

Secure and Courageous

Hebrews is to fuel a life of faithful, obedient endurance to the end. And it does this by elevating Jesus high so that we know that our salvation is secure in him... and by elevating the seriousness of faith and obedience. Juxtaposing these two realities over and over again. And so the grandest statements of the Person and work of Christ are meant to give us deep security in Christ. Salvation is a divine accomplishment, not a human achievement. But security can work in two ways. Security can lead to complacency or courage. It can lead to self-indulgence or self-sacrifice. It can lead to inaction or an adventurous spirit. Let me explain. A young boy who musters up the courage to jump off the diving board because he knows his dad is in the pool waiting for him - has the security of his dad's love and strength, so he adventurously takes the plunge. Picture another coddled, young boy who hardly ever goes outside to play because he loves the comfort and security of being indoors and out of reach of any potential danger.

It's the young boy who is so secure of his dad's love and strength that he takes the risky plunge off the high dive - this is what we are going for. Christ has accomplished a full and perfect salvation. So let's trust him, take the plunge, and go with him all the way in wholehearted faith and obedience.

So here's the Big Idea: **Salvation in Jesus is perfect and eternal, and it's for those who obey him.** We are entering into one of the big themes in the book of Hebrews - the work of Jesus as High Priest. We are going to dig deep into what it means that Jesus is our high priest from here through chapter 9. Piper (leaves/diamonds).

Today, we are going to look at three qualifications Jesus had to meet in order to be our great and perfect high priest. He had to be 1) appointed, 2) sympathetic, and 3) make sacrificial. Let's see how our text shows us that Jesus fits each of these ultimately and perfectly and therefore is our perfect High Priest. Then secure in him, we are to respond in obedient faith.

1. APPOINTED. A High Priest Must Be Appointed by God (verses 4-6)

In other words, a high priest, if he is to be faithful, must represent God. Like Aaron, Jesus was appointed. Notice, it is the Father who appoints the Son High Priest. Verse 5 says,

So also Christ did not exalt himself... but was appointed by him who said, You are my Son...

This is a quotation from Psalm 2:7, which is a Messianic Psalm. There is a place in the New Testament where we hear the Father saying these words to the Son. Do you remember where that's at? At the baptism of Christ. Jesus is baptized by John and comes up out of the water and the Father says, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 4:17). The Father expresses his delight in the Son as Jesus was carrying out his mission. And his mission was to do the work of a high priest. Back to Hebrews 5. The Father appoints the Son. Along with recognizing him as His Son, he also says in verse 6,

You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek... (Psalm 110:4)

So the Father appoints Jesus as a priest. Let's think about a few things here. First, who is Melchizedek? We are going to talk more about Melchizedek in chapter 7, but quickly since he comes up here. Let's just mention him because Jesus is a priest in the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek is a somewhat mysterious figure who

shows up in Hebrews, Psalm 110, and Genesis 14. I want to draw out three things really quick and then tie them together. First, the line of priests in the old covenant came through Aaron. Melchizedek, in Genesis 14 comes on the scene before Aaron, so his priesthood precedes and supercedes Aaron's. So Jesus is part of this priesthood which supercedes Aaron's. Second, Genesis 14 describes Melchizedek as a King who was also "priest of God Most High" (Genesis 14:18) - of course Jesus is too. He is the King of kings, who reigns at the Father's right hand. And third, the Father appoints Jesus as "priest forever". In other words, he is the perennial priest. His priesthood has no end. This is incredibly important when he consider the next two qualifications.

2. SYMPATHETIC. A High Priest Must Be Sympathetic Toward People (verses 2, 7)

A priest must be sympathetic toward the people he represents. Hebrews 4:15 makes an amazing statement:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin...

Notice the double negative used for emphasis. Another way to put this would be to say, "We most certainly do have a high priest who can sympathize with us..." The word sympathize means "to be affected with the same feeling as another". It is a verb. It is not just that Jesus has sympathy. He is sympathetic. He is affected by what affects us. Our text today points out two ways his sympathy is shown to us. First, in our suffering, pressure, and sorrow. Verse 7-8:

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.

I love the first phrase, "*In the days of his flesh...*" The eternal Son of God, stooped down and became fully human. Not just partially, but in every way. Jesus had to stoop down to us in order to scoop us up and bring us near to his heart. If you could feel the sympathetic heart of Christ for you today, it would be such sweet medicine for your soul. Jesus has real sympathy because he really suffered. But this is specifically referring to Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane on the night before his crucifixion. Do you remember that? The agony and sorrow that Jesus experienced there is unparalleled in all of human history. READ LUKE 22:39-44. Do you know sorrow, pressure, trouble, loneliness? Jesus knew it more! He is a man of sorrows. And it is not just that he knew sorrow. He knows your sorrow now. You are part of his body. You are his bride. How can a loving, caring husband not be touched with the pain of his wife?

But Christ's sympathy is shown to us even in our sin. Verse 2 says that even human high priests can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward... How much more our perfect high priest. Not because of his imperfections, but because he was tempted in every way as we are - yet without sin! Thomas Goodwin in his book *The Heart of Christ* says,

your very sins move him to pity more than to anger... yes, his pity is increased the more towards you, even as the heart of a father is to a child that has some loathsome disease... his hatred shall all fall, and that only upon the sin, to free you of it by its ruin and destruction, but his bowels shall be the more

drawn out to you; and this as much when you lie under sin as under any other affliction. Therefore fear not, 'What shall separate us from Christ's love?'

