

Text: Heb 7.23-25

I've had all I can take of my titles for these messages, so I changed it up and put my "generic title" in as the subtitle. This week our message is:

Able to Save Forever:***Why Must There Be a Change? (Part 3 - Contrast 3)***

We are talking about the high priesthood of Jesus Christ and why it is so much better than the Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament.

The undercurrent of all these messages is the temptation of disloyalty to Christ, to make things easier, to drop back to a position that has less risk, less ridicule, less trouble, less persecution.

As I've said repeatedly, we have never really faced the kind of trouble the Hebrew Christians faced, but Christians today are no less tempted to disloyalty.

It's very easy to go easy.

We tend to shy away from hard work and hard times. If there is an easy way out, we want to take it.

The author of Hebrews is laying out reasons *for* loyalty to Jesus Christ. As we work our way through them, let's ask ourselves about the temptations we face. In what ways can we be disloyal to our Lord Jesus?

The whole chapter of Heb 7 lays out the reasons for changing the priesthood from Aaron's sons to Jesus. Those reasons double as reasons for loyalty to Jesus.

1. The tribe of Levi, in Abraham, paid tithes to Melchizedek, signifying their subordination — Jesus, after the order of Melchizedek requires more loyalty than the Levitical priesthood (7.4-10)
2. The change to a priest from Judah means the OT law no longer reigns, the change requires a change of loyalty and a change of relationship to God (7.11-14)
3. The change to Jesus rests on a superior life — the indestructible life of the God-man, as opposed to the failing lives of the sons of Aaron (7.15-17)
 - a. There is a better hope in Him, after the former commandment is set aside (7.18-19)

- b. There is a guarantee of a better covenant, by an oath from God's own lips (7.20-22)
- c. **And today:** there is salvation to the uttermost for all in the one priest who can serve permanently (7.23-25)

That's how the chapter breaks down: reason after reason why Jesus stands in a new place, one that replaces the old system, and demands the greatest loyalty from those who come to him in faith.

Read Heb 7.18-25, text 23-25

Proposition: *Heb offers complete salvation to those who draw near to God through him.*

I. The inability of the many (23)

A. The point of this comparison

- 1. Not so much on the quality of life contrast
 - a. That is, Levitical priests died, this priest is indestructible
 - b. That point already made in 7.16
 - c. Here the contrast is between the *many* and the *One*
- 2. The many are not able to accomplish what the One could do

Many: "This word is the principal emphasis of the clause ..." ¹

B. The greater numbers came about because of their mortality

- 1. We see the mortality of the priests almost immediately
 - a. Forty years after the Exodus, Aaron died (Num 20.28)

Num 20.28 After Moses had stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on his son Eleazar, Aaron died there on the mountain top. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain.

¹ J. Harold Greenlee, *An Exegetical Summary of Hebrews*, 2nd ed (Dallas, Tex.: SIL International, 2008), 253.

- b. Approx. 35 years later, Eleazar died (Josh 24.33, last sentence of Joshua)

Josh 24.33 ¶ And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him at Gibeah of Phinehas his son, which was given him in the hill country of Ephraim.

- c. Every priest in a long line afterwards likewise died

Josephus says there were 83 high priests from Aaron to the destruction of the temple in AD 70 (average of about 18 yrs per high priest)

- d. Of course there were many other lesser priests who also supported the high priest in his role

2. The fact of their mortality alludes to their inability (“prevented by death from continuing”)
- The continuity of the priesthood continually interrupted
 - The discontinuity perpetuated by right of succession
 - The completeness of salvation left unsatisfied by the continual interruption

In human affairs, men will form strong businesses, maybe big multi-million-dollar firms. The old man dies and leaves it to his son. The son may have no head for business and the organization struggles, even fails. Or maybe the son does well, but the grandson fails. Sometimes the heirs (sons and daughters) are forced out of control so that men of business can keep the organization going.

The same was true of the priesthood. Some priests were outstanding. Their sons were not. (Eli and his sons for example). Or consider Annas, his son-in-law Caiaphas, and several other sons who succeeded one another during the 1st century — not sterling examples of high priesthood.

What could the people do when the priesthood fell into bad hands?

Besides this, we've already talked about the repetitive nature of the OT system. The **many** priests could not overcome the inadequacy and inability of the system.

II. The uniqueness of the One (24)

A. Notice the chiasm

On the one hand, the many existed in greater numbers

Because they were prevented by death

But he (on the other hand) because he continues forever

He holds his priesthood permanently

B. The uniqueness of his life: He continues forever

and he, because of his remaining — to the age (YLT)

1. This “implies Christ’s participation in the life of God.”²

2. His position in the Trinity makes his life unique

C. Even more, his position towards us is permanent

1. This priesthood can never be passed on to anyone else

2. The meaning of this unique term (used only here)

a. The word is a negation of the concept of transgression or trespass

If a border can be trespassed, can be violated, it is permeable, not “permanent”

b. Thus, the word means something “which cannot be (or in fact is not) overstepped, transgressed, violated, that which is ‘absolute.’ ... Christ’s Priesthood is His alone, open to no rival claim, liable to no invasion of its functions.”³

² William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1991), 189.

³ Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1903), 192.

III. The opportunity for all (25)

A. The forever salvation

1. The concept of salvation is simple enough to understand

“The salvation to which the author refers indicates salvation from sin and salvation resulting in a right relationship with God.”⁴

2. The concept of “forever”

a. Could refer simply to duration of time, but not the normal word for this concept

1) Jesus continues “forever” — “into the age” (24, one of 48 uses of this term for “forever”)

2) Unique word used here – *pantelēs* (only other word translated “forever”)

b. The unique word

1) A combination of the word for “all” and “complete, mature”

Jesus on the cross: “it is finished” = “it is complete”

2) The Latin translates it with the sense of duration of time, “in perpetuo”

3) But sense seems more than that, “all complete” or ...

“**pert. to meeting a very high standard of quality or completeness, completely. a.** with respect to an action (*quite*) *complete, perfect, absolute*, the same thing as παντελῶς, i.e. *completely, fully, wholly*”⁵

4) κιν: “save to the uttermost”

⁴ David Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary 35 (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Publ. Group, 2010), 429.

⁵ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

c. An illustration: Lk 13.11

Lk 13.11 And there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and **could not straighten up at all.**

“could not stand up completely — not able to stand up unto completeness ... to the uttermost”

d. The reality is that both ideas might be included in this word

1) Duration: if you are saved, it is for all time

2) Completeness: if you are saved, he didn't miss anything

You may struggle with sin and wonder why you can't get victory. You may wonder if you are saved.

If you are saved, you are saved completely: he has enabled you to get victory.

B. The accessible salvation

1. Remember the setting aside of the former commandment (7.18)

a. This was to bring in the better hope, through which we draw near to God (7.19)

b. Now, here, we get the forever salvation if we draw near to God *through* Him

2. There was an old way to draw near to God: the Levitical priesthood

a. The old way required constant attention

b. The old way depended on getting the rituals right, in obedience, in not making any missteps

3. There is a new way to draw near to God

a. Through Him

b. He kept the Law for us

c. We by faith enter into his eternal life

d. We by faith receive forever salvation

4. The reason: He always lives to make intercession for us
 - a. One commenter said that he doesn't intercede, like a lawyer standing before a judge, making an appeal
 - b. Rather, he intercedes seated from a throne on the same level as the Father, and says, "that one is mine"

Conclusion:

Proposition: Jesus offers complete salvation to those who draw near to God through him.

What about you? Do you have complete salvation?