

# On the High Priesthood of Our Lord Jesus

by W.J. Erdman

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*The sermon emphasizes the Lord Jesus' role as the High Priest of our salvation, who has begun and completed a perfect life of faith without flaw or failure, and who sympathizes with us in our sufferings through the Holy Spirit's ministry of intercession.*

**Scripture:** John 14:16, Romans 8:26, Hebrews 1:1, Hebrews 2:9, Hebrews 4:15

**Topics:** "Jesus Christ", "High Priesthood"

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## Description

W.J. Erdman preaches on the epistle to the Hebrews, emphasizing the unique opening of the epistle to Hebrew Christians, highlighting the specific teachings applicable to all believers. He delves into the identity of Jesus as the Prophet, Priest, and King, emphasizing His dual nature as God and Man. Erdman explores the significance of Jesus as the Captain of our salvation, the Author and Finisher of faith, and the sympathetic High Priest who understands and sustains His brethren through their trials and sufferings.

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## Transcript

Let us turn to the epistle to the Hebrews. This epistle opens in a way different from all the other epistles, with the exception of St. John. It is written to Hebrew Christians, and the moment we say Hebrew Christians it would suggest to the mind allusions to the Old Testament; special trials belonging to Hebrew Christians unknown to Gentile Christians; special temptations, and the like. Nevertheless, it has for all of us its own great, general and specific teachings.

So far as I have been permitted to contribute anything to this Conference, those who may have been present may have remembered that the first topic I had was the truth for the sons of God. And then again this morning, the Holy Spirit as specially given to the sons of God, the author of all their spiritual experience as sons of God. To-night I take up the relation of the Lord Jesus as the High Priest of the sons of God: and my point from which to start is in the ii. chapter and 10th verse of Hebrews, "For it became Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

The first question is, "Who was this Captain of our salvation?" and we have the answer in the first three verses of this epistle, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets; Hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son." That was a prophet's work, to speak the words of God, "Whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds;" "Who, being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by

the word of His power, when he had by Himself purged our sins." He is, then, a Priest, "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." He is, then, a King. He is Prophet, Priest, and King, this Captain of our salvation.

Notice, too, in the first verse of this epistle, the contrasts that are drawn. Allow me to make the verse a little more literal. It is in this wise, "God, who in many parts and many ways, spoke," notice the contrast, "God once spoke in many parts." He gave one Prophet one part of His revelation, and to another another part. And He made Himself known in many ways; in dreams and visions and voices and appearances: but at last there came One who was Himself, the very revelation of God, who had not the spirit by measure nor the truth by parts. He was not spoken to in dreams or by visions, but as a father speaks to his son. It was a revelation of God to Jesus Christ in a most intimate manner. He was a Son, and He was doing all the Father was showing Him, all the Father was telling Him. Now that is language implying the most intimate fellowship and union Possible. Who, then, is this person? He is Prophet, Priest and King.

Next, the question will be, What is His nature? or, What was He in Himself, considered apart from those offices? He was God, and the first chapter gives us the answer. In the first chapter and fifth verse He is called a Son. Notice that He is compared with angels. He is said to be greater and higher than the angels. First, then, He is a Son; second, He is a Son of God; and third, He is God.

Notice in first chapter, eighth verse. "But unto the Son, He saith, "Thy throne, O God,"" &c. Who is He as to nature? Also man. Look at the second chapter and fifth and sixth verses, "For unto the angels hath He not," &c. Then in the ninth verse, "But we see," &c. Then it goes on to tell us in the twelfth verse that we are His brethren, and then in the thirteenth verse that we are the children that God has given Him, and then in the fourteenth that He was made partaker of the nature of those children. Who, then, is this Captain of our salvation? Prophet, Priest, and King. What is He as to nature? God and man: man, able to sympathize; and God, able to help.

Now, then, as to the name given there, "The Captain of our salvation." What is the meaning of the word "Captain?" If you will turn to the twelfth chapter of Hebrews and the second verse, we will find, "Looking unto Jesus," &c. Let me now say that the word "Author" is given in the margin of my Bible as meaning "Beginner." So you see the translators were in doubt as to the meaning of the word, and thus left it to your choice.

