

Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews XXII-A The Greatness of Christ's Priesthood

(Chapter 7)
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Hebrews 7 lays the foundation for chapters 8-10. It becomes very important in understanding our relationship with God more than anything else. It is telling us that that the priesthood of Christ is the *priesthood of being King and Priest*, which makes it *superior* to what it was under the Old Covenant. Not just better, but *superior!*

Then you add to that *eternal life!* Now you have something that is so great and marvelous that we need to really understand that this is telling us how we have a continuous relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ *through the priesthood of Jesus Christ!*

The patriarch Abraham gave a tenth to Melchisedec (Heb 7:4). What Paul is also showing is that Abraham is greater than all Israel, because he was the father of what became all Israel—was he not? So, as I mentioned in the last one that we did on tithing, that if people do not believe in tithing, then they are denigrating the Priesthood of Christ below the Aaronic priesthood.

Hebrews 7:9: “And in one sense Levi, who receives tithes... [the priesthood had not yet been completely done away] ...also gave tithes through Abraham; for he was still in his forefather's loins when Melchisedec met him. Therefore, if perfection was indeed *possible* through the Levitical priesthood... [perfection has a great meaning] ...— for *the Law that the people had received was based on it—what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchisedec, and not to be named after the order of Aaron? For since the priesthood has changed, it is obligatory that a change of the priestly law also take place*” (vs 9-12).

The Protestants love this, because they say that this does away with all law. We will see that the term *law* applies to the regulations regarding the Levitical priesthood, and all the laws of sacrifice, etc. The law also applies to the covenant, but the covenant change does not change the commandments of God. That's why Abraham is brought in here. Because the verse that we go back to so many times is that the covenant was confirmed to Isaac, the one that God gave to Abraham, because Abraham:

- obeyed His voice
- kept His charge
- His statutes

- His commandments
- His laws

‘We are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise,’ if we are Christ's. Nowhere in here does this imply in any sense that the commandments of God have been done away. Those who do so are living in a perpetual state of lawlessness. Of course, God is *a God of:*

- law
- love
- mercy
- forgiveness

—and all of these things are important. So, it's also obligatory that a change in the law take place, too. What was changed in relationship to the priesthood? First of all, *how the priesthood began!* The Priesthood of Christ was prophesied in Psa. 110:4. From the very beginning the priesthood of Aaron was doomed.

Psalm 110:4: “The LORD has sworn...” There are two places where the Lord has sworn. We'll look at those two places. When God swears, and swears by Himself, that is a profound thing.

“...and will not repent...” (v 4). He's not going to change. So really, this is saying it doesn't matter what people think. He's not going to change. God does not run salvation with CNN polls, or public opinion.

“...‘You are a priest **forever**... [eternal] ...after the order of Melchisedec’” (v 4)

Now we are dealing with a whole change of circumstances. *Yes, we are, an eternal Priesthood!* Why is that important? *Because men fail!* Let's look at what it says concerning the Law. Let's look and see how a priest is selected. God did not establish the Aaronic, Levitical priesthood with an oath. He appointed it by physical descent, entirely different.

Hebrews 5:1: “For every high priest, being taken from among men to act in behalf of men, is appointed to serve in *the* things pertaining to God in order that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins... [there are all the laws you find back in Lev., Num. and Deut., that the priests had to do] ...*and* he is able to deal gently with those who sin in ignorance and those who have been led astray, since he himself is also encumbered with many weaknesses. And because of these *weaknesses*, he is

obligated also to offer *sacrifices* for his own sins, exactly as *he does* for the people" (vs 1-3).

Let's go back and see the prophecy of the doom of the Old Covenant, and the doom, or the ending, of the Levitical priesthood. We're just going to kind of do a review by chapter. Sometimes it's good to go back and do a review by chapter and just get the overview as to where we're coming.

Exo. 20—we have the Ten Commandments given, and then we have the reaction of the people. Thus showing that the people would not have a direct relationship with God. Under the Old Covenant, you did not have a direct relationship with God except those special, selected ones with whom God made the choice to have the relationship with Him; like Moses, David, certain of the kings of Israel and certain of the prophets.

Exodus 20:18: "And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking. And when the people saw, they trembled and stood afar off. And they said to Moses, 'You speak with us, and we will hear...'" (vs 18-19).

There's a basic flaw, right there. Whenever you depend upon a man it cannot lead to eternal life. Why? *Because man dies!* And man has a sinful nature. People like to have a man that they can look to, so if something goes wrong they can blame. They may be right or wrong in their accusations. But nevertheless, that is just the way it is. Whenever people get caught doing things, or doing things that are not right, what do they always do? They justify it by pointing out the difficulties of someone else that's very similar. *That is the fatal flaw in human nature!* It is completely weak, it is unable to save itself, it is incapable of true right righteous thinking. We're all limited with that. That's just the way it is.

