

The Everliving Intercessor

by J.C. Philpot

Jesus Christ is able to save His people to the uttermost because He ever lives to make intercession for them.

Scripture: John 14:6, Romans 8:34, Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 4:14, Hebrews 7:25

Topics: "Jesus Christ", "High Priesthood"

Description

Joseph Philpot preaches about the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ as depicted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, emphasizing how Jesus excels in virtue and efficacy all Old Testament sacrifices as the great High Priest. He divides Jesus' priestly office into His earthly sacrifice and His heavenly intercession, highlighting the importance of coming to God through Jesus Christ. Philpot describes the characteristics of God's people as those who come to God by faith in Jesus Christ, contrasting natural convictions with spiritual convictions that lead to true worship. He explains how Jesus is able to save His people to the uttermost, addressing various trials, temptations, and needs that require a Savior who intercedes continuously for them at God's right hand.

Transcript

by Joseph Philpot, 1846

"Therefore he is able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:25)

We have reason to bless God for the Epistle to the Hebrews, for it so unfolds the Levitical dispensation, and casts such a divine light on all the types, figures, rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices of the Old Testament.

What is the main subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews? It is this: to set forth the High Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to show how much this High Priesthood excels in virtue and efficacy all those sacrifices of the Old Testament which were but figures of it. The Lord Jesus Christ, then, being the High Priest of His people, we may divide His priestly office into two distinct periods; one period comprehends all that Jesus Christ once did on earth, and the other period comprehends all that Jesus Christ now does in heaven.

There were two things chiefly that the high priest had to do under the Old Testament dispensation; one was to offer sacrifices, the other to make intercession for the people. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the

great High Priest after the order of Melchisedek, performed on earth the first part of the priest's office, being both the Sacrificer and the Victim. And now, being ascended, He performs the second part, in making intercession for the people of God, and presenting before the Most High His blood and righteousness in behalf of His people. It is this second part of His priestly office that the text chiefly speaks of: "Therefore he is able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them."

In looking at these words I shall endeavor to consider them under three distinct heads-

First, the people described in the text- Those who come unto God by Jesus Christ.

Secondly, how He is able to save these to the uttermost.

Lastly, the reason why He is able to save them to the uttermost, because "he ever lives to make intercession for them."

I. The characters of the people of God are described in the word of truth under various characters. It seems as if the Holy Spirit had taken His pen of inspiration, and traced out the characters of God's people, that they, by seeing and feeling in their own hearts a correspondence to the characters described in the word of truth, might have sweet encouragement to believe that indeed they are the people of the living God. For instance, sometimes they are described as hungering and thirsting after righteousness; sometimes, as poor and needy; sometimes, as groaning under a body of sin and death; sometimes, as the flock of slaughter; sometimes as wandering through a waste, howling wilderness; and sometimes as afflicted, tried, and tempted.

When the people of God, then, feel in their own consciences that they have those marks that the Holy Spirit has described, and when the blessed Spirit is pleased to seal this persuasion upon their hearts, it raises them up to a living hope that they are God's people, because they have such marks, and are such characters as the word of inspiration has traced out.

In the text we have a description of the people of God in whose hearts the Spirit of God has begun, and is carrying on a gracious work. They are described as coming unto God by Jesus Christ: "Therefore he is able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by him." This is their character; this is the description that the Holy Spirit has given them - that they come unto God by Jesus Christ."

Now, if you have never come to God by Jesus Christ, you have no manifested saving interest in the text; but if God the Spirit has quickened your soul into spiritual life, if He has begun, and is carrying on a work of grace in your conscience, depend upon it, you will find your character here traced out.

What is man by nature? The Holy Spirit has given this description of him: that he is "dead in trespasses and sins;" that he is "alienated from the life of God by the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart;" (Eph. 4:18) that he is "an enemy to God by wicked works," that he is utterly unable to bring his soul near to God, and to do anything acceptable in His sight. Now, if this be the case, that man is dead in trespasses and sins, far from God by wicked works, alienated from the life of God by the ignorance that is in him because of the blindness of his heart, if the carnal mind is nothing but implacable enmity to God and godliness, how can he come near to God? He may come in a 'form' or in the mere exercise of his natural faculties - but a holy and just God cannot accept such a coming as this.

True worshipers come in spirit, as Jesus declared to the woman of Samaria. "The hour comes, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." And all worship, except spiritual worship, and all coming, except spiritual coming, is only a stench in God's nostrils.

