

“Jesus Lives to Pray for Us”

Heb. 7:11-28

As we come to Heb. 7:25 we read that

²⁵ Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

Who’s “them”? “those who come to God” [us]. So Jesus lives to intercede in prayer for us every day to His Father. And He is able to save completely those who come to God. How is He able to do that? Back in Ch. 5:7 we read,

⁷ During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹ and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him ¹⁰ and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

We saw that word perfect used 2 weeks ago in Heb. 2:

¹⁰ In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.

Obviously Jesus wasn’t imperfect, but the word means completion, finish a task; perfect it. God sent Jesus to this earth to be Emmanuel (God with us) to complete the task of dying for our sins on the cross and rising from the dead, having victory over death and now those of us who place our faith in Jesus also have victory over sin’s penalty death, which is eternal separation from God. Now we have a relationship with God that we didn’t have before. Now we can approach the throne of grace for our needs through Jesus. Heb. 5:8-9 adds that He also had to finish this task through suffering.

Because this is the point of his letter to Jewish Christians, who were suffering for the gospel and were thinking about (and some must have already) going back to temple worship and sacrifices to avoid suffering. Since the Jews weren’t being persecuted only Christians. So the author of Hebrews warns them of the danger of abandoning Jesus for Moses and the Law. And most of the letter is showing how much better Jesus is than the sacrificial system prescribed through Moses. And now we’re introduced to this Melchizedek fellow to show us that God always knew the Law was insufficient to bring people into a relationship with Him. It worked, because it foreshadowed what Jesus would do for us, but you could only get so close to God. As a worshipper you only got as far as the bronze altar of offering. If you were a priest you got closer, you got to go into the holy place and burn incense, light the menorah and put out fresh bread each day. And if you were the High Priest you alone got to go into the Holy of Holies only once a year.

Can we not get closer to God? How can we know our prayers are heard? In the Old Testament, God showed and promised He had a better way, a better Mediator coming and He showed His plan through Melchizedek.

There’s a lot about Melchizedek that we don’t know but the whole point of Melchizedek is to show us

God Wants a Closer Relationship with You **(7:11-20)**

The author of Hebrews introduced us to Melchizedek back in 5:10 but then he said in 5:11 that these Christians hadn't matured enough to know who Melchizedek is. Failure to understand Melchizedek's purpose reflects your limited understanding of Jesus and God's desire to draw you closer to Himself.

God designed the temple and the sacrificial system under the Law to show Israel He wanted them to come near Him, but it also showed them they could only get so far. It was made that way intentionally to point to something better. But it's the Law. It's Scripture. How can anything supersede it? Because in the Old Testament God already promised He had a better priesthood and therefore a better way that people could get close to Himself.

So in vv.1-10 the Hebrews' author explains that Melchizedek was a priest before the Law was written. Remember Abraham's battle in Gen. 14 to rescue Lot? Abraham wins. After his victory Melchizedek, the priest of God Most High comes from Salem (Jerusalem) and blessed Abraham from God and Abraham offered Melchizedek 1/10 as an offering to God. 7:2 points out that Melchizedek means king of righteousness and since he was the king of Jerusalem, he was also the king of peace. So before the Law there was already a righteous king/priest of Jerusalem who could mediate for you to God.

He was greater than Abraham and the Levitical priesthood would come from the seed of Abraham meaning, the Levitical priesthood owed allegiance to this King/priest as well. So v.11 begins

¹¹ If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood—and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood—why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? ¹² For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also. ¹³ He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar.

Remember, perfection mean completion, bring to an end. Could the Levitical system bring believers completely into God's presence? No. But through Melchizedek

God promised to send a better mediator (vv.11-17)

Melchizedek was before the tribes. The Scripture is silent about his lineage so the Hebrews author under inspiration of the Holy Spirit uses Melchizedek as a type of Christ; a King priest of God Most High, king of righteousness and peace whose beginning and end is purposely unmentioned meaning his physical limitations doesn't end this priestly line. When did God promise in the Old Testament that He would send a better mediator? In Ps. 110. The Hebrews author prefaced that with

¹⁵ And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, ¹⁶ one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷ For it is declared: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

Melchizedek's line continues because it was not based on blood. The one who fulfills it can't die – Jesus. And this is who Ps. 110 refers to:

- ¹ *The LORD [Yahweh] says to my [David's] Lord [Messiah]: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."*
- ² *The LORD [Yahweh] will extend your [Messiah's] mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies.*
- ³ *Your [Messiah's] troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn you [Messiah] will receive the dew of your youth.*
- ⁴ *The LORD [Yahweh] has sworn and will not change his mind: "You [Messiah] are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."*

The author's point here is why are you thinking of going back to a system that can't get you closer to God, when His Son now can give you that closer relationship with God? Matter of fact, He's the only way you can get close to God

Since no one else can represent us to God (v.18)

¹⁸ *The former regulation is set aside because it was weak & useless*

So if the priests who are assigned to represent us to God are ineffective and a new priest can do the job, that means the whole system needs to change. And if the people assigned to be our mediators are unable to represent us to God, that means no one is able to represent us to God, including ourselves. Back in v.12 we read,

¹² *For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law.*

Jesus said in Matt. 5:17

"He did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfil it." This is how the Law can change. Jesus is 'better' because He is not weak and useless. He alone can go into God's presence and represent us so we can draw closer to God. It is only through Jesus that

We can know we are in God's presence (v.19)

¹⁸ *The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless* ¹⁹ *(for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.*

How do we know God is with us? Because of Jesus. How can we be certain we are close to God? Because we can go through Jesus. Only He satisfied God's requirement to live a sinless life and voluntarily die for our sins. Proven by His resurrection. The resurrection proves you are victorious over sin. For 40 days He appeared all over Israel after His death and burial.

