

THE LORD JESUS AS HIGH PRIEST

Hebrews 6:17-20—Wherein God, willing to shew more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of his purpose, intervened by an oath, that by two unchangeable things, in which [it was] impossible that God should lie, we might have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us, which we have as anchor of the soul, both secure and firm, and entering into that within the veil, where Jesus is entered as forerunner for us, become for ever a high priest according to the order of Melchisedec.

Philippians 2:5-11—For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form, taking his place in the likeness of men; and having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and [that the] death of [the] cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal [beings], and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord to God [the] Father's glory.

Let's have a word of prayer:

Dear Lord, as we gather together in Thy name we are assured of Thy presence. How we praise and thank Thee for Thy presence because in Thy presence is fullness of joy forevermore. We give ourselves to Thee for this time. Even though it is the last time of our gathering we praise and thank Thee that Thy presence is still here. Thy Word is also here, so speak to each and every one of us. We pray that whatever is unfinished will be completed this day that Thou may get all the glory. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.

At the last session of this conference I do thank the Lord that we have concluded our time together with the Lord's table. He gathers us together unto Himself, and He is the One who fills our heart. If we continue in such a way I do believe He will lead us from victory to victory. I often feel there is no need to say anything after the Lord's table. If we have already met the Lord, if He has filled our horizon, what else do we need? And what else can we say? So I do feel that it is very difficult to speak after the Lord's table because we are already filled and He is our everything. But it is the arrangement of the brethren so I have to obey them.

Preparation for the Lord's Soon Coming

Today we are faced with the most serious thoughts because our Lord is soon coming. I really feel that we are on the very verge of a great change. This is a most thrilling time but also the most difficult time. How can we continue to the very end by the grace of God? As long as He has given us today, how can we be faithful to the Lord in light of the fact that we shall see Him very, very soon?

Do you know that the Lord Jesus can return any time now? Every prophecy concerning His coming has been fulfilled, so the time is ripe. Of course, there are still prophecies to be fulfilled but all these prophecies are concerned with the time of His coming and even after His return. Whatever precedes His return has already been fulfilled; so the Lord can come at any time. How

good it would be if He were to come now! Suddenly, some people will disappear from all around the earth. The Lord will take them to the throne to be the welcoming party of the Lord. And when this happens, then events will move very quickly and our Lord Jesus will soon appear upon this earth.

He Comes First as a Thief

I often feel in the singing of hymns concerning the coming of the Lord, we often sing that the trumpet shall sound, there will be the voice of the angels, and our Lord will come upon this earth. If that is the case it is too late because His first coming will be like a thief. Is there any thief that will sound a trumpet and announce his coming? If that is the case we will welcome him because we are ready. Unfortunately, the thief always comes at a time when he knows we are not ready. And when we become aware of it he is already gone, and our treasure has been taken. So the first step of the Lord's coming will be like a thief. Suddenly he will come and only those who are prepared for Him will be taken to Himself. So hopefully, we will be those who are waiting for Him that we may not be caught unaware.

God's Secret for Overcoming

How can we be ready in our days since they are getting more and more difficult? Thank God there is a secret—and that is seeing God on the throne. If we only see ourselves and what is happening with us, if we only see what is going on around us, I think we will all be disappointed. That is why the Lord said, "When you see all these things happening, look up, look up, for your redemption is drawing nigh."

God's Eternal Purpose

God has an eternal plan. Even before the foundation of the world God had a plan which He purposed. This is what He is going to do, and this is what He wants to accomplish. What is the eternal purpose of God? We are told in Ephesians 1 that God's eternal purpose, which is according to the purpose of His heart, is for His Son Jesus Christ to head up all things. He wants to conclude everything in Christ; He wants everything to express Christ Jesus. And thank God that in His eternal purpose there is also a special place for man because He wants His Son to have a bride, and He wants His bride to work together with Him. It is through the church that He wants to bring all things to Himself. So this is God's eternal purpose.