So, here's the flaw in the relationship between the people and God under the Old Covenant: *They wanted a man between them and God!* Moses did that. He went up and he got all the things concerning the things for the Old Covenant. He came back and he told all the people all the words:

Exodus 24:3: "And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, 'All the words which the LORD has said, we will do.'" Then He established the covenant with them, and so forth.

While Moses is on the mountain for 40 days receiving more instructions, the corruption of the Aaronic priesthood made itself very evident right at

first, and was influenced by the people. That's why when you go through the history of the children of Israel, what do you find? *You find periods where they come to God, then corruption!* God corrects them; they come back to God; same way with the priesthood.

What happened in Exo. 32? *The situation with the golden calf, showing that the priesthood of Aaron was subject to corruption!* Not only in dying—because he died—but also in practice. That is why every religious movement goes through a cycle where they start out fine, and then what happens? *They become corrupt!* Then they have to be purged, and there are splits, and all these things that take place. That's all a part of the weakness of human nature.

In order to have eternal life, you have to have a completely different set-up. That's why the order of Melchisedec is *by an oath*, and then it's going to be forever, and no man can turn it down. That's why when Christ came in the flesh He had to carry within His flesh *the law of sin and death* and yet never sin so He could become the perfect sacrifice, and so that He would qualify as the perfect High Priest forever, ***Who never sinned***, contrary to the priesthood of Aaron, where they had to offer sacrifices for their own sins, as well as sins of the people. That's why it was obligatory.

Hebrews 7:12: "For since the priesthood has changed, it is obligatory *that* a change of *the priestly* law also take place... [What are the differences here?] ...because the One of Whom these things are said belongs to another tribe, from which no one was appointed to serve at the altar" (vs 12-13). Even God abided by His own laws until the establishment of the New Covenant.

Verse 14: "For *it is* quite evident that our Lord has descended from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning *the* priesthood. And it is even more evident because a different Priest arises according to the order of Melchisedec; Who was not invested according to *the priestly* law of a fleshly commandment..." (vs 14-16). That is if you are the son of Aaron you are *automatically* a priest. You qualify for the priesthood by the virtue of your birth. That's the law of fleshly commandment.

Now contrast that with this: "...but by *the* power of indestructible life. For He testifies, 'You are a Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec'" (vs 16-17)—a *perpetual* priesthood. Now what God is establishing here is a higher priesthood, because the Levitical priesthood was fundamentally flawed from the beginning, because it

was an appointment of a man who had 'the law of sin and death' in him, and was subject to corruption like all other human beings.

Now we have a High Priest Who has not sinned; Who—though He died to be the perfect sacrifice—is incorruptible. So, there is no comparison. This is to give us the understanding and realization that the calling we have is absolutely marvelous and fantastic. It is not just a religion; it is not just an organization; it begins with a personal relationship between you and God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Everything has to be put on an entirely different basis. Here's what has to change, and God did all the changing. What God instituted, God also destroyed. Radical difference now in all things that pertain to the priesthood:

1. the temple *destroyed*
2. the high priesthood *destroyed*
3. the sacrifices *destroyed*
4. cleansing *destroyed*
5. access to God—*totally different*
6. worship of God

All of those had to change and be replaced with something *superior*.

Now we have the temple in heaven above—don't we? Is that not greater than a temple on earth? *Yes, indeed!* Now we have a High Priest at the right hand of God the Father, or the Majesty on High, Who intercedes for us, Who was human, Who died, Who suffered, Who was tempted in every way like we are, yet without sin. We have the High Priesthood. We have the sacrifices. We have a greater sacrifice. What animal sacrifice could be compared to the death of Christ? *No comparison!*

- circumcision—circumcision of the heart
- cleansing—cleansing of sin

How are we cleansed of our sins? *Physical ritual never cleansed sin! Access to God! We draw near to God!* That's a tremendous thing, brethren. All of these are very profound and important. Let's look at a couple of them.

The most important function that we have with the Priesthood is One Who knows and understands. Now then, instead of going to a temple, instead of going to a human priest—which the Catholics have never understood—we come to a High Priest in heaven above. *Because:*

- He lives forever
- He is the order of Melchisedec
- He became human and died and was the perfect sacrifice for us.

Therefore, when we come to Him, and we come to God the Father through Him, everything is on an entirely different level.

It is true, people can fool people some of the time, part of the time, and fool all of the people part of the time. *But you can never fool God!* That's what's important. That's profound in our relationship with God. When we come before God privately in prayer, this is the most important time in your relationship between you and God. You have direct access to God the Father in heaven above through Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 4:12: "For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of both soul and spirit, *and* of both *the* joints and *the* marrow, and is able to discern *the* thoughts and intents of *the* heart. And there is not a created thing that is not manifest in His sight; but all things *are* naked and laid bare before the eyes of Him to Whom we must give account" (vs 12-13).

When we come to God in prayer—that is our form of worship to God, mainly; and that is also the basis of our relationship with God—we hold nothing back from God. That's important to understand.

