

Jesus' Prayers for You
November 16, 2008

I didn't know what I had done. But my teacher suddenly made a bee line for my desk. Everyone's eyes turned towards me. I just sat there awkwardly alone. It was a critical year in my educational career. Fail this one and a lot of other things might be affected. We were working on our printing. But I had I had a book at home where you could trace the letters of the alphabet in writing. So I spent a significant portion of time tracing every letter of the alphabet. Then when our teacher started reviewing our printing, I put up my hand. "Mrs. L., I wrote my letters see."

Somehow, this was a violation of Mrs. L's teaching plan for the day. Maybe she'd had a bad morning. But she snapped! She marched over to my desk and took both of my cheeks in her hands. Then she jerked my head back and forth with every word as she made her point. No writing before printing! Now this was 1969. Teaching methods were a little different. I was not traumatized because this was par for the course with Mrs. L. But all my classmates watched while my cheeks got stretched. It was a lonely moment.

"It's lonely at the top" someone once wrote or said. I think they referred to unique pressures and challenges faced when you're a leader or head of an organization. But it's lonely in the middle, at the bottom and everywhere in between too. It's lonely when you see other kids in the class talk about a party you're not invited to. It can be pretty lonely when you're the only one in class or at work who doesn't think that joke is funny. It's lonely in the hospital when visiting hours are over and you're left to think about your health. It's lonely driving home with bad news from a doctor's appointment. It can be lonely staying at home dealing with sick kids. It's lonely when we're shut in or away at school or living in a newly emptied nest. It's lonely in a non-communicative marriage or single parenting situation. It's lonely when your parents don't understand you or your kids don't listen. And it can be lonely living the Christian life at work, on the bus, in school and maybe even at home.

Though we know God is with us, there are times we might still feel alone. We may even look back at that time we first came to Christ and remember the enthusiasm, joy and closeness to God. But now its ordinary or things have gone bad lately. We wonder "is God there?"

“Does He care?” “Is our salvation some past event that will result in a future blessing?” But until then we’re on our own?

I’m here today friends with good news for those lonely times. I’m here to proclaim the truth that God never leaves or forsakes us. I’m here to announce Jesus’ constant, active involvement in our lives and salvation. Infact **Jesus never-ending prayers to God for us completely save us.** That’s super news for Christians especially during those lonely times.

This truth was delivered to a group of people who felt like they were on their own. About 1900 years ago, Jewish Christians faced intense pressure to give up their belief in Christ as their Messiah. This pressure came from economic, social and religious angles. The pressure was designed to isolate these Jews who accepted Christ. Then they might keenly feel their loneliness and turn back to a Judaism that rejected Jesus. So God inspired someone to write a letter for them to encourage those tempted to conclude that they were alone. We don’t actually know who wrote it. But we do know what they wrote. The writer puts forward Jesus Christ as completely sufficient for salvation. But in addition, the writer reveals Jesus’ ongoing ministry on behalf of

these isolated Christians. Here we will discover a beautiful revelation of Jesus’ prayers for Christians.

This picks up our prayer series of messages. We started by looking inside ourselves at internal issues about prayer. We learned about simple prayer and the prayer of confession. We talked about the giving up control prayer and how to respond when God says no.

Then we looked up to the One we pray to. We considered the prayer of praise where we give glory to God for who He is and what He has done. Then we thought about asking prayer. We learned that our God is our generous Dad in heaven who longs to give good gifts to His children. Two weeks ago we considered the Holy Spirit’s help in prayer. Now we come to Jesus’ prayers for us. To do that, we are going to unpack the central truth - “Jesus never-ending prayers to God for us completely save us.” I hope this truth will greatly encourage us today both in our faith and for our current life circumstances. It’s found in the New Testament book of Hebrews, chapter 7, starting at verse 23. I will read from the New International Version but will also refer to the English Standard Version which I have reproduced for you on that little insert. Heb. 7:23-28

Hebrews 7 NIV

²³Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; ²⁴but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. ²⁵Therefore he is able to save completely^[a] those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

²⁶Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. ²⁷Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. ²⁸For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

a. [Hebrews 7:25](#) Or forever

Hebrews 7 (ESV)

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 ^[1] 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.

Footnotes

^[1] **7:25** that is, completely; or *at all times*

Now why this talk about Priests and Jesus serving as a priest?

Well to understand this, we really have to go back to the beginning of redemptive history – the account of God’s work to redeem or buy back humans from their slavery to sin. Here’s history from God’s point of

view. *God created the universe and the Earth. He created man to reign over the Earth under the authority of God.* The first man and woman enjoyed some time of that reign in the Garden of Eden.

Man rebelled or sinned against God’s authority by listening to the devil rather than God. They took the forbidden fruit and disobeyed. In our study of the Gospel last Easter, we learned that you and I were in some way connected to that rebellion. We learned Christ alone blows away Adam’s fatal universally damaging transgression. Romans 5:12 reveals our connection to that first sin “sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.”