But when we look at man, we can see that man has failed God. Man may fail but God never fails. We see the glorious plan of God—how He sent His Son into this world to be a Man and through His Son as Man He completes and accomplishes everything He desired of man. And whatever He has done in His Son He wants to do in us that we may be His bride. So this is the glory of God.

Where Is Our Anchor Cast?

Now we would like to go into Hebrews 6 which tells us "there is an anchor." Where would you cast the anchor? Would you cast the anchor on the ship? If that is the case the ship will not be steady; it will be blown around by the wind. But when you cast the anchor outside of the ship

into the sea, it can be anchored on the rock. Where should we cast our anchor? We need to cast our anchor on God's throne, and if we do that, then we are safe. Praise God, there is One who has done that because the Bible tells us that our Lord Jesus has entered as the forerunner for us, and He is also our High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec. So we want to center our attention upon the Lord Himself.

We have already spoken of Job. It shows an extreme case—how Job feared God, yet unknown to him he became the center of a conflict between God and His enemy. Nevertheless, God had a purpose for Job. He knew that Job needed something. He was righteous but he was self-righteous, and God wanted him to learn the lesson of turning away completely from himself and looking only at God. Therefore, God allowed him to be tempted by Satan until he learned his lesson. And we know he did learn because he said, "I have heard of Thee with the hearing of the ear, but now I see You." He saw God on the throne. God has every authority, so whatever He does is right. Job yielded his whole life to God and this is how God led him into sonship.

The Man Who was Totally Obedient to God

Now we would like to consider another example, and it is the other extreme. In the Scriptures we find a Man who was obedient to God to the uttermost, and in Philippians 2 we have a description of His life. In v. 6 it says, "Who subsisting in the form of God." The word "form" does not refer to outward form; it is image. It speaks of inward character. Our Lord Jesus has the form of God; that is to say, He has the same character as God. God is love and He is love. God is righteous and He is righteous. God is holy and He is holy. God is eternal and He is eternal. In other words, He is God; He is one with God and has everything that God has. This is what our Lord Jesus was before He came to this world. And when He was in the form of God, it was not something that He tried to grasp at because He was originally that way.

He Emptied Himself

This reminds us of another person who tried to grasp the form of God. He was just an angel but he was not satisfied. His pride gave rise within him, and he wanted to have the form of God. He tried to grasp it, and because of that, he was dismissed from heaven and he turned himself into Satan, the adversary of God. So here you find a contrast. Our Lord Jesus was originally God; He was one with God and yet He was willing to empty Himself. This emptying does not refer to His deity because that is what He is, but He emptied Himself of all the glory, honor, power, authority to accomplish God's end. Before He came into this world He had to empty Himself—He had to leave His throne; He had to lay down His authority; He had to lay down the worship by the angels; He had to lay down His sovereignty in order to take up a bondman's form.

He Took on the Form of a Bondman

In the beginning God created man in His own image after His likeness; that was glorious. At the same time the man of God's heart is one who takes a bondman's form. Even though man was created in the image of God he is supposed to have the bondman's form within him. Here in Philippians 2, it is not just a servant; it is a slave, a bondman. In other words, He has no right of His own; He belongs to His master. He has surrendered Himself completely to His Master. He lays down His life in order to obey His Master. He does not live by His own wishes or like. He lives only

for His Master. So that is the kind of inward temperament in the man of God. So when our Lord Jesus, who is God, chose to become a Man it was not only His outward life that He laid down which was all the glory and honor that belonged to Him, but inwardly He took the bondman's form. He came into this world to be a Man but with the desire to serve God's purpose. And with this bondman's form He took on the likeness of a Man.

We thank God for becoming Man. Have we ever thanked God for being Man? When God created us, it was according to His own image, but we forget one thing. Even though we are created in His image, according to God's eternal purpose, inwardly we should have a bondman's form. We are not here for ourselves; we are here for God's will. That is the man of God's own heart.