Here, then, is one that is as unable to come to God by living faith as Lazarus was to come forth from the tomb, until the voice of the Savior spoke with power, "Lazarus, come forth." (John 11:43) But no sooner does the blessed Spirit speak to the conscience, no sooner does His sovereign voice reach the soul, than there is a doing spiritually what Lazarus did naturally--a coming forth. No sooner did the voice of the Lord, that is full of Majesty, that breaks the cedars, and makes the hinds to calve--no sooner did this Almighty voice break into the ears of Lazarus, than he came forth. And no sooner does the Lord begin to speak to the soul by the blessed Spirit, than the soul comes; it is moved, it rises out of the grave of death, and comes unto God. So that every soul whom God has quickened to fear His great name, has a manifested saving interest in this text--in that he comes unto God.

Here, then, we see a grand distinction, a distinction ever to be made, between those natural convictions of sin that a man may have in the flesh, and those spiritual convictions that are produced by a work of grace on the heart.

What is the effect and tendency of natural convictions? it is to drive the soul from God. Was it not so with Cain? What was his language? "My punishment is greater than I can bear;" (Gen. 4:13) and "he went out from the presence of the Lord." What was the effect of natural conviction in the bosom of Adam, our first parent? He hid himself among the trees of the garden. And what do we read is the feeling of the carnal mind? "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of your ways." A man may have deep convictions of sin by the workings of natural conscience; but they will only drive him from God. But when the blessed Spirit, by opening up God's law in the conscience, convinces a vessel of mercy, there is at the same time put into his soul by the same Spirit that crying, that groaning, that begging, that entreating, in a word, that "coming," whereby he answers the description in the text, that he "comes unto God."

The same apostle tells us (Heb. 11:6) what is necessary in a sinner that comes to God. Does he not say, "that without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him?" Faith then is needful; so that he that comes spiritually and acceptably to God comes in faith. This is it which brings a sinner near unto God. The blessed Spirit raises up the 'grace of faith', whereby he apprehends the character, and feels the power of God; whereby he bows down before the Majesty on high; whereby God's presence is solemnly realized, that he sees into the secret recesses of his bosom, and knows all the thoughts of his heart as they lie "naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

He comes also in the cries, and sighs, and groans of his soul. We may have prayed much before the Lord was pleased to quicken our souls. We may have said many prayers; we may have used long prayers, prayed in the morning, prayed at noon, and prayed at night; and yet not a single breath of true prayer was there in our hearts until God was pleased to quicken our souls into life. But I believe from experience, that one of the first marks of divine life is for God to raise up a spirit of supplication enabling us to breathe out our soul before God. It was so with me, and it is so with every quickened soul. "Behold, he prays," was said of Paul when first arrested by the hand of God.

He comes, then, to God in prayer, in sighs, in breathings, in longings, and pantings; and yet all the time there is a heavy burden of guilt upon his conscience. Sin often lies with a heavy weight upon his soul; the

sins of his past life awfully rise up to his view; the corruptions of his nature are laid open; and yet, though he feels he deserves a thousand hells, and were God to banish him from His presence he could not but say, that in hell he should justify Him for all: yet there are those cries that he cannot stop if he would. He does not pray because it is his duty to pray, neither does he pray because six o'clock is come, or because nine o'clock is come, but he prays because he must. He groans, and cries, and sighs because he cannot help it. It is like water that must have a vent. It is like a stream that must gush forth; and therefore he prays because he cannot help but pray.

He comes with breathings toward God that He would show mercy upon him; that He would manifest Himself unto him; that He would pardon his sins, break in upon his soul, make Jesus known, reveal love and blood in his heart, and sprinkle his conscience with the blood of sprinkling; for you perceive the text says they "come to God by Jesus Christ."

Now, after the soul has thus been well plagued, well exercised, and well stripped, brought down, and its mouth put in the dust, there is a discovery made to it of the way of salvation through a crucified Immanuel. There is a discovery to the heart by faith, through the teachings and applyings of God the Spirit, of the glory of Christ's Person, of the fullness of Christ's righteousness, and Jesus is revealed as set forth in the Scriptures. And when the blessed Spirit takes of these things of Christ and unfolds them to the soul, and gives it a glimpse of what Jesus is to the poor and needy, at the same time and in the same way He imparts living faith toward the blessed Redeemer; and thus He enables him "to come to God by Jesus Christ."

He sees now there is a Mediator; he now knows that blood has been shed, that a propitiation has been made, that everlasting righteousness has been wrought out and brought in, and that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And, when the blessed Spirit is pleased to reveal these things with power in his soul, and to give blessed faith whereby they are laid hold upon in the conscience, then is there a coming to God by Jesus Christ, and a beseeching Him to apply the blood of atonement to his guilty conscience, and to reveal His dying love to the soul.

