

The Epistle to the Hebrews

August 1, 2021

Hebrews 7:11-19

Reading: Hebrews 7:11-19

The Song Of The Gospel

Introduction

The following quotes is attributed to either **John Bunyan**, author and poet who lived during most of the 17th century; “Far better news the gospel brings: It bids us fly and gives us wings” or **Ralph Erksine**, minister and poet who lived from the late 17th to mid-18th centuries; “But when with gospel tongue it sings, it bids me fly and gives me wings.” These quotes brought to my mind there is no better song than the Gospel for it sings spiritual life into the souls of people. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the greatest of all songs for one’s soul. The Gospel song brings one into a deep relationship with the Creator of the universe. It is broken mankind that complicates and tries to change “when with gospel tongue it sings ...” with their man-made laws and vindications for the sins they do.

Many churches today teach that holiness is attained through a long list of do’s and don’ts and it is mostly don’ts. You are seen as a first-class Christian if you don’t drink or smoke, dip or chew or go with girls who do or play cards or dance or watch movies. The problem with this mentality is avoiding doing things that are labeled as unholy or doing something considered by some to be a sign of holiness, does not make one unholy or holy.

In the early years of the 20th Century, in opposition to the liberal teaching that was making its mark in America, a group appeared who laid out a list of things that marked one as an evangelical Christian. This group had good intentions and they fought hard to promote conservative Christian beliefs. They were called the

Fundamentalists. They were called this because of their writings titled, *The Fundamentals: a Testimony to The Truth*, comprised of 90 essays published between 1910 and 1915, they were funded by Lyman Stewart the founder of Union Oil, and over 3 million copies distributed. Their test of orthodoxy was an adherence to a certain list of rules mostly written down and some others simply understood. The problem was this group crossed over the boundaries set by God into legalism. This group over time became more and more elitists just as the Pharisees and Sadducees. They began to think that their brand of Christianity was superior and that all other groups were somehow lesser Christians. Some things do not change with time for we see this happening today just as it did for Jews as they tried to achieve righteousness from the Mosaic Law. The Old Testament law had become a long list of do's and don'ts. No one was ever able to keep all the law. So, the Mosaic Law found in the Old Testament could only condemn, it could never save. It could only show people their sin, not clean one of their sin, it could not forgive ones sin nor remove it. The solution to this problem mankind had with sin is the Gospel of Jesus Christ that sings life into one's soul, for He forgives sin and removes sin and remembers it no more.

Pray – now let us prepare our hearts, minds and souls to hear the Word of God that it might indwell us, singing the Gospel into our souls and change us forever.

Out With The Old (v. 11-12)

The writer of Hebrews begins this passage with a comparison between Jesus and Melchizedek in verse 11, “Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?”¹² For when there is a change in the

priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.” To begin with, the Law which came through time by the Levitical Priesthood was only meant to be temporary. All along in God the Father’s mind Jesus, God the Son, was to come from heaven to the earth and be the perfect Priest. So, the coming of Jesus and the eternal priesthood and salvation for mankind was not ‘Plan B’ for God - it was always ‘Plan A’. That is why the following verse could appear in the Bible a thousand years before Jesus was born. King David wrote about Jesus, “The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.’ ” (Psalm 110:4) God placed in the mind of king David the eternal King and Priest to come – Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament priesthood was only intended to be a means of showing people what sin is and that it was futile to try and remedy it on your own; people, all people, not just the Jews desperately needed the Messiah. The Old Testament priesthood could not meet the ultimate needs of sinners, at best it could only cover sin until, the Messiah, Jesus, came to take it away permanently.

The Mosaic Law showed us an ideal world where perfection is required. However, this world pictured by the Mosaic Law was unattainable for us because mankind is made up of fallen people who are sinners. In the Old Testament we have a law given by God which shows His perfect holiness and yet man was not given means by which these holy demands could be met. God did give priests to the people but their work was always incomplete and unfinished. They had their own sins to atone for. They were fallen just like the sinners they served and made sacrifices to temporarily cover sin. So, God the Father sent His Son, Jesus who was and is perfect and by Jesus’ perfection brought salvation to mankind.

In the Book of Romans, Paul explains this to us, ⁷“What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet **if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin.** For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ ⁸But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. ⁹I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. ¹⁰The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. ¹¹For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹²So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.” (Romans 7:7-12) Paul blends this with, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²**For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.** ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (Romans 8:1-4) The problem was not the Law of God, for it is perfect. The problem was sinful mankind. Sin had made God’s holy and perfect law unattainable for humans. The eternal Priesthood of Jesus Christ and the new Law or New Covenant He brings meets our need in giving us the perfect righteousness that God’s Mosaic Law required – perfect righteousness through Christ.

In With The New (v. 13-19)

With Christ and the New Covenant believers were freed from the Law. We are not free to sin but we are free from the condemnation of sin. The former was imperfect and temporary, Christ is perfect and eternal as the writer takes up in verse 13, “For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe,

from which no one has ever served at the altar. ¹⁴ For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. ¹⁵ This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, ¹⁶ who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷ For it is witnessed of him, ‘You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.’ ¹⁸ For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.”

