

Sermon Notes of Rev.Dr.I.J.W.Oakley (18-2-1979 Strandtown Baptist Church)

Hebrews 7:25

Additional Reading: Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 110:1-4; Hebrews 7

Introduction

This letter was written to professing Jewish Christians. They were seen to be swaying over the edge of the precipice of apostasy, and were eventually branded by other Jews as traitors to the religion of their forefathers. Hence they were persecuted. Internally, their spiritual lives were at a low ebb, and they were secretly looking back at the old religion they had forsaken. The appeal of ritual, ceremony and tradition was very strong, and they were sorely tempted to go back. Hence the writer warns them of spiritual danger, reminds them of the superiority of the Christian Gospel, and of the infinite blessings which were laid up for them in Christ.

Christ was better than the prophets, the angels, Moses, Joshua, and now Aaron, and the Old Testament priesthood descended from him to whom they were looking back so fondly. Again the central theme is Christ's priesthood. (This reminds us of something we often overlook in our reaction to others – that in the Gospel we have a priest, an altar, and a confessor. We need all three. And in the Gospel all three are provided.).

In order to bring out the meaning of this well-known and often quoted text, **Wherefore he is able to save them to the uppermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them** (Hebrews 7:25), we will ask and answer four questions: Who is able, what is he able to do, for whom is he able to do this, and why is he able to do it?

Who is able?

“Wherefore” in the text reaches back into the previous context, which sheds wonderful light onto the superiority and power of Jesus Christ. He is the priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. Story taken from Genesis 14. Melchizedek was the ancient king of Jerusalem, he met Abraham after he had been rescuing Lot. Melchizedek, because he was greater, blessed Abraham, and Abraham gave him one tenth of his spoils of war. So Melchizedek was greater than Abraham. He was also greater than Abraham's descendants, including the tribe of Levi from which Aaron and all the priesthood of the Jewish religion came.

Christ's likeness to Melchizedek is reinforced by a quotation from Psalm 110, which says that the Messiah would be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek appears in the Genesis record as a timeless figure - no record of father or mother, we do not hear of his beginning or end, he is a priest when we meet him, and a priest when we lose sight of him – therefore he is always and forever a priest as far as our vision is concerned (Hebrews 7:3). So Christ's priesthood is eternal and unchanging. Different from Aaron and all the other Old Testament priest's who died eventually and had to be constantly replaced. They served at most 30 to 50 years of their life. Jewish historian, Josephus, tells us there were 83 High Priests from the days

of Aaron to the fall of Jerusalem in AD70. No one could continue long because of death (Hebrews 7:23).

But Christ is alive forever more. **By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament... This man ... hath an unchangeable priesthood** (Hebrews 7:22,24). He is absolutely perfect, holy, harmless, undefiled. All the other priests needed to sacrifice for their own sins before offering sacrifices for other people. Christ was perfect, He sacrificed Himself once for all, not for Himself but for the people. The way was forever opened up into the presence of God. Thus Aaron's priesthood was inferior, imperfect and temporary. Christ's is eternal, superior, perfect, and the final priesthood. Jesus is God's last word to man. He is now the only and the abiding priest at the throne. He has done what no Jewish priest could do – provided real and permanent access to God. Sin is overcome, fear is banished, and the way is open for all. Who could ever think of leaving Christ for an inferior priesthood.

We need to keep hold of this great truth that we have a priest, an altar and a confessor. Christ is the priest, His Cross is the altar. We need never turn aside to anywhere else, we need no human priest on earth when we have a divine one in heaven. People who turn from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism have lost sight of this fundamental truth.

#### What is He able to do?

**He is able to save to the uttermost.** The work of the Old Testament High Priest was to offer sacrifice, intercede and pray for the people, and then come from within the Holy of Holies to bless the people. Parallel this with the work of Christ - Christ offered the perfect sacrifice for sin, never to be repeated, finished, complete. At present He is at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us, obtaining daily blessings, fresh supplies of help and mercy. One day He will come forth from heaven to bless us at His return in power and great glory. That will be the end of weakness, sorrow, sin and death. No more parting and separation. So Christ's work offers perfect salvation.

Able to save to the very end, continually, fully, completely, absolutely, forever, “from the guttermost to the uttermost” – perfect salvation. He saves us from the consequences, tyranny and the very presence of sin. There is no part of our lives which cannot be touched and transformed by this great salvation. Nothing is excluded from the word “uttermost”. He is able to save, notwithstanding our weakness, trials, persecutions and temptations, the sting of death, terrors of judgment. We need not despair, none of these things can break off our union with Him. While Christ lives, we shall not be forsaken. Nothing can separate us from Him.

Keep in view that Christ died, lives, intercedes, cares, loves, and is coming again. Remember the continual intercession of a mighty friend at the right hand of God, a friend who never slumbers nor sleeps, who cares for us morning, noon and night.

Lindsay Glegg summarised this complete salvation: Eternal salvation – He will see us through to the very end, we shall not perish; Everyday salvation – salvation that is able to touch every place, every day, all day; Entire salvation – no situation or temptation or failure which is beyond Him.

### To whom is He able to do this?

**Them that come to God by Him.** To people with a sense of need and failure and despair, who also have a faith that God is willing and able to do this for them. Only qualification here is that we come to God by Him. The door of blessing is open wide to all who will come. *τους προσερχομενους* – those who *keep on coming*, those in the habit of coming to Him. The message here for the unsaved is clear – you are condemned by your life and your ways. Confess, tell Him you come in Christ's name. For His sake, ask to be heard and forgiven. Have no fear.

For believers, there is also a word here – this is the guarantee of our security. Therefore we can have boldness in prayer. No matter how miserable, poor and wretched we are, we can go before God with confidence and ask what we need day by day. Christ's intercession causes prayers to be accepted. He signs and endorses and presents our petitions. Here is the secret of daily comfort in all the trials and distractions of life.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century civil war, a soldier, who later fell, prayed before leaving his tent, "Lord, I am going to do my duty today. I may sometimes forget thee. I cannot fix my thoughts at all times as fully on thee as I wish. But Lord, if I this day forget thee, do not Thou forget me." This is a prayer for all of us, in the busy-ness of our lives. Remember every morning there is one living in heaven praying at all times for me – whatever I may be doing. This can strengthen us as we look into the future, and are fearful of falling. The power of Christ is pledged on our behalf. He died for us, cares for us, and is at God's right hand praying for us. No one can pluck us from His hand.

### Why is He able to save?

**Seeing He ever lives.** He is alive forevermore. He is alive now in heaven – and there He is praying for us. His boundless, endless, glorified existence in heaven is for His people as well.

This truth of a living Christ needs to be remembered in our times of greatest need. The living Saviour is interposing for us. Our great Redeemer lives for us, lives in the fullness of His power and glory, devotes His life to the preservation of our souls from ill. What endless blessings must come to those for whom Jesus spends the strength of His endless life.