

Text: Heb 5.7

We've made good progress in Heb 5, covering ten verses in two Sundays. Now we are going to settle down and stay in the same passage for a while.

Today I want to focus on verse 7. Let's read the whole passage:

Read Heb 5.1-10, text 7

When you hear this verse, does any other passage come to mind?

For most readers, the Lord's agonized prayers in the garden of Gethsemane are at the forefront. We talked about this a little last week, but today I want to examine it much more closely.

Last week we talked about "What We Have Found in Our Eternal Priest." The whole passage presents Jesus as a priest like Aaron, but better than Aaron.

This idea is central to the book of Hebrews.

Thinking about the priesthood, we've seen that a priest is an intermediary between man and God. He can sympathize with man, but he also has access to God through whom men can connect with God.

For accessing God, the high priest cannot come empty handed. What does he need to bring so that sinning man can commune with God? (see Heb 5.3)

He must bring an offering, a sacrifice.

In the human priesthood of Aaron, we see he must first offer for himself, then for the people.

In the same way Christ appears before God with an offering. We are used to thinking about this. What do we think of as the offering Jesus brought to God?

We usually think of the bloody sacrifice of himself on the cross, and of course this is true.

What does Hebrews say of the offering of our great High Priest in our text? What does he offer?

Heb 5.7 ¶ In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety.

Remember the word, "offered up" is the very word that is used of priestly offerings in other contexts.

What makes prayers and supplications the offering Hebrews is talking about? Which prayers should we think of in this context? How did those prayers achieve their end, and what was the end? (the text says God heard him)

That is our subject for today:

Our Priest's Great Offering

Proposition: Through His prayers, Jesus offered up the one thing needful for all men to live.

I. To whom did Jesus pray?

- The answer seems obvious, “to the Father, duh”
- But why call the Father, “the one able to save him from death”?

A. Possibly because of how he prayed in the garden

1. Already mentioned: prayers in Gethsemane
2. Mentioned in all three Synoptics (Mt, Mk, Lk)
3. Read Mt 26.36-46, the fullest account
4. Luke adds this detail (Lk 26.44)

Lk 22.44 And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

5. Luke also mentions, in the preceding verse

Lk 22.43 Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him.

6. What Jesus asked

- a. First: “is there any other way” — as a man, he shrank from death, though it was his purpose
- b. Second: “your will be done” (after the strengthening from the angel)
- c. The initial request was for a way “out of death” — but the answer wasn’t “out of death,” for he died

Our text, though, says, “He was heard” (*i.e.*, answered) — implying a positive answer... yet he died

B. The One able to save him from death

1. God is able to do anything he wills, so as we sing, "He could have called 10,000 angels to destroy the world and set him free"
 - a. One commentator escapes the dilemma by saying, "well, 'the one able to save him from death' is just a title, like 'the Lord of hosts'"
 - b. That answer doesn't satisfy
2. The phrase, "from death," does not necessarily mean "prevent death"
 - a. The Gk is literally, "out of death"
 - b. In other words, "out of the grave," *i.e.*, the resurrection

Now let's turn to another question

II. Which prayers, if any, does Hebrews mean?

A. In the previous message, I mentioned that Jesus was always praying

1. We noted that he rose up early to pray (regularly)
2. We noted the prayer for Peter ("Simon, Satan has desired to sift you as wheat")
3. We noted the high priestly prayer for all saints ("not for these only...")

In a sense, the whole life of Jesus was an intercession for his people.

B. Still, we are thinking of his high priestly function, so some specific prayer must be in mind

1. The prayers in the garden were first of all to prepare himself to undergo the suffering (not intercessory, except indirectly)
2. What about his groaning on the cross?
 - a. Seven sayings on the cross:
 - 1) Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. (Lk 23:34)

- 2) Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise. (Lk 23:43)
- 3) Woman, behold thy son! *and* Behold thy mother! (Jn 19:26–27)
- 4) My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34)
- 5) I thirst. (Jn 19:28)
- 6) It is finished. (Jn 19:30)
- 7) Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. (Lk 23:46)

b. A few notes:

- 1) The only cry mentioned in Matthew or Mark is the central one, “My God, my God...” [quotation of Psalm 22.1]
- 2) Some will make Mark the first gospel (I think wrongly)
 - a) My order: Matthew [about AD 45], Luke [about AD 59], Mark [about AD 64], John [about AD 80]

Mt 27.46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” that is, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”

- b) Regardless of whether Mt or Mk is first, Lewis Johnson says,

“it is evident that the cry of desolation was the only dying utterance of Jesus Christ which the early church had in written form for some time.”¹

This would pretty well cover the apostolic age by my reckoning.

- 3) There is **a rabbinic practice** that may apply here: when a Rabbi would utter the first line of an OT passage (esp. a

¹ S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., “The Death of Christ,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* : Dallas Theological Seminary 125, no. 497 (1968): 11.

psalm) the whole psalm would come to mind among the hearers

Possibly in use here ... consider these sections

- a) The mocking of onlookers (Ps 22.6-8)
- b) The description of suffering (Ps 22.16)
- c) The division of his clothing (Ps 22.18)

Could the onlooking priests, scribes, Pharisees, and rabbis fail to get this message?

Let's look at Ps 22 a little more closely

3. The prayer of Psalm 22

- a. The doubt and despair of David (1-10)
- b. The suffering and petitions of David (11-21)
 - 1) Extreme suffering (11-18)
 - 2) Petition (19-21)
- c. David's message to his brethren (22-24)

We will stop here...

4. Theological significance of the cry

- a. The first three statements are in behalf of others
 - 1) The soldiers
 - 2) The thief
 - 3) His mother
- b. The fifth statement fulfills prophecy ("I thirst")
- c. The last two statements conclude the scene, committing Jesus into God's hands
- d. The fourth statement stands out on its own
 - 1) First and last address God as Father
 - 2) This addresses God as God
 - 3) This expresses abandonment

4) The first and last speak of a paternal relationship, this one is “judicial”²

e. The essence of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is *judicial*: Jesus suffers judgement

1) Not on his own behalf — he is without sin

2) Rather on the behalf of others: he is offered to satisfy God for the sins of others

III. What effect did his prayers have?

A. Our text says, “He was heard because of His piety”

1. The phrase “he was heard” implies he was heard and answered

2. The word “piety” could be translated “reverence”

Heb 12.28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with **reverence** and awe;

3. The offering was accepted because it was offered by an impeccable (sinless) priest

B. Psalm 22 also touches on this

Ps 22.24 For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Nor has He hidden His face from him; But **when he cried to Him for help, He heard.**

C. The prayers and supplications Jesus offered with loud crying and tears?

1. Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani

2. My God, my God why have you forsaken me?

Why? Because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Why? Because the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

² Johnson, Jr., 14.

Why? Because without the intercession of the Lord Jesus, standing between you and God, you would die.

Conclusion:

Proposition: Through His prayers, Jesus offered up the one thing needful for all men to live.

Have you made the Lord Jesus your own personal saviour from sin?