Now, we have three meanings for one word in the Bible: Captain, Beginner, and Author. Turn to Acts iii. 15, there you have the same word rendered "Prince," and in the margin of my Bible it again reads "Author." Then we have one place more, which is in Acts v. 31. So we have these words--Captain, Prince, Author, Beginner--of what? Of faith. And you notice in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews and second verse, the word "our" is in italics. So, if we omit the word "our," it brings out the wondrous beauty of this name as the Captain of our salvation, the Author and Finisher of faith. In the eleventh chapter there is a long roll of men and women of faith who lived in the olden time, but in the twelfth chapter we are told not to look at Abel, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, to imitate them in their faith, but to look at the Lord Jesus. That word should be rendered, "Looking away unto Jesus, the Beginner and Completer of faith." And of the faith, What faith? The faith common to all God's sons. Jesus is the only Son of God who ever began and completed a life of faith without flaw or failure. We are to look away, then, from Abraham as the father of the faithful, for he failed twice. And so when you come to look over the whole list, all had a flaw, as looked upon by God. But there was one adorable Son in whom God found no flaw, no failure. Who, then, is this Captain? Prophet, Priest, and King. What is He as to nature? God and Man. He was very God. He was

very Man. He is the God-Man to-night, and there He is on the throne of the Majesty on high, and He feels for us as much as He ever felt for the poor disciples on the Sea of Galilee. He is Man, and has us on His heart: He is God, and, therefore, able to help.

Let us come back to the word "Captain," to look at another shade of meaning. You know in a regiment the file leader is he who stands at the head of the line and leads off; and that is what the Lord Jesus has done--our princely Leader of warriors of. faith--under the cover of all those different names. Look back at Hebrews ii.9, 10. There is He the Leader of a long line of brethren with their faces set towards the glory, and are marching on, and being led on by the Captain of their salvation. They are saved ones, saved by the blood of that same Lord Jesus who, having "purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." The brethren are yet down here, and what is their life? A life of faith; and their faith will be subject to trials. But the relationship of the Lord Jesus to us is this, that He once lived down here, and was made perfect through sufferings, and is thus able to sympathize and sustain His brethren.

Then in what sense was He made perfect through suffering ? He was perfected sympathetically and officially, that is, God knew that for eighteen hundred years He would be leading many sons unto glory; and He knew that there must be some one who must know these sons on this earth. And so the Lord Jesus sustains this relationship among others that He began and completed a perfect life of faith. He was tried and tempted, yet sin apart.

We fail often, but He never fails. We get discouraged; we find the way steep and rough. But, my friends, if we would only look up, we would see glory always. And if we always appealed to God, the Father would supply us from the riches of glory in Christ Jesus. He came into this world so that He might make Himself acquainted with all sorts of experiences of pain and weakness, weariness and fatigue. Jesus Christ walked through Palestine as you and I might walk through an hospital. In the days of our Lord Jesus Christ, He found the cripple, and the dumb, and the blind all over the land. It was one great lazar house through which He moved continually: and so He knew all about every form of sickness, and sorrow, and pain the sons of God would have for eighteen hundred years.

Notice, too, the Father was going to lead many sons into glory. So the Lord Jesus went through the vast and varied gamut of human sufferings, so that He might be able to sympathize with every class and condition of saints through all the ages that were to follow, until all those sons were made perfect together in glory.

So, my dear friends, we want to get these facts into our souls, that He is merciful and supplies us with all needed grace. The Lord Jesus knows what it is to be poor. Now, is there any believer here to-night who is poor? That believer has the privilege of saying that the Lord Jesus had no place where to lay His head. But the Lord Jesus, when He had no place to lay His head, knew to look up to the Father. More than that, the Lord Jesus Christ knows what it is to be rich. He was invited to rich men's tables. He knew all the temptations of the rich. How many words He spoke about the rich. How He said, " It is hard for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom." But He is able to help all these. Rich Christians need Him as well as poor Christians.

Again, the Lord Jesus Christ was a boy ; and there is no young Christian with whom He cannot sympathize. And He knew the nature and heart of woman, as no man or woman can know; and we can understand why it was that women followed Him. I do not profess to understand fully my wife: I certainly never under. stood my mother. But I do know one thing, I know that the Lord Jesus Christ can understand

mothers, for He is priestliest heart of all; He came to minister. So the Lord Jesus Christ, in leading many sons into glory, many believers of all ranks, perfected Himself; developed His sympathies by His contact with human sufferings. It is blessed when you can lay hold of the Lord Jesus Christ in that way.

And now, how does He manage all this? There is not much said in Hebrews about the Holy Spirit. He is mentioned in the ninth chapter and fourteenth verse, and the tenth chapter and twenty-ninth verse. But there is a silence as to the way that the results of Christ's intercessions are communicated to believers. A priest must do three things: a priest makes an offering; a Priest intercedes on the ground of that offering; a priest receives blessings to bestow as the result of his intercession. Now, how does this apply to the Lord Jesus? First, we know He was a Priest who made Himself an offering: then, in the presence of God for us, He, on the basis of His accomplished work, makes His prayer of intercession for us. In the seventeenth chapter of St. John you have the prayer, a prayer repeated for over eighteen hundred years in the cause of believers.