- that's all a part of *repentance*
- that's all a part of *spiritual growth*
- that's all a part of *understanding God's Word*

That's how we have our relationship with God. It must be totally open, totally right before God, because we are sinners. We can have full confidence.

Cleansing

The next thing we will look at, then, will be the cleansing, v 14: "Having, therefore, a great High Priest, *Who* has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, we should hold fast the confession of *our faith*. For we do not have a High Priest Who cannot empathize with our weaknesses, but *One Who* was tempted in all things according to the likeness of *our own temptations*; yet, *He* was without sin. Therefore, we should come with boldness to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (vs 14-16).

That's why we live under grace. You have the greatest thing that is given to you. You come before God, completely open, completely honest. God knows everything about you; He made you. He even knows the number of hairs on your head.

What do we have here? *We have the basis for a proper relationship between the individual and God*, of which then the hypocrisy of human nature can be overcome, and the sins of human nature can be overcome. In His grace, God does something greater. He gives you something that was never available under the covenant that He had with Israel: ***He gives you the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of promise!*** Let's look at that, because the Holy Spirit and circumcision tie together.

This is one of the greatest acts of grace that God can do, aside from having sent Jesus Christ to be the sacrifice for the sins of the world. God gives you the Holy Spirit, coming from Himself, as a seed of begetting that you have. That is a great and a marvelous grace that God gives.

Ephesians 1:13: "In Whom [Christ] you also trusted after hearing the Word of the Truth, the Gospel of your salvation; in Whom also, after believing, **you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.**"

That's a tremendous thing, brethren, to understand having the gift of the Holy Spirit because God ***called you and chose you and selected you***. And also, *you had to repent*, too, which is the beginning of the true cleansing. You received the Holy Spirit.

Verse 14: "Which is *the* earnest of our inheritance until *the* redemption of the purchased possession, to *the* praise of His glory." This puts us under the grace of God on a continuous basis.

We don't have to, as it said in one place, go to heaven to find God. We don't have to go to the depths of the earth to find God. God has given His presence in our hearts and minds with His Holy Spirit. We become a temple of the Holy Spirit or a temple of God. Is that not a greater relationship than going to Jerusalem? Even like the Jews say every year, 'Next year in Jerusalem!' The only year I want to go to Jerusalem is after I've been resurrected and I'm on the Sea of Glass and come down with all the saints. That's the only time I want to visit Jerusalem. This is why we are told this:

Ephesians 2:8: "For **by grace you have been saved...**" It was an individual act upon God:

- to call you
- to select you
- to lead you to repentance
- to give you the Holy Spirit

All of that's an act of grace. None of that can be accomplished with a physical temple, or a physical priesthood.

"...through faith, and this *especially* is not of your own selves; *it is* the gift of God..." (v 8)—which is both *of faith* and *of grace*. Can any human being save himself? *Of course not!* Only God can save him. Therefore, it has to be by God's grace.

Verse 9: "Not of works... [not of something we can do] ...so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship..." The whole complexion of everything is changed. We are His workmanship. Christ is being formed in us. 'Let this mind, which was also in Christ, be in you.' The whole process of conversion—through the relationship that we have with God the Father in heaven above through Jesus Christ, Who is a High Priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec—is *so superior* to any other means—*period!*

Verse 10: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto *the* good works... [those are the works of the Holy Spirit] ...that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them." We have been called, not to a 'religion,' but to a *special way of life* by God; that's why it's so important. That takes care of the High Priesthood and the sacrifice of Christ.

Circumcision

Circumcision now is required of all. Under the Old Covenant it was only required of the male, and then when marriage took place the females participated in the circumcision through the sexual act. Now under the New Covenant, everyone has to be *circumcised in heart and in mind*. Paul wrote concerning it. I think we could apply a lot of this to ourselves, too, today.

Unfortunately, as it turns out, too many people fall into a 'religious' category as the Jews did here. 'Oh, well, we're the people of God.' So, this is why Paul wrote what he wrote. Let's just go through it so we get a full complexion and picture of it; so that we understand how much greater this relationship that we have with God the Father and Jesus Christ and the Priesthood of Christ is today. It is fantastic.

Romans 2:17: "Behold, you are called a Jew, and you yourself rest in the law, and boast in God, and know *His* will, and approve of the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and are persuaded *that* you yourself are a guide of *the* blind, a light for those in darkness, an instructor of *the* foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of the knowledge and of the Truth *contained* in the Law. You, then, who are teaching another, do you not teach yourself also?..." (vs 17-21).

In other words, you better take care of yourself first. And that's why under the New Covenant you have that relationship with God so that you can.

"...You who preach, 'Do not steal,' are you stealing? You who say, 'Do not commit adultery,' are you committing adultery? You who abhor idols, are you committing sacrilege? You who boast in law, are you dishonoring God through your transgression of the Law? For through you the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, exactly as it is written" (vs 21-24).

I would have to say the Church of God made itself a laughingstock of the world, too, because of that, because of the very same thing.

