

INVINCIBLE HOPE

You probably didn't wake up this morning thinking, "I'm so glad Jesus is my High Priest!" It may not be the first thing on our mind. But tomorrow you might. Especially when you see how powerfully connected it is to your outlook on the future. Hebrews 7 is all about giving you a solid ground for gospel hope - and it relentlessly focuses on Christ's office of High Priest.

Hope is a confident, certain expectation of future good. And not a slightly improved future. But a future that is beyond our wildest dreams. Hope is future oriented. But it has strong effects for the present as well. Hope is described in Hebrews 6:19 as a "*sure and steadfast anchor for our souls.*" This is what these Hebrew Christians needed. They were suffering personal loss. They were being persecuted because of this new faith in Christ. Life was hard. They needed the steadfast and sure anchor of a future oriented hope. We do too.

So four glorious truths converge for our enlarged and grounded hope: 1) The Father's oath, 2) the kind of Person Jesus is, 3) what Jesus has done, and 4) what Jesus is doing now. And they all have to do with Jesus as our high priest.

The Father's oath to Jesus our high priest... (verses 20-22)

Our hope is invincible because it is built upon an oath from God the Father. And this oath is that Jesus is our high priest forever. He is our eternal high priest. Look at verses 20-21:

And it [our better hope introduced] was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, You are a priest forever."

God swears to something here. Hundreds of years before Jesus comes to earth as a man, the Father said to Him, "You are a priest forever." Why an oath? Isn't God's word enough? Why didn't the Father simply say, "You are a priest forever"? Why did he say, "I swear and I will not change my mind, You are a priest forever?"

He ups the ante. Usually when someone swears to do something, it's because they have previously broken a promise or not followed through on something. When my son says, "Dad, I swear I will do thus and so," it is usually because I pointed out that the last time he didn't follow through. But that's not why God swears. He does not swear in order to assure us that he will actually follow through this time, unlike last time. Hebrews 6:17 tells us why God swears with an oath,

When God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise, the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath...

God swore with an oath to give us strong encouragement to trust him. “*God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise*”. You see we live in a world filled with liars. We have all lied and we have all been lied to. We have all broken promises and we have all had promises broken. And so to give strong encouragement, God swears with an oath. [just saw yesterday] Notice who he swears to. He doesn’t swear to us. He swears to the Son Jesus. It’s almost like we are allowed to be a fly on the wall in this interaction between the Father and the Son. The oath is from the Father to the Son, where he appoints the Son to be a priest forever. And when Jesus comes to earth, he clearly has a self-awareness of his priestly office. Numerous examples could be drawn out, but let me just give one. John 17 is often called the high priestly prayer of Christ. He’s praying to the Father and says in this verse 12: “*While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*” He was made a high priest by oath and he has and is fulfilling that oath. This is a strong anchor for our hope.

Hope in who Jesus, our high priest is (verse 26)

For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

It was *fitting* that we should have such a high priest. I love that. It is fitting. Just the kind of high priest we need. Given the kind of people we are, we need a high priest like this. The book of Hebrews states emphatically on the one hand that Jesus, according to his human nature was made like us in every way (2:18, 4:12-16). But here we see how Jesus is unlike us.

Jesus our high priest is “*holy*”. He is uniquely God’s holy One, set apart to God and for God’s service. He is “*innocent*”. This literally means “without evil”. Jesus is completely without evil. Whereas we, in ourselves and according to nature, are evil in our motives and actions, he is good and innocent through and through.

Jesus our high priest is “*unstained*”. The high priests in the OT had to be clean externally. Jesus is unstained internally. While all human beings are depraved because of sin, Jesus walked the earth for 33 years, but was

immune to the stain of sin. Because Jesus is holy, innocent, and unstained, he is “separated from sinners”. Though he put on flesh (incarnation) for our sake, he is separate in his Person and character from sinful human nature.

Finally, Jesus our high priest is “*exalted above the heavens*”. This speaks of the triumph of his resurrection, ascension, glorification, and present enthronement at God’s right hand (“sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet...” - Psalm 110:1, Hebrews 1:13) He is not only our high priest, he is also our Lord and King.

That is what our high priest is like. Your hope and trust in him will be limited by what you know of him. Would you trust a completely stranger with your children or the information to your bank accounts? How about someone you scarcely know? How about your best friend, who has impeccable character? You bet. Jesus, the holy One who is innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens - he is trustworthy. He is a strong anchor for our hope.

