

**"I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ."
Philemon 6**

sermonnotes

Introduction

"O God, I have committed iniquity and transgressed and sinned before thee, I and my house and the children of Aaron, thy holy people. Oh God, forgive, I pray, the iniquities and transgressions and sins which I have committed and transgressed and sinned before thee, I and my house."
Prayer of the High Priest found in the Mishna

I hope we are not missing the illustrative magnificence of the book of Hebrews. Our author has shined his significant knowledge of the Old Testament as a shadow on the person of Jesus Christ our "high priest."

Can you imagine the spiritual significance of Jesus being our high priest, clothed in the garments of the high priest, which are wrought with symbolism? The priest would first wear white linen as the foundation of his garments, and then he would put on a blue robe.

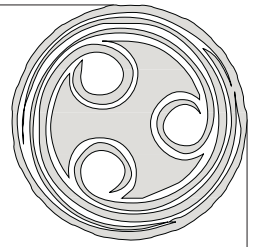
Attached to that robe were pomegranates woven from blue, purple, and red (scarlet) yarn placed between bells that rang as the high priest did his work in the temple (this according to Exodus 28:35 was to determine if the priest was still alive). After the priest put these elements on, he would then place on an apron-like piece made of gold, blue, purple, and red yarns. The shoulders of that apron-like ephod had two onyx stones (set in gold) on each shoulder, and on each stone was inscribed the names of the 12 tribes of Israel in birth order.

Then from the shoulder piece hung a breast piece from the shoulders by gold chains, and had 12 semi precious stones (four rows of three). On each stone was engraved each of the 12 tribes of Israel. The breast piece also had the Urim and Thummin attached to it. The last piece the priest would wear was the white turban which had a gold plate attached to the front of it with the inscription, "Holy to the Lord," engraved on it (Exodus 28:36). The garments, like everything pointing to God's final plan are symbolic of what the Messiah would do when He came to earth. The spiritual significance of the high priest when applied to Jesus Christ is huge. We saw last week that He (Christ) can relate to us, our passage today illustrates that by showing Christ's solidarity with humanity, while at the same time shows us where Christ transcends this realm. It is imperative that we understand here that Christ was fully human, and that humanity caused Him to subjugate Himself to God in everything He did. As a man He (like you and me) struggled with the "Will of God," yet He obeyed, making Christ our extreme example.

From The Head...

Qualifications of an Earthly Ministry (Hebrews 5:1-4) It is assumed that certain men and women do the work of the ministry. Those are the paid staff, and those that "have the time," do the work of the ministry. This idea is not biblical. We are ALL called to "do the work of the ministry" (Ephesians 4:12 cf. 1 Peter 2:9). Subsequently the qualifications of a minister are as relevant for you as it is for me.

First, there is a connection between those that minister, and those that are being ministered to. We need to be connected to people in order to connect with people. This is why those of you not in the "full time" ministry have an advantage. According to Ephesians 4 the pastors, evangelists, teachers, etc. exist to train, so that you could do "the work of service (ministry)." Subsequently you have a ready-made place to minister (serve). You have the same needs and time pressures, etc. The goal of the ministry is partially described in verse one; "to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." This was the "holy" duty of the high priest, and it is our duty as the high priest who stands between God and



fallen mankind. We offer a life of thanksgiving and a person of sacrifice to them. When people see us offering gifts to God in the midst of our stress, and we point to the one who sacrificed Himself for us, we give them the two-sided truth of the gospel, which is that we are ensconced in sin, yet because of Christ, we are able to give gifts of praise and thanks to the Lord, just as the Jews would when their sins were forgiven symbolically.

Secondly, the person that rightly understands God and sin is humbled by the experience, and therefore able to minister to other sinners. There's an empathy that is real. As we saw last week, even though Jesus didn't sin Himself, He was tempted in such a way that He understood the weight of sin more than we do both experientially and psychologically. It is only when we rightfully understand who we are in front of God that we can properly minister to others without being too timid, or too self-righteous. As we see in our set of verses, the high priest would first need to make a sin offering for himself before he would enter the "Holy of holies" on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).

When we understand ourselves in a biblical humility, we are able to gently and sympathetically deal with others that are in the snare of their own sins. When we become self-righteous, we are unable to minister effectively to those that have fallen (see Galatians 6:1-2).