Verse 25: "For on the one hand, circumcision profits if you are observing *the* Law; on the other hand, if you are a transgressor of *the* Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if the uncircumcised is keeping the requirements of the Law, shall not his uncircumcision be reckoned for circumcision?" (vs 25-26).

What he is showing here is that the physical act had no relationship to the spiritual need of keeping the commandments. To be circumcised did not mean that one was less of a sinner, or had less hypocrisy. It was only part of the Old Covenant as God had established. Now moving into the New Covenant, an entirely different kind of circumcision is required.

Verse 27: "And shall not the uncircumcised, who by nature is fulfilling the Law, judge you, who, with *the* letter and circumcision, *are* a transgressor of *the* Law? For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, neither *is* that circumcision, which *is* external in the flesh; rather, he *is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly... [Christ is *in* you, and He came from the tribe of Judah] ...and **circumcision is of the heart, in the spirit** and not in *the* letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God." (vs 27-29).

Let's see that under the New Covenant and with the Priesthood of Christ, we have a greater circumcision. So, to say that circumcision was done away really gives the wrong implication. It should be *physical circumcision is no longer required*. Circumcision has been spiritually more profound than physical circumcision, because **spiritual circumcision is to change the heart and the mind, of which only God can do! Before God deals with you, you have to have the spiritual circumcision!**

Colossians 2:10: "And you are complete in Him..."—in Christ. As we see in the book of Hebrews with the priesthood that is eternal, your

completeness, or perfection, comes through Him and through that process.

"...Who is the Head of all principality and power in Whom you have also been circumcised with *the* circumcision not made by hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (vs 10-11).

That circumcision begins with *repentance!* He changes your heart and your mind, and your whole way of living and thinking. Of course, you have to grow into it. You also have to apply yourself to it. ***This is the circumcision of Christ!*** How is that accomplished?

Verse 12: "Having been buried with Him in baptism... [into His death; conjoined] ...by which you have also been raised with *Him* through the inner working of God, Who raised Him from the dead." That is the *spiritual circumcision* that takes place. On the heels of this, with the grace of God, with the Holy Spirit of God, with the spiritual circumcision in Christ, now we have a new way of cleansing, *spiritual cleansing*.

The Pharisees were concerned about being clean. The reason they became so fastidious in the washings of pots and pans and tables and hands and clothes and everything else, was that they made the mistake of this: As the temple was to be cleansed—*clean, purified—in everything that was done by the priests in everything; therefore, in your home, everything you do should be as the temple*. And that's how they got carried away with it. God never required that the home be as the temple.

When John the Baptist came, this presented the Pharisees with a problem. John the Baptist was the son of a high priest. Where did John the Baptist operate? *In the River Jordan!* Not at the temple. That was a profound thing that God did, because God was showing that through repentance and purification by baptism sins were forgiven. They didn't have to go to the temple. Now you understand why the Pharisees and the Levites came to John and said, 'Who are you? (We're losing people from coming to the temple to be purified)'—the unspoken thing. After Christ we have a new way of being cleansed. We have an entirely different relationship, too.

John 15:1: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. He takes away every branch in Me *that* does not bear fruit; but He cleanses each one that bears fruit, **in order that it may bear more fruit**" (vs 1-2). That means *cleanses it*. Cleansing by 'the washing of the water by the Word.' He cleanses or purges it.

If we look upon all of our trials and difficulties that we go through as a means by which God is using, so that if we repent and come to Him, we can bear more fruit.

Verse 3: "You are already clean through the word that I have spoken to you."

- Have you ever had the experience that after you have studied the Word of God you feel really great?
- Inspired and uplifted?
- Why? *Because it has cleansed you!*

On the other hand:

- Don't you feel miserable and rotten when you don't study?
- Don't you feel miserable and rotten when you don't pray?
- *Yes! Because you're not being cleansed!*
 - ✓ we are to be cleansed with the Word of God, *and that is to be daily*
 - ✓ we are to be cleansed with the Spirit of God, *and that is to be daily*

That's why the model prayer says, 'Give us our bread day-by-day, and forgive us our sins...' and the obvious implication is day-by-day. So, we are cleansed of our sins by the Word of God and through repentance day-by-day. And instead of going to a priest and saying, 'I did this. I want to bring this animal sacrifice,' you go to God and you confess your sins, between you and God directly.

That's something! *That is a profound and magnificent privilege!* It's something that we need to realize that we need to do every day. That's why John, in the first chapter, gives us a thumbnail overview of this relationship that we have with Jesus Christ, Who is a High Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec, and how great it is!

1-John 1:1: "That which was from *the* beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our own eyes, that which we observed for ourselves..."

The difference between *seen* and *looked upon* [observed]: is that 'looked upon' means *we have just intently gazed and examined.*

"...and our own hands handled, concerning the Word of Life; (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and are bearing witness, and are reporting to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested to us)" (vs 1-2). He is showing the great experience they had as apostles. This is referring to after the resurrection when they saw Him.