So if you want to abandon Jesus because following Him is hard, you need to rethink this. Without Jesus you don't have access to God. Don't go back to a weak and useless system where no one is fully representing you to God. Because of Jesus we now have complete access to God and

God Guarantees He Hears Us Through Jesus **(7:20-25a)**

How? Ps. 110 was an oath, a promise from God a better priest was coming.

“The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: ‘You are a priest forever.’ ” ²² Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

And because Jesus lives forever He has a permanent priesthood. The two main functions of the priest were offering the sacrifice on another’s behalf (and Jesus’ sacrifice made sacrifices no longer necessary) and praying to God for the people. There’s a great illustration of this in the pre-Christmas account of John the Baptist’s coming. Zechariah, his dad, goes into the holy place to sprinkle some of the blood from the daily sacrifice on the horns of the altar of incense (which symbolizes prayer – God who’s right behind the curtain “smells” the prayers of one who has come into His presence through shed blood. Gabriel appears at the right side of the altar of incense, and says, ‘Your prayers have been heard. Your wife will have a son & will bring many back to the Lord.’

Since Jesus is literally at God’s right hand, God hears our prayers through Jesus.

If Jesus lives God hears us (vv.20-24)

People who pray to God and not through Jesus are not heard. No matter how sincere, or how many words they say; if you don’t acknowledge Jesus as the Son, your prayers go unheard. And going through Jesus

Assures us that we are saved (v.25)

Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

Jesus assures us of our salvation. When we come to God, Jesus says to God, ‘Hear their prayers Father. They have placed their faith in Me’. And His prayers for us maintains our relationship with Him and His Father. Nothing can snatch us from the His hand (John 10:29).

This is why God sent Jesus; so we could have a closer relationship with God. If Jesus lives to intercede for us, that tells me Jesus believes prayer is crucial to our spiritual maturing. He believes in prayer. He believes the way we can become more like Himself has a lot to do with prayer. Well, we’re listening because we always feel our prayer life could be better. So what can Jesus’ prayers to God through my prayers do for you and me?

Jesus Prays to God for What We Need **(7:26-28)**

²⁶ *Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.* ²⁷ *Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.* ²⁸ *For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.*

What is it we need? We need forgiveness obviously. Which we only get through Jesus. Ongoing forgiveness is crucial to our spiritual maturity. In Heb. 10:11

¹¹ *Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.* ¹² *But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins,*

he sat down at the right hand of God. ¹³ Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, ¹⁴ because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Jesus will, can, and is making us more holy; more like Himself. This is what we need. But that's not how we often pray. Our prayers are often centered on the removal or avoidance of suffering. 'Lord, take this pain/discomfort/worry/ away.' Or 'Lord help me to have a pain free/comfortable/ anxious free day.' Maybe not those words but that's the way our prayers are often centered on. Wrong? No. But off-center.

What's the context of this letter? Disciples wanting to avoid suffering. Yet we pray to God through the One who suffered for us. Jesus intercedes to God for us because

He discerns our needs better than we can (Rom. 8:18-26)

How? Romans 8,

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but **we ourselves**, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our **bodies**. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

Hebrews is written to Christians who are suffering and don't like it. Fair. However, He reminds them that their Saviour and High Priest suffered for them. He knows everything we go through. He relates to every hurt we have. Because He too had to suffer for us if we were to draw close to God. We are part of the creation who are subject to hurt in this life as we wait for the glory to be revealed in our immortal bodies.

V. 24 acknowledges we who have the Spirit (God is with us) groan inwardly as we await the redemption of our bodies but we must wait patiently for it. We don't usually pray for eternal joy and comfort, we are often praying for our temporal joy and comfort, and freedom from and solutions to our earthly problems. What we're often not praying for is our holiness in the process that suffering and hurt can produce. The Spirit then helps us in our weakness to see that in the moment so He intercedes for us through Jesus because we're too focused on the removal/solution of our difficulties and not seeing how God is maturing us through them.

This then is how we should pray to God through Jesus, asking for spiritual discernment to balance removal of sorrow with seeing its spiritual goal, our Christlikeness. Isn't this where Paul goes next?

²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. ²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed

to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Here's where prayer is so vital. In prayer, as we come into God's holy presence we should (and Jesus wants us to) ask God for our needs. In asking God to meet our temporal needs we need to be more spiritually aware that God's will has a bigger goal for us through our needs; spiritual maturity. Jesus lives to intercede to God to pray for what we need since

He knows God's will better than us (Rom. 8:27-30)

We want God's will to be the removal of discomforts, hurts and pains in our life, but like these Jewish listeners who were hurting, God is somehow working in all these things for our good; our good being defined by God as conformity to Jesus. Essentially, Jesus is constantly praying for us to be more like Himself. And where is He? At the right hand of God? Why? Because He finished His suffering on earth (without sin) and now is at the right hand of God telling God to give us strength, maturity, patience and the spiritual wisdom to see His bigger purpose for us more than our temporal relief of difficulties.

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If you have any questions or comments about this message please
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