that other. It says He saves those that come unto God by Jesus Christ. "Come" is one of God's favorite words. He started it in Genesis 7:1 with Noah, and He wraps up the whole Bible in Revelation 22:17 by saying, "Come." The whole Book of Revelation is come, come, come, come to salvation. It's not enough to hear. There must be a response.

So many times I think that we have thought we've accomplished the purpose when we've presented the truth. No. There must be a response. Parent, keep that in mind when you work with your children, that it's not enough to just tell them and keep telling them and keep telling them. There must be a response. If the truth does not bring a response, the truth will damn a person. To come is to cast yourself completely on God by faith in Jesus Christ. There is no other way.

Then He goes on to one other point, the security of uttermost salvation. How do you know that once you've got it, you're going to hang onto it? "Seeing He ever lives to keep on making intercession for them." Oh, is that fantastic? Not only does He save you initially, but He keeps interceding on your behalf. And you know how His intercession works? "Father, He just sinned. Put it on my account." He constantly is your guarantee that the covenant is never violated.

People say, "Can you lose your salvation?" Not as long as Jesus is the surety. Not as long as He's the surety. And how long will He be the surety? Forever. He secures us by His perpetual life...His perpetual life. He says, "Because I live, ye shall," what? "Live also." "As long as my life goes on, that's how long yours goes on."

Oh, stupendous work. And this is what Paul, I think, is talking about. Oh, I just really...this is a loaded thought, but let's go to Romans 5:10 for just a quick minute. We'll just take a little seed thought out of it, anyway. Romans 5:10, "For if when we were enemies," now, before we were saved, we were enemies against God, rebels, "if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." Stop right there. Now, that's a negative thing bringing about a great change. What is the negative thing? Death. Death is a negative. True? Christ did a lot with His death. He took a negative and did a tremendous work. By a negative, His death, He reconciled us to God. If a negative could do this, I wonder what a positive could do?

Listen to the rest of the verse. "Much more, being reconciled, we shall be continually being saved by His," what? "By His life." Listen to this. If His death did so much for you, imagine what His life must be doing for you. If by His death He could redeem you from Satan and sin, by His life, imagine how He must hold you. You see? That's what Paul is saying. We are being saved, present tense, kept by His life. If His death could do what it could do in negative, what His positive can do is life. Fantastic thought.

That's why Jude says He is able to keep you from falling and to present you what? Faultless. Faultless. That's why Paul says that "He which hath begun a good work in you shall perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." He continues to intercede in tender, compassionate love, to present us ultimately to God in perfect uttermost salvation. What a Savior. What a high priest. Surety of a better covenant, Savior to the uttermost.

Third thing. Separate from sinners. Oh, this is good. All those Levitical priests were sinners, and they had to go around offering sacrifices for themselves before they could for the people. Let's look at verse 26. "For such an high priest," listen, "was fitting for us," the word "becoming" there means becoming in the sense of fitting, "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Now, that's not like Aaron, because verse 27 describes Aaron, "who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's." No, He didn't have to do that. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens.

He was a fitting high priest, prepo, which means to be fitting or to be becoming. Christ is the fitting high priest. He fits the requirements. He does all that we need Him to do. He is the perfect one. His sympathy is the fullest because He has endured a temptation to its extreme, for He who is tempted and never succumbs knows temptation at all its limits. And He is fitting because not only is He sympathetic, but He's able. He's able. He not only feels what we feel, but He knows the way of escape.

And so He branches, beginning in verse 26, to the sinlessness of Jesus Christ, perfect, holy harmless and undefiled. Let's look at the terms He uses. First of all, He uses the term "holy." The only high priest, incidentally, in the Old Testament, who was fitting to get before God was a holy one. His holiness wasn't his own, but he had to offer sacrifices to render himself holy. And so the priest, as it says in verse 27, every day had to offer up a sacrifice for his own sins first and then for the people. And then he would run into God in this kind of a temporary holiness, and he could only stay for a minute on the Day of Atonement once a year, and then he'd have to get out of there fast. He wasn't holy, of his own holiness. But Christ was.

In fact, when Christ was born, in Luke 1:35, His humanity was called, "that holy thing." He was holy from the very beginning. He could say in John 14:30, "The prince of this world cometh but hath nothing in me." There was no capacity in Jesus for anything but holiness.

Now, the word for "holy" is usually hogios, which means separated unto God, saintly, holy. It's a very important word in Scripture. But that's not the word here. It's as if the Holy Spirit wants to just emphasize the holiness of Christ so much that He pulls out a completely different word. It is the word "hosios," h-o-s-i-o-s. And it refers to holiness of character. Hogios is holiness of service. Hogios means separated unto God to service. Hosios means personal holiness. The Lord Jesus Christ is both hogios and hosios.