Verse 3: "Which we have seen and have

heard we are reporting to you in order that you also may have fellowship with us; for the fellowship—indeed, our fellowship—**is with the Father and with His own Son Jesus Christ.**"

That is what Paul is writing about in the book of Hebrews. That's why we must understand the greatness of the Priesthood of Christ, the greatness that He has been made a Priest after the order of Melchisedec *forever*, and that we have this relationship with God.

Verse 4: "These things we are also writing to you, so that your joy may be completely full. And this is the message that we have heard from Him and are declaring to you: that God is Light, and there is no darkness at all in Him. If we proclaim that we have fellowship with Him, but we are walking in the darkness, we are lying to ourselves, and we are not practicing the Truth" (vs 4-6). The Greek there is 'poieo,' which means *to practice the Truth!*

Verse 7: "However, if we walk in the Light, as He is in the Light, *then* we have fellowship with one another..."—between God the Father and Jesus Christ, *and* with each other. That's very important, because that's part of the basis of the whole reason why we keep the Passover, that we love one another.

"...and the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, cleanses us from all sin" (v 7).

- we are cleansed *through the sacrifice of Christ*
- we are cleansed *through the Word of God*
- we are cleansed *through the Holy Spirit of God*

That's why the whole process of cleansing of sin is entirely different. And it's a better and a greater way.

Verse 8: "If we say that we do not have sin... [we don't have a sinful nature; we're all just good people] ...we are deceiving ourselves, and the Truth is not in us. **If we confess our own sins...** [to Him] ...**He is faithful and righteous, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**" (vs 8-9).

The whole operation of the temple and the priesthood had to be a change in the way that it was done, which meant *there was a change in the law of the priesthood and the temple.* We are now under the operation of *faith, belief and the power of the Holy Spirit.* Maybe some of you have not understood this. I've often wondered about this, so I'll bring this out in relationship to that there was a necessity that there be a change in the Law. What was it changed to?

Romans 8:1: "Consequently, *there is* now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who are not walking according to *the* flesh, but according to *the* Spirit." That's what we are doing:

- walking after the Spirit
- keeping the commandments of God
- striving to overcome
- maintain the relationship with God

to prepare for eternal life.

Verse 2—here's part of the grace of God: "Because **the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus...** *Hello!* That then is *the new priesthood law and operation of our relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ, which then leads to eternal life!* Through that cleansing of sin that we just covered, through the cleansing and the 'washing of the water by the Word.'

Verse 2: "Because **the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has delivered me...** [justified me] **...from the law of sin and death.**" That becomes a very important thing.

Living under the grace of God puts you in the special category that God does not look upon you the same way that He does other people. That's not to lift us up, that's to encourage us, and help us to be thankful to God. But He looks upon us as what we are going to be in the Kingdom of God. He is looking to the end, or the completion of His work. Because God speaks of those things that are not, as though they are. Isn't that something? That is a tremendous and a fantastic relationship that can only be accomplished because we have a High Priest Who lives forever, and because now we have a priesthood that is not subject to the physical laws.

Hebrews 7:15: "And it is even more evident because a different Priest arises according to the order of Melchisedec; Who was not invested according to *the priestly* law of a fleshly commandment, but by *the* power of indestructible life" (vs 15-16).

When you come before God the Father and Jesus Christ, bear that in mind. He lives forever.

Verse 17: "For He testifies, 'You *are* a Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec.'.... [on into the ages of eternity forever] ...For there is indeed an annulment of the earlier commandment *delivered to Aaron* because of its weakness and unprofitableness..." (vs 17-18).

Why was it weak and unprofitable? *The corruption of human nature, and not being given access to the Holy Spirit!*

Verse 19: "Because the Law... [of the priesthood] ...brought nothing to perfection..." The Law, the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, brings us to perfection. *It's greater!*

Verse 11: "Therefore, if perfection was indeed *possible* through the Levitical priesthood..." *It wasn't possible!*

Verse 19: "Because the *priestly* law brought nothing to perfection; rather, *perfection* is brought about by a **superior hope, through which we draw near to God.**" We have the superior hope of eternal life. They had the hope of living in the 'promised land.' Which is greater? *Eternal life!* "...through which we draw near to God."

That is the whole basis. That's why when He gave the Ten Commandments we find there in Deut. 5:29, when the people said, 'Oh, we'll do everything that You say.' God said, 'Oh, I would that there were such a heart in you, that you would fear Me and keep My commandments always!' But they couldn't. So, we have a *superior hope*. We draw near to God. That is the whole theme of the rest of the book of Hebrews. In drawing near to God there are some profound things that we need to do. James 4 ties in with what we've already covered in relationship to cleansing.

James 4:6: "But He gives greater grace. This is the reason it says, 'God sets Himself against *the* proud, but He gives grace to *the* humble.'.... [showing our relationship with God] ... Therefore, submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you...." (vs 6-8). How about that? That is the relationship that we have with God

"...Cleanse *your* hands, you sinners, and purify *your* hearts, you double-minded!" (v 8). That is by repentance. So, that follows along with what we've already covered.