The new eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ has been inaugurated and the writer gives two proofs. First, he writes that the new High Priest is not like the other temporary priests who found their lineage from Levi. Our new High Priest is not from Levi but scripture tells us, Jesus is a descendant of the kingly tribe of Judah and of the order of Melchizedek. Reading from Psalm 110 written a century before Jesus. King David wrote, “**The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.’**” (Psalm 110:4) Here the writer again refers to the Old Testament passage to prove that it is God’s will for Jesus to replace the priests Levi and Aaron with His eternal Priesthood.

When we look to Old Testament passages for illustrations and for proof, it is not that they just seem to speak in a similar way or that Jesus could possibly fit the description of this Melchizedek. The proper way to view the Old Testament scripture is it was written to show us Jesus and to point us to Him. It is the road map taking one on a journey to the Messiah, but one does not reach the Messiah until the coming of Jesus. Moses saw Jesus from afar, this is why Jesus said to those who questioned His authority, “**For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.**” ⁴⁷ But if you do not believe his writings, how will

you believe my words?" (John 5:46-47) The whole point of the Old Testament was to reveal Christ in shadow and in type and to direct people to His coming. The key to unlocking the Old Testament is to look for Jesus in its pages, for they are inspired by God, so we might know Him.

The other proof the writer gives us for the superiority of Christ's priesthood by His resurrection; both His physical and spiritual life proved Jesus is the Messiah **"by the power of an indestructible life"** as we read in verse 16. A Levite would serve as priest until he died. He died because he was a sinful, fallen human, just like all mankind. However, Jesus is different. His priestly work is eternal and is powered by His indestructible life. The grave could not hold our Lord and He will be on the throne forever.

The early Christians were under the authority of the Romans Empire. Depending on who the emperor was and his attitude toward the Christians determined how they were treated. Some were hostile toward Christianity and the people were mercilessly persecuted, imprisoned and killed. Others were tolerant and ignored the Christians. So how the Christians were treated depended on who the emperor was. The one who sat on the throne dictated how they were treated. So, it is today with the political leaders of the countries of the world. This has affected Christians throughout history; they have been persecuted, imprisoned and killed, but Jesus is eternal and secures them spiritually. Jesus is always on the throne, so, one does not have to be concerned with who comes into power with a different attitude toward Christians. I am not saying we should be active and stand for righteousness. Peter wrote to the early church and it applies to us, ¹¹ **"Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds**

and glorify God on the day of visitation.” (1 Peter 2:11-12) As Christians we do not belong to the world, our mortal life here is to be marked by bringing glory to God in a fallen world. As Luke wrote the words of the angel to Mary, concerning Jesus,³² “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:32-33) So, the eternal priesthood brought with it a new law. We now live in the time of grace. The New Covenant was instituted during the Passover meal the night before Jesus died. When He sat with His disciples and they ate the Passover Meal together Jesus brought in the New Covenant – the age of God’s grace.

The New Makes Us Perfect (v. 18-19)

The point the writer has been and is making is *the Old Covenant which could never save but only condemn is replaced by Jesus’ New Covenant which does not condemn but saves*. Reading at verse 18, “For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.”

The Old Testament Law was perfect just like God is perfect. God’s minimum requirement is perfection. God does not grade on a curve and He has never changed His requirements for gaining access to Him. If you wish to go to Heaven when you die you must be perfectly righteous before God at all times. One sin is all it takes to forever be barred from the gates of Heaven. That is the really bad news – for all of us are sinners. The New Covenant or we could say the New Law brought in by the New Priest, Jesus, works differently. It is known as the Gospel or Good News. The Gospel song fills out souls, “when with gospel tongue

it sings, it bids me fly and gives me wings.” This is what enables Paul to write and for us to proclaim, ¹⁶“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, (Habakkuk 2:4b) ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’ ” (Romans 1:16-17) Paul here, knew the Gospel was the key. He lived in the time of the transition. He knew what it was like to live under the Old Testament Law. He knew that it was unable to deal with sin. The only thing it could do was condemn sin. Paul also experienced the coming of a new age when a New Covenant was made between God and His people. Now the demands of the Law were met, but not by us - by Jesus. Understand that God the Son and God the Father live in perfect harmony all the time, as so does God the Holy Spirit – they live in eternal perfection. The reason this is the case is that they, the Triune God, are perfect in holiness and righteousness.

The last part of this text tells us that the New Covenant brings for us a perfection which allows us to “draw near to God.” This can take place only because our High Priest is sinless and has given us His sinless perfection as we have given Him our sin. When Jesus died on the cross, the wrath we deserved, was poured out on Him instead. Because of that we can boldly approach the throne in the righteousness God requires because our Priest did His work perfectly and it will last for all eternity. Jesus has brought in a new age, a New Covenant because He alone is the new and final Priest.

If you are without Christ this morning, God’s perfect requirement of righteousness will be required of you. One sin and one sin alone will bar you from Heaven. If you turn to Christ and trust in Him for your righteousness, all your past sins will be forgiven and heaven’s doors will open wide for you. If you do not

know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, run to King Jesus today and trust in His perfect priestly work for you and you will have God's mercy rather than His wrath.

Stop trying to achieve righteousness by a list of do's and don'ts. Stop trying to be good enough. Trust the eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, and you will experience forgiveness. As we heard early this morning, "But when with gospel tongue it sings, it bids me fly and gives me wings." Fly to Jesus – for He is the Savior. Come and pray with me and accept Jesus! I will wait for you to come once we close in song. Amen!