It may be asked, what is it that makes him come? Why, is it not a sense of felt need? It is guilt that makes him long for pardon. It is condemnation that makes him long for justification. It is helplessness that makes him long for help, it is blindness that makes him long for light. It is ignorance that makes him long for the teaching of the blessed Spirit. It is worthlessness that makes him long for Jesus' righteousness as a justifying robe to cover his nakedness, in which to appear before the throne of the Most High.

Necessity, felt necessity, lies at the root of coming unto God. If we have no needs, we can do very well without Jesus Christ. But, if we are full of needs, if we are poor, and needy, sinful, filthy, and guilty, helpless, hopeless, and undone, and then see by the eye of faith what a rich provision there is in the gospel; that "there is forgiveness with God that he may be feared" - when these things are experienced in the soul, then they draw forth feelings that are better known than described.

These, then, are the people who Jesus Christ saves--who "come unto God by him." All others think they can save themselves. But, if I can work out my own righteousness, I do not need Christ. If I can please God with my own performances, I need none of Immanuel's. If I can purge myself from my sins, I do not need the blood of Jesus. If I can please God with my own works, I do not want to be accepted in the Beloved. But on the other hand, if I feel full of guilt and shame, and have not a rag to cover myself with, but a life stained with sin, and my nature horrible in the sight of a holy God; if, then, I see by faith the blood

and righteousness of the Son of God, His tender mercy, and the super-aboundings of His grace over all the aboundings of my sin--this draws me to His feet.

When He says "Look unto me, for I am God, and there is no other," and a sense of my needs and His fullness; my guilt and shame, and His righteousness - when these two things meet together in a sinner's heart, then only do we come as God would have us to come, in faith and feeling, in poverty and emptiness, in beggary and bankruptcy; and then only is our soul ever filled out of His fullness who fills all in all. "He opens His hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing."

There is no other coming but this; all other coming may be moving our body, but there is no moving of our soul. It may be a moving of our lips, but not of our heart. It is "the bodily exercise which profits little," not that spiritual exercise which is "profitable unto godliness."

II. HOW He is able to save His people to the uttermost. Now of these people it is said, "He is able to save them to the uttermost." There is something to my mind very sweet and expressive in the words, "to the uttermost." It seems to my mind to convey two things. It seems first, to convey the desperate condition of those whom He saves; and it seems also to convey the all-sufficiency and omnipotency of that almighty arm that can pluck a poor sinner out of the very depths of hell.

Now, first, see WHOM the Lord is able to save to the uttermost. The Lord Jesus Christ had a mighty work to do. Would God have sent His only begotten Son into the world to do a little work? Would God and man have been united in one glorious Person to do a little work? Would an everlasting covenant have been entered into between the three Persons in the Trinity to do a little work? And would the only-begotten Son of God have come out of His Father's bosom, where He dwelt from everlasting, to do a little work? Does not the very act of the Lord Jesus Christ, in taking our nature into union with His own divine and glorious Person, clearly show what a mighty thing salvation must be, when such an act was needful to accomplish it?

And do we not see by it how desperately sunk man must be to require such a sacrifice--that nothing would do but God's co-equal and co-eternal Son; that He who was from everlasting to everlasting, should stoop so low as to bleed and die to save us from the Fall, and go into the depths into which we were sunk, and into which our first ancestor plunged himself and all his race.

When God the blessed Spirit, then, is pleased to open up in their hearts the depths of the fall, depend upon it they want every word of the text - One who is able to "save to the uttermost." They want that "uttermost" to be revealed to their hearts' experience.

For instance, some of those who are coming to God by Jesus Christ, are full of doubts and fears- Is the work genuine? Do my feelings spring from the work of God on my heart? Is my religion such as will stand in the last day? Is it the mere hypocrisy of my fleshly heart or the teaching of God the Spirit?

Others of the Lord's people are passing through grievous temptations; temptations to infidelity, temptations to blasphemy, temptations to suicide, temptations to curse God, temptations too base, too black even to be hinted at. And when their poor souls are groaning and laboring beneath these temptations, can a little Savior do for them? No; they need just such a Savior as Jesus is, one who is able to save to the uttermost; if I may use the expression, one who has an arm long enough, and one who has an arm strong enough, to reach to the ends of the earth; aye, and in some cases to reach to the very 'gates' of hell.

Others are passing through deep convictions; they see the length, and breadth, and spirituality of God's law; that God requires a righteousness perfect in all respects; and they have proved that they sin in all they think, say, and do. They see they must have the righteousness of God, and be clothed in it, that they may stand before God without spot, or blemish, or any such thing.