Verse 9: "Be grieved and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into grieving, and *your* joy into mourning. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you" (vs 9-10). There again is another way of expressing the same relationship that Paul was writing about here in Heb. 7.

Hebrews 7:19: "...through which we draw near to God. And according to this *superior* measure, *it was* not without *the* swearing of an oath *that He was made a Priest.* (For those *who descend from Aaron* are made priests without *the* swearing of an oath; but He *was made a Priest* with *the* swearing of an oath... [they just get it by inheritance] ...by Him Who says concerning Him... [he repeats it at least four or five times in the book of Hebrews])

...*'The Lord swore and will not revoke His Word, "You are a Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec."*) By such a greater measure then, Jesus was made the Guarantor of a **superior** covenant" (vs 19-22). Not just better, *superior!* Can you compare life with death? *No!* That's why it's *superior*.

Verse 23: "Now in the one case, there were many priests because they were not able to continue to *serve* by reason of death... [wouldn't have to worry about that] ...but in the other case, because He is living forever, His priesthood never changes.... [you can always count on God] ...Therefore, He has the power..." (vs 23-25)—'dunamis'—in this case because it is eternal, it has the implication of *absolute power*. Does God have absolute power? *No question about it!*

Verse 25: "Therefore, He has the power throughout all time to save those who come to God through Him *because* He is ever living to intercede for them." What if there is someone out there just kind of feeling lost and miserable and sort of cries out to God, 'Help me'? What does God do about that?

Revelation 5:6: "Then I saw, and behold, before the throne and the four living creatures, and before the elders, *was* standing a Lamb as having been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are **the seven spirits of God that are sent into all the earth.**"

The seven horns in the head of the Lamb signifies the seven churches of Rev. 2 & 3, and Christ is the Head of the Church; that is why there are seven horns. ***Christ is always the Head of the Church.*** "...the seven Spirits of God that are sent into all the earth." What do the seven Spirits of God do? Why are they sent forth into all the earth? *God is busy and active!* God is ready to intercede on behalf of those who call out to Him. The seven Spirits there are the seven eyes of God, which go through all the earth.

2-Chronicles 16:9: "For the eyes of the LORD... [the seven Spirits of God that we saw (Rev. 5)] ...run to and fro in all the whole earth... [in other words, they're busy surveying the whole earth] ...to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect [sincere] toward Him...."

That's why Jesus said, 'Seek, and you will find, and knock and it will be opened; draw near to God, He'll draw near to you' because those seven Spirits of God are active and busy watching over the whole earth. Now, that covers those people who are not converted or called, yet, who may be in the

process of being called. But with us, we have the Spirit of God direct, and we go directly to God.

2-Chronicles 15:1: "And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him, "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD *is* with you while you are with Him.... [that's always the way it's been; that is a living principle] ...And if you seek Him, He will be found by you...." (vs 1-2). *Always a living principle!*

If you find yourself in predicaments where it's very difficult, ***seek God!*** And if necessary, start out: 'Oh God, I'm here in the bottom of the barrel, and I don't know where to go. I've gone clear to the bottom. And, of course, You want me there.' Now that's hard to admit. Why does God want us there? Everyone's going to come to the bottom of the barrel in his life, one way or the other:

- that we'll trust in God
- that we'll turn to God
- that we'll seek Him
- that we won't seek ourselves
- that we'll look to His solution
- that we'll wait patiently for it

Yes, we'll do our part. Yes, we'll do the things that we need to do, no question about that!

But here's a guarantee, v 2 "...if you seek Him, He will be found by you. But if you forsake Him, He will forsake you." And that's also the story of the book of Hebrews. Did we not cover the thing on the *unpardonable sin*? {see #s 17 & 29 this series} *Yes, indeed!* Therefore, He is able to save throughout all time.

Hebrews 7:25: "...to save those who come to God through Him *because* He is ever living to intercede for them." How quickly will God forgive sin? *As soon as you repent!* Many times when you sin you have such a great guilt complex about it, because you really are not repenting in the way that you need to. You're letting the guilt complex take hold of you more than you ought to. You ought to feel guilty and repent, that is true. Then on the other hand you end up sort of accusing God, that He can't forgive you unless you do something else. You really don't mean to, but that's just sort of the way that human nature is.

Have any of you sinned as badly as King Manasseh? (2-Chron. 35); he did it for 55 years. He shed much innocent blood. He let the homosexuals take over the whole temple area. He even built an altar in the temple of God dedicated to other gods. And God sent him off in captivity. While he was in the dungeon in Babylon he repented. God had mercy and brought him back.

Likewise with Ahab; God told Elijah, 'You go to Ahab, and you tell him that he is going to die. You tell him that he is a wicked, and evil, and terrible, and a wretched human being; and My judgment is, he's going to die, and the dogs are going to lick his blood and Jezebel's blood off the wall.' So, sure enough, Elijah goes and he tells him that—and, I'm sure, shakes his finger right in Ahab's eye—and says, 'You are the man!' So, he left. What did Ahab do? *He repented!* It says he walked tenderly, put on sackcloth. As Elijah was on his way back home, God told him, 'Go back to Ahab, My servant Ahab. And tell him I will forbear.'