Thirdly, the minister of God is chosen. We are all called and chosen by God to serve (1 Peter 2:9) and suffer with those that suffer, both spiritually and physically. There is joy in this work as we realize that God ultimately defeats evil, and that He has entered this battle through the incarnation. Subsequently this struggle is both defeated and happening at the same time, which is paradoxical, yet understood when we begin to understand that this world is playing out the drama of God's sovereign will on the stage of humanity. And just like the earthly high priest, we are called with the intent to bring "holiness to the Lord." Our goal in ministry has to be God's glory, and sympathy for those that suffer the sting of sin.

The Similarities and Dissimilarities of our Eternal High Priest (Hebrews 5:5-0)

First, like the earthly high priest, Christ was chosen to be a high priest "according to the order of Melchizedek." This statement is quite interesting since there was technically no priesthood with this name. There was the Aaronic priesthood, and the Levitical priesthood, but not the order according to Melchizedek (we are going to get into this more in the next few chapters, since this really opens up the theme of the next section of this book). The quote here is from Psalm 110:4. The Hebrews author has used two key Psalms (Psalm 2:7 and Psalm :4) to explain two key roles that Jesus has in salvation, his Royal office (2:7) and the Priestly office (110:4). This latter Psalm becomes the heart of the next few chapters. It does suffice now to recognize that Genesis 14:18 refers to Melchizedek as both king of Salem and priest of God. No priest had the office of king, and no king ever had the office of priest in the Old Testament. Jesus appears to be both. Thus Jesus' priesthood (and Kingship for that matter) is eternal. He is who He is.

Secondly, we see these next verses expounding on Hebrews 4:15, which tells us that Jesus can "sympathize" with humanity. Our verse says that Jesus "offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the one who could save Him." We see in the gospel of Mark that Jesus was "Deeply distressed" (Mark 14:33), and that His soul was "overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Mark 14:34), and that He continues by asking God to take away this cup (literally change your will), which we see in our passage that God answered His prayer because of His reverence toward His Father, and that answer was NO!

Jesus wanted God to change His will! Why? Because He was truly human and fully understood the pang of sin. The evil that Christ was about to experience was an evil beyond our understanding. "He was heard because of His piety!"

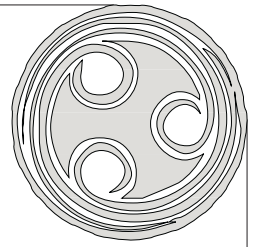
That floors me. God heard Him, and realized His pain, but according to Romans 5:8 it is because of His love that He "Sent His son to die!" Isaiah 53 reminds us that God was "pleased to crush His Son!" Why? Because the accomplishment of that act was astonishing.

Thirdly, Christ identified with us by learning obedience "from the things He suffered." Why did Christ need to learn obedience? Was He normally disobedient? The idea of the word "learned" (manthano) is to "experience" or "understand more fully." Jesus didn't learn something He didn't know, He experienced something at another level. Because of His identification with human suffering, He was able to more closely relate and understand what true obedience is in the midst of a time when you truly didn't want to do something. As a human, He really didn't want to do His father's will, but as a perfect man (as one coming from God), He chose to obey, and because of that He was "made perfect," in that He was complete as a human. The word for perfect is teleioo, which carries the idea of completed or finished (see John 19:30). He was complete in His human experience. According to Luke :52 Jesus grew in "wisdom and stature." As a man, He grew, and learned like we would, and as a man, He was perfected in His experiential knowledge of humanity. Obedience was the cure for Christ's deep distress.

Lastly, the difference between Christ's obedience and my obedience is that His obedience secures God's will; my obedience reflects it. It is in Christ and His act that He became the "source of eternal salvation."

What begins in verse one as a high priest taken from men (earthly high priest) ends with Jesus being "designated by God" (as a heavenly high priest) that is according to an order that has no beginning and no end.

Christ in His humanity was able to truly identify with our weaknesses, but He overcame those weaknesses by obeying His Father. Our eternal salvation rests in His work, and we are called to obey that by placing our trust--and ultimately our hope--in obeying Him and trusting in Him as our savior. What is it that you are suffering? Can you drop it off at the feet of the cross and begin anew with a newfound hope in the midst of your pain? I hope so, and I hope that you understand that leaving your suffering at His feet only begins a journey that involves joining in his suffering for the sake of the gospel. As Philemon six exhorts us to share our faith, so we too can begin to have a fuller more experiential knowledge of the Lord.



... To The Heart

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