I think it is much easier to believe that Jesus is sympathetic to us in our pain than to believe that he is compassionate toward us in our sin - yes even now. The word wayward means to go astray, to get off the right path, to wander. The KJV translates it "out of the way". Do you ever find yourself wayward, wandering, out of the way, out of sorts spiritually? Jesus hates the sin, but his heart goes out to you and welcomes you to come to him and find help. Too often we justify our sin or pretend it isn't a big deal, not realizing that the medicine we need is in the hand of the Great Physician who is ready to administer it to us. Oh, come to him. Even now... he is gentle and full of compassion. A bruised reed he will not break...

3. SACRIFICIAL. A High Priest Must Sacrifice For People (verses 1, 8-10)

The high priest must atone for sins and turn away God's wrath. Jesus has done this perfectly, once for all. Verse 9 says,

And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.

Through what he suffered, Jesus was "made perfect". What does that mean. Well, it does NOT mean that he was somehow morally unqualified or deficient before he suffered and died on the cross. Rather it means that through the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross, he was made the perfect and sufficient Savior, able to save perfectly all who draw near to God through him. The word translated "made perfect" is teleioo, from which we get the telos - meaning "ultimate aim or purpose". Jesus accomplished God's ultimate aim - full redemption for his people. And he did this by offering up himself once-for-all to put away our sin forever. He is a priest "forever", perpetually, perennially. His sympathy is as real and tender today as ever. His once for all sacrifice is as effectual to fully save as ever. Past tense - "made perfect".

This is why he is the source of eternal salvation! The word source means "effectual cause". Jesus Christ, in the perfection of his work as High Priest is the supreme cause of eternal salvation. One of the sayings that came out of the Reformation is that we are saved "*by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone!*" And once saved, we receive an eternal salvation - nothing can undo it. It is not as though we are saved today, but tomorrow we've been cut off. I do believe that once you are saved, you are truly and eternally saved.

To Those Who "Obey"?

Which is why the last part of verse 9 has caused no small amount of trouble. But the end of verse 9 shows us this is not a message of cheap grace. You are not being called to some kind of easy believism nonsense. Here's what it says,

*And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation **to all who obey him.***

We are tempted to read this as though it says, Jesus is the source of eternal salvation to all who "believe him". But that's not what it says. This eternal salvation is said to be for all who "obey" Christ. The perfection of the work of Jesus Christ as our High Priest is for more than lyrics for good songs to sing, more than for good, comforting feelings in our hearts, and elevated thoughts about God and Christ in our heads. It does all of

those things. BUT if that is all it does, you may have wonderful notions of Jesus and still no saving knowledge of him. Here is what Charles Spurgeon said:

Faith and obedience are bound up in the same bundle. He that obeys God, trusts God; and he that trusts God, obeys God. The moment you put yourself into His hands you must obey Him, or you have not trusted Him.

This is not works salvation. This is not obedience as cause of salvation. Let me explain. **If Jesus is the supreme cause of eternal salvation, than our obedience CANNOT BE!** But it is necessary as evidence of our salvation. Or as fruit of saving faith. If saving faith is the root which grows up into a tree, obedience is fruit of genuine saving faith. So genuine faith will have accompanying, real obedience. Hebrews 11:8 says, "By faith Abraham obeyed..." 1 John 2:3 says "We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments."

Jesus asks a question that all of us should think carefully about in Luke 6:46: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' and not do what I tell you?" Good question. Well, think about what the Lord has told us to do so far in the book of Hebrews - all of these spoken to professing Christians. Listen to the seriousness of these words:

- Today if you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts (3:8, 3:15, 4:7)
- Hold fast to your hope in Christ (3:6, 4:14)
- Be careful, watch your heart, so that you are not deceived by sin and fall away from God (3:12-13)
- Be diligent to hear and respond to God's word (4:12-13)
- Draw near to the throne of grace through Christ (4:14-16)

These are imperatives, commands. What are they saying? If what Hebrews says about Jesus is true, then you must reorient your life to him. He is ultimate reality! To not, to treat him lightly, is to commit spiritual suicide. Do you trust Jesus Christ alone for salvation? Is your life characterized by obedience? Not perfect obedience, but a sincere and honest desire to please the Lord in all you do. True faith is obedient faith. Jesus Christ, our perfect High Priest, is the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. Let's pray.

LORD'S SUPPER - The sermon speaks of the sacrifice of our High Priest. The Lord's Supper dramatizes it. In the message, the gospel is spoken. In the Lord's Supper, the death of Christ is a perpetual reminder and display of the death of Christ. It is yet another unmistakable reminder that our salvation was secured through Jesus Christ alone. I want you to consider two things as the elements are passed this morning:

1. Corporate activity. 1 Corinthians 11:18 - When you come together - personal, but not private. We have come together for this. Don't isolate yourself from the body, for this is a church-wide activity.
2. Jesus told us to take the bread and cup "In remembrance of me." Not in remembrance of ourselves and how rotten we have been. We look to Christ, with gratitude, remembering his willing suffering and death "for us". Pass the elements and we will take together.