



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

From the Gutter-most to the Uttermost

May 22, 2022

Hebrews 7:20-28

Clint Pressley

²⁰ And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, ²¹ but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him:

*“The Lord has sworn
and will not change his mind,
‘You are a priest forever.’”*

²² This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.

²³ The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, ²⁴ but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. ²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

²⁶ For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

(Pastor prays)

Thursday afternoon, John Stegemerten and I were discussing this passage and the goodness of God and salvation. That's when John said, “God saves us from the gutter-most to the uttermost,” which is absolutely true and seems to be the whole point our writer is making as he strengthens his people for all they will be dealing with. It’s what I want to do, by God’s grace and with this passage, strengthen you. As prices rise and temperatures flare and morals fall and pressure increases, we need to be strengthened in our souls. This passage is full of hope and joy and promise and stability.

Let's catch up and get context. So far in Chapter 7 the pastor has strengthened his people by holding up an Old Testament figure named Melchizedek as a type of Christ. Now that he has made his point, he puts Melchizedek aside and joyfully brings Christ into full view. Because if you are not careful, you find yourself minimalizing your Christianity and maximizing everything else so your identity is weighed heavy on school or work or hobbies or children or politics and the fact that you are a Christian is put into the background. Just like the people receiving this letter, the world has made it so there is nowhere left to hide. If you believe this book and the God who inspired it and if you confess Jesus Christ as Lord, you and possibly your family are on an absolute collision course with a world that hates the God of the Bible. It was like that in ancient Rome and it's like that in modern America. And we must find a way to live with joy and contentment and courage and grace. I think this passage helps.

Rejoicing in the Lord Makes You Strong

There are several reasons to rejoice.

We rejoice in the promise kept

The God of the Bible is the original promise keeper, and in verses 20-21 the preacher plays on that truth. And look how he compares the priesthood of Christ to the broken-down old ways of where they came from. ²⁰*And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, ²¹but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever.'"* As a display of God's promise of the coming savior, he quotes Psalm 110:4 which is a messianic Psalm grounded in Genesis 14 so that the whole Bible is a promise of God's story of redemption.

What is the story of the Bible? You can put it in categories if you want. The story goes like this: Creation. Fall. Redemption. Restoration. Consummation. I'll go through them all again.

Creation. God created everything and all things were good. He created everyone in His image. That image of God in you is good, it's what gives you dignity.

Fall. That image of God in you has been disfigured because of your sin. Adam and Eve fell in the garden and that has marred all of us. We are separated from God.

Redemption. The story of the Bible points to Christ who will redeem us. Jesus, living perfectly in our place; going to the cross to take the punishment our sins deserve and giving us the righteousness that He earned by keeping the law.

God raised Him from the dead and after redemption, there is **restoration**. When we are saved it means our sins are taken away and we are adopted children of God. Redeemed. Restored. Jesus ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty. And He will come again to get His church. That's the **consummation** of His kingdom.

The whole Bible tells the whole story. You can rejoice that God has stamped His promise into the structure and nature of this book and that Jesus Christ is the promise kept by God the Father. That God has promised to save you, to sustain you and to keep you. One good way to settle your soul is to think on the promise of God. Pray through the 23rd Psalm line by line. Pray The Lord's Prayer line by line, rejoicing in these promises. We need to rejoice in the promises kept.

We need to rejoice in a debt paid

Look with me at the beauty of verse 22. There are two things to see. ²² *This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.* There is a man, the perfect man who has taken our place and He has made a better deal for us. A better covenant. He has made a covenant of grace because we are not able to keep the law of God. We sin, we have wrong motives, we complain and tell white lies. We cut corners and eat too much and do too little and are not content. And the God/Man keeps the covenant for us and at His cross takes our sin and grants us His righteousness so that we are no longer slaves to sin but sons and daughters in Christ. Not only that. Their preacher uses a word here not found anywhere else in the New Testament. He says Jesus is our "guarantor." Jesus. The God/Man knows our need and He guarantees that the legal obligations we have to God are carried out. As your guarantor He has accepted all responsibility to secure your commitment to God. The guarantor cosigns a debt. A guarantor acts for someone who is incapable or incompetent to act for himself. As your guarantor, He pledges to make good on your responsibilities to God. The wages of sin is death. As our guarantor He takes and pays for the debt we owe.