Sin is no laughing matter. *In fact, the white hot wrath of God awaits all sin and unrighteousness.* Romans 1:18 talks about this – “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men.” Some of you only know this part of God or were raised with only this character trait of God. If wrath is all you know of God, you received unbalanced teaching. God’s character includes much more than His holy wrath but it still does include His wrath. In an over reaction to the “God is only wrath

theology”, the pendulum swung back to “God is love.” There needed to be that correction. But it went too far so that the reality of the wrath of God was lost. God became our buddy; more like a golf partner or shopping friend who would never hold us accountable or insist on holiness. So please don’t tune me out because you are hearing about God’s wrath. His love and all He has done to save us is about to overwhelm us in this message. But if we don’t get the wrath part, the magnitude of love and grace doesn’t make sense.

People need protection from God’s white hot wrath and they cannot provide that protection themselves. We can’t save ourselves from God’s wrath. We can’t earn our way into heaven with good works. That’s a false gospel that Satan has spread for centuries. Sadly, many still believe it today. We can’t protect ourselves or make ourselves right with God because of our sinful nature and our sins.

But the good news of the Gospel is *God provided that protection Himself.* *He first provided Moses to serve as a mediator between the people of Israel and Himself.* Remember at Mount Sinai in Exodus 19 and 20, God shows up. The people at first want to meet him. Then the terror

and wonder and awesomeness of God causes them to run for cover. When they hear God’s voice, they’re even more terrified. So the plead with Moses to speak to the Lord on their behalf.

*Through Moses, the Lord delivered a system of sacrifices that would teach the people of His holiness and their need for protection when they fellowshiped with Him. *He provided priests who would make intercession and offer sacrifices on behalf of the people for their protection.* These priests would go where the people were not allowed to go. They went into the tabernacle and into the temple. Once a year, the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement to make atonement for the nation. There he would meet God who came to sit on the mercy seat right above the Ark of the Covenant.*

But human priests offered flawed, incomplete and interrupted sacrifices and prayers. (Heb. 7:23) Sometimes the priests themselves were so sinful that they stopped sacrificing to God. Instead they led the people in worship of other gods. Some were careless in their office so that God struck them dead. Some were so spiritually immature that they offered wrong sacrifices or incomplete ones. But even the good

ones could only minister for their appointed time in office. This brings us to the Hebrews 7 passage. Verse 23 states “The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office.” Ancient Jewish Historian Josephus records the names of 83 high priests from Aaron, Moses brother to the end of temple worship in 70 A.D. Some were good. Some were bad. But none could continue permanently in that office because they all died.

Yet God provided a permanent high priest in Jesus. Verse 24; “But because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.” The ESV brings out a little more clearly the contrast the author draws. “But he (Jesus) holds the priesthood permanently, because he *continues* forever.” The former priests were preventing from continuing by their deaths. Jesus continues forever, so he has a permanent priesthood.

The really great stuff comes in verse 25. “Therefore, he (Jesus) is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.” The ESV states “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.” Jesus high-priestly ministry includes never-ending prayer to God for us that will completely save us.

Now we know that Jesus saves. But the first phrase of this verse states “he is able to save completely or to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him.” Now *what does it mean to save completely or save to the uttermost?* That seems to imply that there is more saving to happen or some parts of us are not yet saved. But didn’t we “get saved” back when we accepted Christ?

Either this verse is wrong or we’re missing something about salvation. Well at our conversion, that moment when we put our trust in Christ, we certainly experienced a lot of salvation. We were regenerated or given new spiritual life. God justified us or placed us in right legal standing before Him. God accepted Jesus sacrifice on our behalf. God adopted us as His kids. We are no longer by nature children of wrath but children of God. But *there are still some aspects of salvation that need completion in our lives.. I can think of three; Sanctification; Perseverance in our faith and Glorification.*

Sanctification refers to the ongoing change in the believer’s life where we become more and more holy in our behavior. We turn away

from more sins and turn more to Christ. If you're a Christian, you can hopefully look back at your life 5 years ago (2003) and see a marked growth in your spiritual life. We will never be completely sinless in this life. But God through the Holy Spirit continues to do His work of sanctifying us. So, in one sense, this saving- completely involves saving us completely from the power of sin.

Another ongoing area of salvation in our lives concerns the perseverance of our faith. There are times when we are tempted to doubt Christ. Some difficulty comes into our lives and we doubt God or His goodness. Think about members of the persecuted church who have seen family members murdered. There might be times when they wonder if Christ is real or if it's really worth it. Humanly, we might give up the faith when times get tough. But Jesus won't let that happen, He firmly holds us even when our faith is weak. As the Good Shepherd in John 10, Jesus states these now famous words: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." (John

10:27-28) Our perseverance is not yet complete but it is being completed.

Then there is our glorification or the last phase of salvation. Sanctification is the work of the Spirit to free us from the power of sin. In Glorification God frees us from the presence of sin. When we die, our souls are glorified in this sense. Our loved ones who have died and gone to be with the Lord are free from sin. They are glorified in the presence of Christ right now. Our bodies will be glorified and freed from sin's presence when Christ returns. The dead in Christ will rise first and receive their resurrection bodies. Then we will all be changed.

So these are at least the 3 aspects of salvation that are still ongoing. The first half of verse 25 states "Jesus is able to save completely or to the uttermost." Notice it begins with the word "therefore" or "consequently." Remember verse 24. Jesus has a permanent priesthood because he will never die. So like the human high priest who offered sacrifices and prayed for the people before God, Jesus engages in this ministry for us. But unlike the priest who could only engage in this ministry for his time in office, Jesus can do it

forever. Because he lives forever he can save us completely delivering that ultimate sanctification, perseverance and glorification. It is salvation to the uttermost.

But how does he do this? End of verse 25 – “Because he always lives to make intercession for them.” The ESV says “since he always makes intercession for them.” He completely saves us because He always makes intercession for us. Intercession means to plead on behalf of another. Here we get a glimpse into the goings on of heaven. Have you ever wondered what Jesus is up to these days? He’s in heaven with a human body bearing the scars of the crucifixion. He’s at the right hand of God’s throne ruling over the universe. And if you’re a Christian, He’s interceding for you.

This truth is not only found in the last phrase of an unfamiliar passage in Hebrews. The Servant Song in Isaiah 53:12 concludes with this declaration: “For he bore the sin of many and *made intercession for the transgressors.*” Then during Jesus’ life on Earth, He interceded for His disciples. In Luke 22:31 and 32 Jesus tells Peter, “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you Simon that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned

back, strengthen your brothers.” Then we have Jesus high priestly prayer in John 17 where He prayed for His disciples and future believers. The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:34 Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” The Apostle John writes in 1 John 2:1 “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”

Jesus constantly prays on our behalf to God! Isn’t it amazing that He can do that for millions of Christians at the same time? One theologian puts it this way. *“It is a consoling thought that Christ is praying for us, even when we are negligent in our prayer life; that He is presenting to the Father those spiritual needs which were not present to our minds and which we often neglect to include in our prayers; and that He prays for our protection against the dangers of which we are not even conscious, and against enemies which threaten us, though we do not notice it. He is praying that our faith may not cease, and that we may come out victoriously in the end.”* Louis Berkhof – *Systematic Theology*, 403.

Friends, there may be times we feel lonely. But we are not alone. Jesus Christ is at the right hand of God, interceding on our behalf.

Non-Christian – you need to come to Christ because you have no protection from the white hot wrath of God. You have no high priest interceding for you. But God has demonstrated His own love for you in this, while you were still a sinner, Christ died for you. So draw near to God through Christ. You will never be alone again.

Christian –Take comfort in the ongoing sympathetic prayer of Christ. When struggling in your faith, Jesus prays for your faith to persevere. When struggling with forgiveness, remember Jesus' scars that remain on His Body right now remind us that the sacrifice has already been made. When struggling with sanctification, Jesus prays for your ongoing growth.

And continuously draw near God in faith. If we are going to be saved forever, we need to continuously need to draw near to the one who can save us. We must not start living as if God doesn't exist. We must not become a philosophical theist and a practical atheist. "I

say I believe in God but I live like He doesn't exist." Draw near in prayer.

That's why trials and uncertain times can be great blessings. Instead of thinking we don't need God and we can get along fine without Him, trials remind us of our desperate need for God and His amazing grace in our lives. We need His grace and prayers for the safe delivery of our children. We need His grace and prayers for our health.

We need His grace and prayers for the opportunity to live, learn and think. We need His grace and prayers to resist temptation. We need His grace and prayers to save us from abandoning our faith when a loved one dies. We need His grace and prayers to conduct ourselves at work with humility and Christlikeness. We need His grace and prayers to keep us faithful in the midst of hell-bent world swimming with invitation to walk away from God.

We need His grace and prayers to treat each other in this Body with grace, respect, love, humility, patience. We need His grace and prayers to love our spouses and kids. What do we often do? When things are going great, instead of drawing near to God in thanksgiving

for His blessing, we forget Him and think we've accomplished it all.

Trials force us back to face the reality and gift that God is faithful and we desperately need God.

When we come to God in prayer, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us. Jesus Christ constantly intercedes for us from the most powerful place in the universe. So will you come now with your loneliness? Will we come and confess any charge against Christ that He's abandoned us. Then come to the table and thank God for sending Jesus. Through the sacrifice of Himself and His never-ending prayers, He is completely saving us.