Others are mourning and sighing under a sense of their helplessness, that they cannot raise up one gracious feeling, that they cannot move nor melt their own souls, nor utter one single breath of prayer; nor can they create in their own hearts any faith, hope, or love. Others are mourning and sighing on account of the deep depravity and desperate corruption of their nature, that all manner of wickedness is lurking and working in their carnal mind, and that do what they can, sin works in them, and that continually. Others can get no answers to their prayers; they have cried, and the Lord has not heard; and they have begged and prayed, but fear they shall never come forth into the light, life, and liberty of the gospel.

Now all these need a Savior that can save them to the uttermost; not a one-half Savior, not a nine-tenths Savior, but a Savior that can save them to the uttermost, that can look down from the heights of the sanctuary into their soul, that can apply His blood to their conscience, that can sweetly whisper to their heart, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you;" (Isa. 43:1) that can bless their souls with the sweet enjoyment of this love, lift them up into His bosom, and assure them that when they die they shall be with Him in glory.

The very trials and afflictions, and the sore temptations through which God's family pass, all eventually endear Christ to them. They thus learn salvation is of grace, not of works, that Jesus alone must save, that nothing but His blood can pardon sin, nothing but His righteousness can justify. And depend upon it, if you are a child of God, you will sooner or later, in your travels through this wilderness, find your need of Jesus as "able to save to the uttermost." There will be such things in your heart, and such feelings in your mind, the temptations you will meet with will be such, that nothing short of a Savior that is able to save to the uttermost can save you out of your desperate case and felt circumstances as utterly lost and helpless.

This a great point to come to. All trials, all temptations, all strippings, all emptyings that do not end here are valueless, because they lead the soul away from God. But the convictions, the trials, the temptations, the strippings, the emptyings, that bring us to this spot - that we have nothing, and can do nothing, but the Lord alone must do it all, these have a blessed effect, because they eventually make Jesus very near and dear unto us.

The text declares, that "he is able to save them to the uttermost." But has He not already saved them? Do we not read, "Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling?" Salvation is a past act. The elect were saved in the purposes of God, when their names were written in the Book of Life; and they were saved actually, when the Savior died on the tree. But they are saved in their consciences, when there is a manifestation of salvation of their souls. And this all the people of God have experienced, or are longing to experience; and not a single soul thus longing will go out of the world before he has received a manifestation of this salvation in a greater or less degree. This salvation is manifested when the Lord of life and glory is pleased to make Himself known to the soul. And when the blessed Spirit takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to the conscience, then and there salvation is brought into the heart. Thus all the living family will sooner or later experience what it is for the Lord Jesus Christ to save them to the uttermost.

III. We pass on to the last consideration, and that is, WHY He is able to save His people to the uttermost. This is the reason: "Seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them." The high priest under the law had two offices to perform. If you read carefully Leviticus 16. you will find them pointed out. One office was to sacrifice the victim, and make an atonement for his own sins, and for the sins of the people. This was a type and a figure of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, by the eye of faith, we view the bleeding Lamb of God.

But the high priest was also to take a censer, and put coals therein from off the altar, and put incense thereon, that so the cloud of the incense, when he went into the most holy place, might rise up and cover the mercy seat. This was typical of the intercession that the Son of God makes at God's right hand. "He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them."

Some may say, "How does the Lord Jesus Christ make intercession? Does he pray for His people in words?" Not so; but He intercedes by virtue of His sacrifice upon earth. Do you not see, in what I have just quoted, how the incense was fired from the altar? And was not the morning and evening sacrifice a type of the sacrifice of the Son of God? It was the 'coals off the altar' that kindled the incense, and caused it to mount up before the mercy seat. So it is with the Son of God now within the veil. It was the sacrifice on earth, and the blood that was shed that speaks better things than that of Abel. And from His body that He has taken for that purpose rises a perpetual odor of intercession for the people of God, for whom He pleads at the right hand of the Most High.

This is what the apostle holds forth. Thus the priesthood of Christ excels the priesthood of Aaron. Aaron's priesthood passed from father to son; but Jesus has an unchangeable priesthood. There He is at God's right hand in majesty and glory; there He is with all his tenderness and sympathy, the Lamb slain before the throne, with pierced hands and wounded side; and by virtue of His meritorious sacrifice and obedience, making intercession before the throne of the Most High. If I may be allowed to use the expression, the whole court of heaven is filled with His intercession for His people, just as on earth the temple was filled with the cloud of incense ascending before the mercy seat.