This is what God has done for us in Christ. For you, if you are a Christian, He looks at His own failing people who are unable to meet their obligations to God. Christ has agreed to undertake that for us, fully paying all our debt. He completely satisfies every demand at the cross and stamps on your life "paid in full. "

You need to think deeply on grace and on the ocean of love that washes you clean and makes us free. Think about what it feels like not to be able to pay the bills or to be in so much debt that you feel enslaved. Think about how it would be to owe several hundreds of thousands of dollars and to know you can't pay it. Now multiply that by infinity and realize that's what your sin cost and Jesus shows up and nails it to the cross. Colossians 2:14 says, *by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.* There is no good reason that you shouldn't walk out of here today feeling lighter and happier and holier because you've put your faith in the one who died for you. We need to rejoice in the promise kept. We need to rejoice in a debt paid.

Verses 23 and 24 give us the singularity of Christ and how His saving work is permanent. It's powerful and it will hold you and that sets up verses 25-26 which is one of the most powerful and beautiful passages in the book of Hebrews. John MacArthur calls this "the John 3:16 of Hebrews." And it is my third and, hopefully, final point. We have the promise kept and our debt paid.

We need to rejoice in our lives saved

Let's just read verse 25 and deal with it. ²⁵ *Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.* Consequently. That is the basis of salvation. So based on everything we have just talked about, the great and final priesthood of Christ, here is, once and for all time, His death on the cross. All our hopes and joys and forgiveness and love are there. All your guilt has been executed, killed on the cross. He is able to save the gutter-most to the uttermost. That's the power of Christianity. He is able to save to the uttermost. Look now at the far-reaching power and unlimited adequacy of Christ's saving work. This keeps us praying for all our lost causes and wayward friends and people we love who seem so far gone. He is able to save. Get a name in your mind now, a person, a daughter, a son, a husband. God is able to save to the uttermost. His power knows no limits. His life knows no end and His love knows no boundaries. He saves

fully and completely and wholeheartedly and comprehensively. No sin, stain, situation, evil, confusion is beyond Him. He saves to the uttermost. He is able to save fully and completely. There is nothing necessary to supplement salvation to make the conditions right. It is Christ who achieves it by His work on the cross and it is the spirit who applies it by His power. It's what Jonathan Edwards said: we bring nothing to our salvation but the sin that makes it necessary.

Do you know someone deep in sin and off in a far country? Ask God. He is able to save to the uttermost. Let's look closer at who God saves. He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw nearer to God through Him. He will only save those who come to Him in faith. Grace secures salvation at the cross, faith appropriates salvation in your life. There must be a response to the Gospel in order for it to save. This is why we don't baptize infants. If baptism is a symbol of salvation, it comes after conversion, after you draw near to God through Christ.

Now let's look closely at the security of salvation. ²⁵ *Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.* Take that last phrase and it is astounding. This is the present ministry of Jesus. It's going on right now. Those we pray for, He prays for. There is no Christian alive who has not had Jesus Christ mention his or her name to God the father. It is not possible that Jesus died for you and is not right now interceding for you. This should embolden us. Robert Murray M'Cheyne said "If I could hear Christ praying in the other room, I would not fear a million enemies." What is He saying to God the father on our behalf?

We see it in Luke 22:31-34 in Peter's predicted betrayal. *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, ³² but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."* ³³ *Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death."* ³⁴ *Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."* Jesus prays for our strength, that our faith would not fail. He prays for change, for when we return. He prays for usefulness. That we would be able to strengthen our brothers. In John 17 we see His high priestly prayer. He prays that God will be glorified in us and keep us safe. He prays that we will be unified around the Gospel and that He will guard us. He prays for complete joy and that we will be kept from the Evil One. He prays that we will be sanctified in truth and that we

will live sent on mission. He prays a genuine sense of being loved by God in Christ. More than anything, He pleads the blood of sacrifice that takes away our sin when we stand accused and we are reminded once again to rejoice in a promise kept. We are reminded to rejoice in a debt paid and to rejoice in my life being saved.

Do you rejoice in what God has done for you in Christ? If not, today you need to run to Him.

Will you come to Jesus today? He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him.

(Pastor prays)