None of us have sinned to any extent like those two men. Those are examples for us, so that when we repent we can know we have forgiveness. When we come to Jesus Christ, and He has the power—the absolute power—to save, He will.

Verse 26: "For it is fitting that we should have such a High Priest..."—with a *superior covenant* should we not have a superior High Priest? *Of course!*

"...*Who is Holy, blameless, undefiled, set apart from sinners and made higher than the heavens; Who has no need, as do the other high priests, to offer up sacrifices day by day, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people; for this He did once for all time when He offered up Himself. For the priestly the law makes high priests of men who have weaknesses; but by the word of the swearing of the oath, which supersedes the priestly law... [of the priesthood of Aaron] ...the Son, Who has been perfected forever, has been made High Priest*" (vs 26-28). That's what it means.

Perfection

Let's look at this thing concerning perfection, because the law could not make anything perfect. What God did, He perfected Christ. Being God in the flesh, was He ever imperfect? *Of course not!* But He was not *perfected* until He had gone through the crucifixion, and then being resurrected.

First of all, you have a High Priest Who has been perfected. Hebrews 5:7: "Who, in the days of His flesh, offered up both prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him Who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because *He feared God*. Although He was a Son, *yet*, He learned obedience from the things that He suffered; and having been perfected... [by the things that He suffered] ...He became *the* Author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him, after He had been designated by God *as* High Priest according to

the order of Melchisedec" (vs 7-10).

First of all, you have the perfection of the Priest. Next, you have the perfection of the people. The whole point is, that under the Old Covenant you could not be perfected. Under the New Covenant you can receive that perfection. How does that come about? We've already covered some of it: *repentance and baptism, receiving the Holy Spirit!* Now then, there is the process of growing in grace and knowledge, which then is *perfection*.

Let's come to Ephesians 4, and see that that is the whole purpose of what God has in mind. The whole purpose as to why there are ministers and teachers. There are ministers and teachers, not for the exercise of authority, but for the exercising of teaching the brethren to exercise that authority in their lives through God's Spirit:

- to grow
- to be perfected
- to let God work in their lives

Ephesians 4:11: "And He gave some as apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers **for the perfecting of the saints...**" (vs 11-12). Only possible under the New Covenant; only possible with a perfected High Priest Jesus Christ.

"...for *the* work of *the* ministry, for *the* edifying of the body of Christ; until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **unto a perfect man...**" (vs 12-13). **Perfection!** That is, *spiritual* perfection. Don't worry about the physical perfection; God is not perfecting the flesh. ***He is perfecting the spirit!***

I was watching Larry King, and he was talking to Art Linkletter. I caught the section which was just somewhere before the close, where he said, 'How old are you?' And he said, 'I'm 90 and six months.' Larry King sort of dropped his jaw and took a deep breath, and said to the effect 'How do you do it?' And he said, 'First of all, I live a very modest life. Secondly, I exercise everyday.' And he looked younger than a lot of 65-year-old people that I have met. So, as the Apostle Paul wrote, physical exercise profits, but you've got to keep at it.

Now then, he said something else. Larry King asked him, 'How are you able to do this?' And he says, 'We all live between our ears.' I thought it was a good statement. In other words, *in 'ye cranium' is your life*. That's where perfection takes place. ***Perfection in character, with the mind of Christ, with the fruits of the Holy Spirit!*** It has to come from within by the power of the Spirit of God, and everything that is done within the Church of

God should be toward that goal of perfecting the saints. Till each one comes to, as it says:

Verse 13: "...unto a perfect man, unto *the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*" Of course, that won't take place until the resurrection. Now, that is a tall order.

Let's see how Paul did it. Since we live between our ears, what do we do? How do we handle it? You can spend all your life like the Jews and the Arabs hating each other, killing each other, vengeance against each other, blowing up each other, condemning each other. Where does it lead? *Death and destruction, and plenty of misery in-between!*

Or you can live in the past, whatever your past has been. If it hasn't been too good, if you dwell on the past, you're going to be dwelling on the past. So, you have some things that you need to do. This is what the Apostle Paul did. No one had any greater case for a perpetual guilty conscience than Paul. No one has done any worse than the Apostle Paul when he was Saul, hauling Christians off to be killed and to force them into renouncing their faith. So, this is what he said. This is how Paul lived with himself and God *between his ears.*

Philippians 3:4: "Though I might also have *reason to trust in the flesh.* If any other thinks he has *cause to trust in the flesh, I have much more.*"

I mean, here's his pedigree. A lot of people like to get into genealogy. They get all excited when they find out they belong to the kings and queens of England and so forth, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah! Well, a lot of them were nothing but a bunch of corrupt murderers, adulterers, whoremongers and deceitful political people, and the only reason that America and Britain has what they have is *because of what the promise was given to Abraham, and not* because of any inherent goodness in them. Pedigree doesn't mean a thing.