Last of all, the Lord Jesus Christ sends blessings as the result of that intercession. What was that intercession about? He told the disciples, John xiv. 16, "And I will pray the Father," &c., &c. And the Holy Spirit is He who now comes Himself as the gift of all' the gifts of God. He, Himself, as the blessing, includes all the blessings of God. And now, is there a soul down here tried and tempted, worn, weary, and sad, perhaps sick and desolate, poor and friend- less, what shall such an one do? Why, just look up to that mercy seat, and tell the Father of our Lord Jesus of your need of supplies of grace in glory up there, and that seasonable help will come. Now, how does the Lord Jesus bring that help to one praying down here? Through the Holy Spirit. In that communion there comes an intimation that when the child prays to the Father, the Son has started and endorsed that petition already, and the Spirit down here answers the prayer. He brings the blessing that the High Priest won by His wondrous work of redemption.

Turn to the eighth chapter of Romans, to complete all. Here read of another intercessor. One up there and one down here, and yet one and the same; another person, and yet the same being. It is the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ.

Now, let us turn to Romans viii. 9, "But ye are not in the flesh," &c., &c. Here we have the Spirit called the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ, and thus the Spirit of God is the same as the Spirit of Christ. Then we have the same truth in the fourteenth and sixteenth verses. Turn to the twenty-sixth verse, "Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities," &c. Let us now unravel that for a moment. First, as a fact that we are beset with infirmities: and the context of the passage shows that trials and sorrows are alluded to. Now, what is our resource? First, to pray: but when we pray it is declared we do not know what to pray for as we ought. Shall we pray, "Lord deliver me from this burden," or shall we pray, "Lord help me to carry this burden." What shall we do? It says here, that when we do not know how to pray. the Spirit helpeth our infirmities. He so identifies Himself with us that when we pray it is the prayer suggested by the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit telling the Father what to do for the Son down here. The child left to himself would not know what to pray for. The word "help" represents the burden as lying between two parties, and the Holy Spirit is helping the child of God to carry that burden. He is helping; it is the help of one standing over against the other. Now that is a blessed fact. But how do some people come to Christ to have their burdens borne? It reminds me of the story of the man who, carrying a heavy burden and invited by a friend to ride in his cart, persisted in keeping his burden on his back while riding in the cart. And that is the way we often do. We come to God to ask Him to carry the burden, and still carry it all the "ime our. selves. When Paul was praying for that thorn to be taken away, he did not know what to pray for as he ought. In the eighth verse of the twelfth chapter of II. Corinthians we read, "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice," &c., &c. It is on

this wise: Paul had that thorn in his flesh, he did not like it; he began to pray, but he did not know what to pray for as he ought. He prayed one way; three times he prayed, "Lord take this from me." Paul must have groaned when he prayed these prayers.

Now, in Romans viii. 26, we read, "But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." The Spirit so identifies himself with us that our groanings become His groanings. Now I can imagine Paul to be praying to have that thorn removed, and I think he prayed with groanings unutterable. How was the Father to answer that prayer? Not as Paul would have it.

The thorn was not taken away, but grace was given. We do not know what to pray for as we ought, but God turns His ear to hear what the Spirit has to say, and then God answers according to the prayer of the Holy Spirit, and not according to the desires of the child. As a circle of truth how complete it is. Are we tried and tempted; there is a real living Person, a Man with a human heart, perfected to the utmost fineness of sympathy. There is a Heart up there that understands our case thoroughly, and more than that, He is Almighty and He is able to help. God grant that we may lay hold of the Lord Jesus Christ. This truth is the way to a living Person who loves us: gave Himself for us; or as we ought to say, "who loved me, and gave Himself for me," and more than that, who takes charge of me from the beginning of my pilgrimage to the end. He is leading many sons to glory. May God grant that we as priestly sons may pray for one another, and I ask you to pray for me. Priestly sons? no set order of men, but all of us praying one for another; the gift in all of us is the same Holy Spirit of intercession; and so we have one High Priest up there sending us the blessings down here through the Holy Spirit. May God grant that we may be subdued when we think what we are carrying in these bodies of humiliation a living real Person, the Spirit of God; and He is not afar off. Oh, heaven is much nearer than it seems.

We often pray as if the mercy seat was afar off; but in all true prayer in the Spirit, by faith, we are right before the mercy seat. right in the presence of the glory. Let us draw near with a true heart. We have a way, new and living, by the blood of Jesus There let us go, my friends; we are not so far from God's throne as we sometimes make out. No telescope has ever been able to bring to light the throne of God, and yet I have no doubt it is much nearer than we are aware. May God enable us to realize this, and at last when we see Jesus as He is, we will give Him all the glory. Blessed be His holy name, for of Him, and to Him, and through Him are all things.

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