Then it says He's harmless. Holiness points toward God, harmless toward men. No wickedness toward men. Jesus never harmed men. He lived for others. He went about doing good, always for others. Harmless. Never injuring anyone else. Do you know that some of the priests of the Levite line were terrible, terrible men, who injured their people spiritually? Not Jesus.

And then He goes on, He was undefiled. That means free from blemish and defilement. You know, when you think about it, Jesus Christ for 33 years was in the world, under the curse, mingling daily with sinners and Satan, and yet He never contracted one possible taint of defilement. Just like the rays of the sun, they may shine into the foulest stagnant pond, but they never lose any of their purity. So Jesus Christ moved through the world and was untouched by any of its blemishes.

He was in contact with Satan, but He always came out as spotless as He went in. He touched the leper, and the leper was clean. He contacted death, and death died. There never was a priest who was undefiled. But Jesus was such a high priest.

And then He says this. "He is separate from sinners." Aren't you glad? I am so glad that He is. He is a different class of creature than sinful men. A different class. In fact, He is made higher than the heavens. That's the class that He's in. Now, that's such a high priest. Tremendous thought.

And then verse 27, He carries the contrast a little further, "who needeth not daily as those high priests to offer up sacrifice first for His own sins and then for the people's." He doesn't need to do that. He doesn't have any sin. He doesn't have to offer for His own sin. He doesn't have any. And He doesn't need to repeat His sacrifice. Verse 27, at the end, "for this he did," what? "Once, when he offered up himself." He doesn't have to do it over and over again. He did it once, and a perfect priest and a perfect sacrifice, and it was done. Once is all it took. The perfect priest, the perfect sacrifice.

Oh, what a priest He is, the surety of a better covenant, the Savior to the uttermost, the separate from sinners. Then a summary statement in verse 28. Listen to it. "For the law," that is, the Old Testament ceremonial Levitical and Aaronic system, "maketh men high priests who have infirmity, but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is perfected for evermore." You see? When God set up the Levitical priesthood, it made men priests who were weak. But when God set up the priesthood of Jesus, He did it with an oath, and it was a perfect priesthood. Perfect for how long? "For evermore."

The old covenant, the law, granted a priesthood to men who were weak and couldn't bring perfection. They couldn't bring access to God. They couldn't save to the uttermost. But God superseded that with the Word of His oath, when He said, "I'll swear and I will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek," and Jesus came, the perfect priest. And He brings salvation in all three tenses. "And our priest is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

In the Old Testament, the priest wore a breastplate. And on the breastplate were all the stones representing the 12 tribes. So that whenever he went into the presence of God, he carried with him, on his chest, all the tribes of Israel. He also wore, draped over his shoulders, what the Bible calls an

ephod. Now, we don't really know what an ephod looked like, but apparently it was some kind of a thing that went over the shoulders. And on the ephod, on his shoulder, were all the names of the 12 tribes also. On the chest, or the breast, and the shoulder.

You say, "What was the point?" The priest bore the children of Israel to God on his heart, his affections, and on his shoulder, his strength. You see, this is the indication of what the priesthood is to be. First, a heart for the people. Secondly, the strength to help them.

But you know what? The Old Testament priest could have the heart for the people, but he didn't have the strength. Jesus Christ, right now, is at God's right hand, and on His heart is my name. That's affection. He loves me. And beyond that, beloved, on His shoulder is my name. Not only is He willing, but He's what? He's able. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for our high priest. Oh, how glorious is He to us. Thank you for what we've seen tonight in the unveiling of our great High Priest. Lord Jesus, we just want to praise you right now. We want to adore you for who you are. Oh, what a priest.

Thank you for interceding for us right now. Thank you for being the surety of a better covenant and saying to the Father, "Put that on my account." Thank you for being the Savior to the uttermost, who doesn't do it partially, but brings us into the Holy of Holies and anchors us there. Thank you for being separate from sinners, so that you don't need to offer sin sacrifice for yourself, so that you're not just an example, so that you're not just a martyr, but you're perfect. And your perfection accomplishes what no man's imperfection could ever accomplish.

We thank you that you bear our names on your heart, but more so on your shoulder. You're not only willing, but you're able. And, Father, we know that tonight, if there are some here who do not know you, who've never come to you by Jesus Christ, that you are able to save them to the uttermost, if they'll come...if they'll come. May it be so. In Jesus' name, amen.

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