Verse 5: "Circumcised on *the eighth day; of the race of Israel, from the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; with respect to law, a Pharisee...* [couldn't be any more strict] ...with respect to zeal, persecuting the Church..." (vs 5-6). You talk about a wrong cause. You read that in Acts 9, he soon found out—BINGO!—there he is, lying on the ground.

Verse 6: "With respect to zeal, persecuting the Church; with respect to righteousness that *is* in law, blameless. Yet, the things that were gain to me, these things I have counted *as* loss for the sake of Christ. But then truly, I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my

Lord... [that's what we need to do] ...for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things... [and yes, our own lives also, through baptism] ...and count *them* as dung..." (vs 6-8)—Greek—'skubalon.'

"...that I may gain Christ and may be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is derived* from law, but that *righteousness*, which *is* by *the* faith of Christ, the righteousness of God *that is* based on faith... [to be put in that right standing with God] ...that I may know Him... [not look at the physical circumstances around] ...and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (vs 8-11).

In the face of every difficulty, problem, struggle, trial, and things that he had to go through, this is the attitude he maintained. This is what we need to do. He didn't accuse God. That's the whole lesson of Job. You accuse God, you're in terrible shape: 'Well, why did God do this?' Well, go to God and find out what *you* need to do. Maybe the answer will come. That's what Job had to do. Paul said that he always looked toward the resurrection.

Verse 12: "Not as though I have already received..." [everyday is another day. Everyday you have to keep striving] ...or have already been perfected..." You *are being* perfected. That's the whole purpose of the High Priesthood of Melchisedec Jesus Christ, to perfect you.

"...but I am striving, so that I may also lay hold on that for which I also was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.... [never gets discouraged; never gets down] ...Brethren, I do not count myself as having attained; but *this* one thing *I do*—**forgetting the things that are behind...**" (vs 12-13). That is the key. **You must forget the things that are behind!** They are done! They are over!

Let me give you a good example. How many here have a checking account? When you get your statement you get back your canceled checks. If you want to know how worthless they are, take one of those canceled checks for your house payment or rent payment and send it back to the mortgage holder, or the one who's renting to you, and see if they will accept it. Of course, they won't! It's worthless! Why? *Because it's over, it's done;* the function of that check has been fulfilled. It is worthless.

Likewise, everything that you have done, which has not been for building the character of God, you repent of, you forget, you put behind you, it is worthless. To remember it, to dwell on it, is the same as trying to pay your rent with a canceled

check, it won't be accepted. That's why he says, forgetting those things that are behind.

What if you say, 'I can't forget those things'? Well then, you better get on your knees and ask God to help you forget. You better begin filling your mind with some of the things of the Word of God so you can forget. And you better be asking God for His Spirit and understanding so you can put those things behind you. They have to be put behind! Here's another way of looking at it: all of the problems of today end at sunset, or when you go to bed. *They end!* If there's nothing you can do about it when you wake up in the morning, put it behind you. Why pollute the new day with the problems of the old day? Solve the problems of the old day, and go on. Whatever problems come, as Christ said, 'Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.'

Let's finish it here, v 13: "...but *this* one thing *I do*—¹forgetting the things that are behind, and ²reaching forth to the things that are ahead, ³I press toward *the* goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. So then, let as many as *be* perfect **be of this mind...**" (vs 13-15). *That's how we are perfected!*

Christ was perfected by suffering in the flesh so that He could be the High Priest to make intercession for us. Now He is perfecting the people of God, and this is the process of perfection.

Verse 15: "So then, let as many as *be* perfect be of this mind. And if *in* anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal even this to you." Why? ***So you can repent and change!***

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*

Scriptural References

- 1) Hebrews 7:9-12
- 2) Psalm 110:4
- 3) Hebrews 5:1-3
- 4) Exodus 20:18-19
- 5) Exodus 24:3
- 6) Hebrews 7:12-17
- 7) Hebrews 4:12-16
- 8) Ephesians 1:13-14
- 9) Ephesians 2:8-10
- 10) Romans 2:17-29
- 11) Colossians 2:10-12
- 12) John 15:1-3
- 13) 1 John 1:1-9
- 14) Romans 8:1-2
- 15) Hebrews 7:15-19, 11, 19
- 16) James 4:6-10
- 17) Hebrews 7:19-25

- 18) Revelation 5:6
- 19) 2 Chronicles 16:9
- 20) 2 Chronicles 15:1-2
- 21) Hebrews 7:25-28
- 22) Hebrews 5:7-10
- 23) Ephesians 4:11-13
- 24) Philippians 3:4-15

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Hebrews 7:4
- Exodus 32
- Deuteronomy 5:29
- Revelation 2; 3
- 2 Chronicles 35
- Acts 9

Also referenced:

Hebrews Series #s 17 & 29 the Unpardonable Sin

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