Now, how sweetly encouraging to souls that come to God by Jesus Christ, when felt by faith, is it to know that they have a Mediator at God's right hand; one who has put all things under His feet, and "is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him." And when by the eye of faith, we are enabled to view atoning blood and dying love, and all this ascending before the throne, how it encourages us! how it draws forth our desires to know Christ and the power of His resurrection; and how it seems to raise up living faith in the soul that He is able to save to the uttermost!

We know naturally what it is to make use of an intercessor. Here is a child; it has offended its father; it runs to its mother; the mother must be the intercessor. You are a servant, and you have displeased your master; you speak to the foreman for him to intercede. Or you have a friend, and have quarreled with him, and wish to be reconciled. A mutual friend brings about the reconciliation. Now carry these out. Jehovah is just, and you are a wicked transgressor; the holiness, majesty, and authority of God flows forth against your sin. You are a sinner; you have broken God's law morning, noon, and night. How are you to be saved? How is the forgiveness of sin to be experienced, a guilty conscience to be purged, and your soul brought near to God? Here is the answer, and such an answer as God has revealed in His word and in your soul. There is a Mediator, an Intercessor - there is a Jesus. "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds In a believer's ear!"

There is a Jesus! Look at Him! Did He ever pass by a case unnoticed? Did He turn a deaf ear to any cry? Did the blind call upon Him, and He not give him sight? Did He not unstop the deaf ears? The lepers cried, and did not the Lord make them clean? Were not the hungry fed, and the dead raised? Was there ever a poor needy object that came and fell down at the feet of Christ when upon earth, whom that blessed Man of Sorrows sent away unheeded? Not one! And has He not now the same tender feelings, and are not these all united with infinite power, mercy, grace, and love? Thus He is able to save to the uttermost. He is always at God's right hand. Thus when His poor and needy family see and feel that He ever lives to make intercession for them, how this enables them to believe in God, and to cast themselves as poor and needy at His footstool!

Now are you one of these people? Has God traced out your experience in this text? Look at it, and look at the words, "He is able to save to the uttermost, those who come to God by him." Ask your conscience, are you one of those who come unto God by Jesus Christ? that come sometimes by night, and sometimes by day; sometimes on your bed, and sometimes at your work; sometimes by your fireside, and sometimes in company.

Only as there is a secret groaning and mourning under all your sins, trials, and temptations, is there a coming unto God by Jesus Christ. By faith you view Jesus. You view Him as a blessed Mediator, looking to His precious blood, casting yourself upon His righteousness, and feeling how able He is to save to the uttermost. Do you come with hungerings and thirstings after righteousness, and that He will bless your soul with that blessing that makes rich and adds no sorrow with it? Is it necessity that presses the cry out of your hearts? Are you like Hannah, of a sorrowful spirit? Is your heart full, and do you pour it out in sighs before the Lord?

Then you are His people--whether John, or Thomas, or Sarah, or Mary, or Elizabeth, as much as if you could see your names in the Book of Life; and just as clearly so as though a voice from heaven had spoken to you--you John, you Thomas, you Mary, you Sarah, you Elizabeth. The text does not give our names, it gives our characters; and though we cannot take the comfort of it until God seals the same upon our soul, yet if written in the word of God below, our names are in the book of God above. If you find your experience traced here, then you are the characters. "He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him."

"But," some may say, "I have such a wicked nature, such a hard heart, and feel such obscenity and filthiness within." He does not say in the text that you are to get a little better, a little wiser, or a little holier, and then He will save you. No, but we are in brokenness, in humility, feeling a sense of our needs, crying and sighing, groaning, praying, begging, and pleading, when He saves us. And these things are the effects of the work of God going on in our soul.

Now the text says, "He is able to save to the uttermost." However desperate the circumstances of the case may be, the Lord's arm is long enough, and strong enough, to pluck His child out of the depths of the Fall. Why? Because He ever lives to make intercession for them; because the steam of His incense ever fills the court of heaven above. By sitting at God's right hand in glory, majesty, and power, "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him."

Shall not this be more or less our experience to the end of our days? Shall we ever get beyond this coming to God by Jesus Christ, and being saved experimentally by His blood and righteousness? No, there will be a daily coming to the Lord through Jesus Christ--coming as poor and needy, having nothing and being

nothing, and looking up to Him to supply all our needs out of His fullness, seeing we are destitute and have nothing but rags, and ruin, and misery in ourselves. It is thus we get comfort, and crown Him Lord of all. And what a precious thing it is for a poor sinner who is come to the Lord, though it may be from the ends of the earth, to know that He is a God that cannot lie! He has said, "All that the Father gives me shall come unto me, and him who comes unto me I will in no wise cast out."

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