

October 24, 2021

Hebrews 7:23-28:

“Who God Is, Is Ours Without Change”

- I. Continues Forever.
- II. For One Purpose.
- III. Once for All.
- IV. A Final Note

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Dear Friends in Christ,

As many of you know, Psalm 51 is the great penitential Psalm of David. This Psalm was written after his adulteress affair with Bathsheba, which was followed by the announcement of her pregnancy, which was followed by David's plot to kill her husband, Uriah, which was followed by David's lack of conscience regarding the severity of what he had done, which was followed by God sending the prophet, Nathan, to confront David, which was followed by David's confession of his sin in which he stated, "I have sinned against the Lord." And this was followed by God absolving David through Nathan: "The Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die." (2 Sam. 12:13)

This incident came to David's mind and heart throughout his life; probably, innumerable times; as David confessed: "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight." (Ps. 51:3,4) This incident also brings to mind our sin, the reality of its daily presence, the remembrance of things we don't want to remember, and, maybe, that moment of wondering if God will go on and on forgiving and loving us.

This morning we are confronted with the incomprehensible mercy and love of God for the heart and body broken by sin and fearful of God's eternal wrath for any and all sin. This morning . . .

WHO GOD IS, IS OURS WITHOUT CHANGE

I. Continues Forever.

Our text begins with, "The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds the priesthood permanently, because he continues forever." (vv. 23,24) The Old Testament priesthood and the sacrificial system foreshadowed the ultimate sacrifice of the eternal High Priest, Jesus, Who would give Himself once for all sin. His sacrifice would put an end to the sacrificial system.

There's a word that comes to mind: *Immutable*. God said through Malachi, "For I the Lord do not change..." (Mal. 3:6a) And of Jesus the Scriptures teach, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (Heb. 13:8) In his "Christian Dogmatics," Dr Francis Pieper wrote:

The Psalmist brings into the sharpest possible contrast the change and decay to which all creatures are heir and the immutability of God when he says, "They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure; yes, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture Thou shall change them, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same and Thy years shall never end." (Ps. 102:26-27) God is unchangeable in His essence. He is immutable also in His attributes, e.g., His kindness (Is. 54:10), His wrath (I Jn. 3:36), His will [Pieper then quotes Prov. 19:21]: "The counsel of the Lord shall stand". Scripture draws a twofold lesson from God's immutability: 1) To warn the wicked, because God's wrath is unchangeable (Mark 9:44); 2) to comfort the pious, because God's grace can never depart (Is. 54:10). (Francis Pieper, D.D., Christian Dogmatics, Vol. I, CPH, Saint Louis, 1950, p. 440)

It's like this: the love of God is not hit or miss; here today, gone tomorrow; unpredictable.

II. For One Purpose.

But maybe, just maybe, every now and then, that troubling question might appear: "How can I be sure that God will forgive the sins I've struggled with all my life?" Our text says, "Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him (Jesus), since he always lives to make intercession for them." (v.25)

We don't need a priest to intercede for us. We don't offer something to God to appease Him, as Jesus said, "Whoever believes in him (believes He paid for their sin and secured their heaven) should not perish but have eternal life." Besides, as Scriptures say of God's people, "...you are a royal priesthood..." (I Pt. 2:9) That's speaking about you and me.

As priests, we "declare the excellencies of Him who called (us) out of darkness into His marvelous light." (I Pt. 3:9) And we do sacrifice, as David said, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God you will not despise." (Ps. 51:17) We present our sin and guilt to Him. And this, "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving..." And this: "The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies (God). (Ps. 50:14,23) Again, such sacrifices do not pay for sin or win God's favor, but express our sorrow over sin, and praise and thanksgiving for His love and forgiveness that, in Christ, are always there! In fact, our text says . . .

III. Once for All.

For indeed it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever. (vv.26-28)

The words that stand out are, "He (Jesus) did this once for all when he offered up himself." Again, God the Son is the Great High Priest who gave Himself as the ultimate one time sacrifice for all, because "God so loved the world." His intense suffering, hell and death comprise the most penetrating confrontation with God's wrath and hatred of every sin and the payment that had to be made for you and for me!

The Scriptures are clear: "...without the shedding of blood (and with it, death) there is no forgiveness of sins." (Heb. 9:22) That was clearly made known by God at the very beginning: "...of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Gen. 2:17) When we play with sin - minimize sin - any sin of thought, word, or deed - we are playing with the immutable wrath of God and eternal rejection!

So, let's go back to the beginning; this statement: "This incident (David's fall) also brings to mind our sin; the reality of its daily presence, the remembrance of things we don't want to remember, and, maybe that moment of wondering if God will go on and on forgiving and loving us." And this is a special concern when we find ourselves battling with the same rotten sins.

Remember these words: God the Son gave Himself "once for all"! Remember this: "a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." And remember this: "If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I Jn. 1:9) And this: "...the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." (I Jn. 1:8) And, of course, this: "(Jesus) is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world." (I Jn.2:2) Remember? Jesus is the gift to gain God's favor - forever!

IV. A Final Note.

There is a final note to this. The pew and worship edition of the English Standard Version of the Bible, which a number of us use for personal Bibles, states the following in its introduction to the Book of Hebrews: "The letter to the Hebrews was written to encourage Christians in a time of trial." This could have been written during the time of the vile Roman Emperor Nero, noted persecutor of God's people. The Epistle addresses converts from Judaism to Christianity who were facing persecution. It is suggested that they were probably thinking of going back to Judaism in order to avoid further persecution.

Dear friends, although we can be easily discomfited by this world's efforts to create a god to its own liking, and as much as we more and more see the rumblings against the Lord's Word and His church we must hold tightly to this Word of God:

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient (They and all desires for them will go away quickly and forever, even if we live more than 100 years!), but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Cor. 4:16-18)

Who God is and what He has given us in Christ are ours without change, forever and ever!

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott