

Sunday, June 19th sermon: "Comfort in our High Priest -- Christ Knows Our Sorrows"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS, by John Pittman Hey

Hebrews 2:17-18; Isaiah 53:3-5

The saints find comfort in the knowledge that God controls all things, and all things that happen come from His decree. The book of Job makes it clear, that the tribulation Job suffered was from the Lord.

The death of Jesus was a further example. The disciples could not understand why God would not stop the crucifixion of Jesus, because they did not understand God's purpose in it. Meanwhile, Christ was doing the awful work to save His people from sin and judgment and bring eternal life to all who trust in Him!

One thing Job yearned for in his horrible trials was a Daysman, or an intercessor or mediator, between himself and God. Job complained of the great inequality that exists between himself and the Almighty, and wished there were someone who could plead for him.

Believers have now what Job did not have: we have a Savior, a great High Priest, our Lord Jesus! By the incarnation, we have God with us in the flesh! Our Jesus is both God and man, and therefore, He is the perfect intermediary between God and man.

Christ represents us to God on an equal footing with God, as He is the Second Person, God manifest in the flesh. Indeed, Hebrews tells us that Christ is the very image of the Godhead, and the brightness of His Glory!

Because Jesus was given a body, in which He would suffer in the place of His poor sinful people, He has been perfected as our High Priest. He has suffered in His humanity, and is a merciful and faithful High Priest to make reconciliation for the sins of His people.

He can encourage and sustain His people, because He Himself has suffered in the same trials and temptations as His people.

In His humanity, Christ has fully experienced all our sorrows, trials, and temptations.

Indeed, Jesus suffered in His body far worse than we do. He understands experientially our groanings, our pain, and our struggles.

Therefore, He is very qualified to represent us unto God.

So in our troubles, we appeal to Jesus for help.

It had been prophesied that the Lord Jesus would understand and partake of our sorrows and troubles. Isaiah lamented, Christ is "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

Mankind generally would turn away from Jesus, we would despise Him, and count Him as nobody.

"Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."

And so He was stricken by God on the cross, but it was for our crimes laid upon Him by God, that He was punished unto death in our place.

Christ was to make Himself a sacrifice, as God's Lamb, for the sins of His people who trust in Him.

But Isaiah also foretold this: that Jesus would make intercession for the transgressors.

It is an astounding truth, that Christ was both the sacrifice offered, and the offerer of the sacrifice, as our High Priest!

Paul summarized Isaiah 53 in one verse, at Romans 8:34: Who can condemn us, when it is Christ that died, better yet, is raised up again, and seated at the right hand of Power in glory, and makes intercession for us!

Our High Priest is at work for His people at all times, pleading our cause in glory, and He is the very same One Who was condemned in our place!

When we are cast down, and in trouble, and oppressed all around, remember that because of Christ, there can be no condemnation for us, because He was already condemned in our place, and He intercedes for us on that basis - His perfect obedience and blood shedding for us!

Our Daysman has a perfect case to argue on our behalf - He is a present offering in the holiest of places, and His wounds preach our redemption and His propitiation for all our sins unto God.

Not only so, but our High Priest has full sympathy for us, and therefore we are assured of mercy and grace for the asking of Him.

Christ is touched with our infirmities, for He was tempted in all things like we are, yet without sin on His part.

Therefore, we come boldly to Him at the Throne of Grace, to obtain mercy and help in times of trouble.

Hebrews goes further to describe how a high priest's purpose is to offer sacrifices to God for sins, and to have compassion on the ignorant, and those that are out of the way, because he himself is compassed with infirmities.

And only God can appoint a man as high priest.

So too Christ did not snatch unto Himself the appointment as our High Priest, but God promised that position to Him from olden times.

Furthermore, Christ was perfected as our High Priest in the things that He suffered, including His horror at the prospect of being made sin for us on the cross, for which He made supplications with strong crying and tears unto His Father in the Garden at Gethsemane. Our High Priest was made perfect by learning obedience in the things that He suffered.

And because He is made our perfect High Priest, He is the author of salvation to all His people.

Christ learned by experience the fear and dread of His people in His Own times of distress. Thus, Christ is our sympathetic High Priest.

He knows first hand our pain and sorrow and sin and desperation. His attitude in suffering is our example in suffering.

By His suffering, Jesus was made a perfect High Priest and a perfect Savior for us.

Christ has experienced how God perfects glorious things through all that we go through, even if we cannot know how now. As our High Priest, He gently leads us through to glory, even as He ascended to glory after He suffered for us!

Not only so, Christ will never vacate His position as our High Priest. Other high priests came and went, because they died, but our Lord Jesus is alive again forevermore! Therefore, He is able to save us to the uttermost, all the way into eternity, because He lives forever to make intercession for us.

This last point is very important: never forget, that our High Priest, the Lord Jesus, Who will never forsake or betray us, knows what it means to be betrayed by the high priest!

The high priest at Christ's trial betrayed the perfect, spotless Lamb of God. He had done nothing amiss, and had only helped the helpless and preached the perfect Gospel.

Yet the high priest conspired, in a dirty political scheme, to put Jesus to death, to preserve his own special place of power.

When he ought to have been interceding for Christ, instead he was orchestrating a hoax of a criminal proceeding against Jesus. He was suborning perjury against Jesus, and carrying on the proceedings contrary to the law. In the end, that wicked high priest condemned Jesus to death for telling the truth, that He is the Messiah of God.

That wicked high priest falsely accused Jesus, and then betrayed Him into the hands of the pagan Roman tyrants.

Think of it: the holy and just One, Who is our Redeemer, suffered injustice and betrayal at the hand of Israel's high priest.

So we can surely know that our Great High Priest will never betray us, or fail us in His duty to us, because He knows by personal experience what it means to be betrayed by a high priest.

But we should know this already, for at the Lord's Table each week, we celebrate how Jesus didn't betray us at Calvary, but went all the way through to the gory end for us, to save us, to rescue us from sin and judgment and death!

The One Who laid down His Own life for us, will never leave us or betray us.

We can surely take great comfort in our High Priest, and call upon Him in times of distress and need.

He is the sympathizing Jesus!