Hope in what Jesus our high priest has done (verse 27)

He has no need to, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.

Jesus, our high priest, self-consciously offered up himself - the priest offered himself as the sacrifice. In John 10, Jesus says, “Nobody takes my life from me. I lay it down. And he does this for “the people” or his people. PERSONAL (Galatians 2:20). But then, the words “once for all” are breathtakingly glorious. It’s final! Jesus is not like the former high priests whose work was never completed. Every day they would get up and have a day full of bloody sacrifices - and it never made an end of sin. By offering himself up once for all, he put away all sin for all his people for all time.

And Oh, for those who have a hope on this foundation, what joy there is. Psalm 32:1-2 - “*How blessed is the man transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered. How blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity.*” This is true gospel joy, founded on an unshakable hope. William Tyndale put it, “*The word gospel signifies good, merry, glad and joyful tidings, that makes a man’s heart glad and makes him sing, dance, and leap for joy.*”

There is no other sacrifice needed. If you are in Christ, there is no condemnation for you now or ever (Romans 8:1). Jesus took it, and he took it all. You are free and forgiven - forever. Jesus said, "It is finished" and it is. Christ's finished work on the cross - what an anchor for our hope!

Hope in what Jesus our high priest is doing (verses 23-25)

Our hope is invincible because of the permanent and perpetual intercession of Jesus our high priest.

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

He holds his priesthood **permanently**. He **continues forever**... he **always lives** to make intercession. Permanence, going forever, without a break. Jesus' ministry as high priest is one of permanent, perpetual intercession - he stands before God on your behalf. Notice, who does Jesus make intercession for? Those who draw near to God through him. And what is he able to do for those who draw near? Save to the uttermost. Uttermost is such an amazing word. It means he saves completely or forever. In other words, he saves us, keeps us saved, and he will complete our salvation for eternity. Which is good news, because if he did 90, 95, 99% and left the rest to us. We would be lost!

And we need this kind of a high priest like Him! We need it because we **sin**. We need it because we **suffer**. And we need it because the **devil hates us and would drag us to hell if he could**. Think about this. We need a high priest who always intercedes for us because we still sin. Real Christians don't want to sin, and they are not going around trying to sin, but we do sin. And if Jesus was not perpetually interceding for us, representing us to the Father, we would be lost. 1 John 2:1: "*I write these things so that you may not sin, but if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*"

We need a high priest who intercedes for us because we suffer. Where do we go when we suffer? Well, we should go to God our Father, through Jesus our high priest. Maybe that isn't where you go, but you should! When we go through hardship, and life is daunting, and we fear we might lose hold of him, he will not lose hold of us. The hymn, He Will Hold Me Fast: "*I could never keep my hold through life's fearful path. For my love is often cold, he must hold me fast.*" And he does. He is able to save completely and forever.

And we need a high priest like this because the devil seeks to devour our faith. And the main weapon he uses is accusation and condemnation. Romans 8:33-34 (*“Who shall bring a charge...”*). Because of our high priest, the devil won’t be able to devour our faith. But he’ll try. One of my favorite Martin Luther quotes,

“When the devil throws our sins up and declares that we deserve death and hell, we ought to speak thus: ‘I admit that I deserve death and hell. What of it? Does this mean that I shall be sentenced to eternal damnation? By no means. For I know One who suffered and made satisfaction in my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Where he is, there I shall be also.’”

Before the Throne: *“When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within, upward I look and see him there, who made an end to all my sin.”* What an anchor for our hope.

APPLICATION

How can this hope be yours? How can you know it? Truly! I think we tend to look inward to see if it resides in us. We look in for hope. That’s all wrong. Martin Luther said that the essence of our sinful nature is an inward curve. We turn inward on ourselves.

The certainty of these things lies outside of us. And so we need to turn outward and upward. It lies in God’s sure word of oath. It lies in the perfection of Christ’s Person and character. It lies in the finished, once for all sacrifice “for us” that cannot be undone. It lies in the perpetual, permanent, eternal intercession of Christ “for us.” The words we sang earlier are perfect:

Upward I look and see him there, who made an end to all my sin. Because the sinless Savior died, my sinful soul is counted free. For the just is satisfied to look on him and pardon me.

Don’t look in. Look up. Fix your gaze on Jesus, your high priest and let your hope rise. Keep fixing your hope on Jesus, your high priest and let your hope be strengthened. And sure and steadfast hope, which is an anchor for your souls. Let’s pray.