He was Born a King but in a Stable

Our Lord Jesus came into this world and took on the fashion of a Man. When we review the life of the Lord Jesus on earth, even though He came to this earth as a King to bring in His own kingdom, at His birth He was born in a manger. According to the idea of the world, for instance the magi, who came to Jerusalem because according to their thinking a king should be born in Jerusalem. That would be the natural place, but when they came to visit the newborn King He was not in Jerusalem; He was in Bethlehem. And He was not in the palace; He was in a manger. Can a birth be any lower than that? This is the King of kings, yet He was born in a manger as if He was just an animal, not even in the status of a man.

God Provided All Things for Him

When the Lord Jesus was born, Herod was the king over the Jews at that time. When he heard the news of a King being born, he wanted to kill that Baby, and he killed all the boys in Bethlehem under two years of age. So when He was a baby, His parents had to flee to Egypt to keep Him alive, and there the Lord kept Him and provided for everything. His so-called earthly father was a carpenter and not a rich man. How could He flee to Egypt? Where would the money come from? But we thank God that He provided through one of the magi who gave gold to the Child which made provision for His exodus.

He was Raised in Nazareth

When Herod was dead, they tried to return to Judea but hearing that Herod's son had become the king they went to Nazareth. Now Nazareth was an out of the way place out of which came this proverb: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Nazareth was despised even by the Jewish people, yet our Lord Jesus was raised in Nazareth where He learned obedience to His parents. Most likely, Joseph His father passed away early, and being the first born He took up the duty of the family and became a carpenter. And notice that the Bible says, "*The* carpenter." He is not just a carpenter but He is *the* carpenter. Whatever He did He always did His best. And there He supplied for His family. He lived in Nazareth until He was thirty years old.

He Received the Baptism of Repentance

Notice the way He came to reveal Himself to the nation. Instead of having a huge banquet to show that He was of age, that He is to be the future King, He came to be baptized of John. The baptism of John is the baptism of repentance, but there was nothing for the Lord Jesus to repent of. And John somehow sensed it and felt that he could not baptize Jesus because there was no unrighteousness in Him. Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus was willing to do this thing according to the will of God because God's will at that time was calling for repentance. So He took our place and He received the baptism of repentance.

He was Obedient to God

In the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry He yielded Himself to the will of God, not because of what He needed but because of what we need. Then we find that during the three and half years of His ministry the Father's will ruled over His life. In the Gospels He told us repeatedly: "I cannot say anything. I say it because I heard My Father saying it. I cannot do anything I want, but I do it because I see My Father has done it." Out of Himself He did nothing or said nothing. Throughout His life, in all His ministry, He only did what the Father had done. Even His time was not His own. You will remember that one of His brothers said, "If You want to show Yourself at the festival You should go to Jerusalem." But the Lord said, "Your time is always convenient but not Mine, because My time is not in My hands. The Father's time has not come yet." Throughout His life He was obedient to God and laid down His life.

The Mount of Transfiguration

When He went to the Mount of Transfiguration, He took three of His disciples with Him. Suddenly He was changed and was full of glory; His clothes became white as light. And Moses and Elijah appeared, and talked with Him concerning His exit. In other words, how would the Lord Jesus exit from the world? He came into this world; the Word became flesh full of grace and truth and tabernacled among us. He spent some time on earth. Now, how will He depart from this world? So far as He is concerned, He had every right to exit at that time because He had obeyed His Father to the uttermost. He was ready to leave; but if He left from the Mount of Transfiguration and returned to heaven there would be only one Man there because He would be alone. Therefore, when Moses and Elijah talked with Him about His exit, He was determined to stay and would not exit from the Mount of Figuration to heaven. He came down from the mountain with His face set towards Jerusalem.

The Garden of Gethsemane

Do you think it was easy for the Lord to die on the cross for us? Do you think that because He is God He can do anything? But we must remember that He is a perfect Man and the burden of the sins of the world were beginning to come upon Him. How He struggled in the garden of Gethsemane! He said, "I am sorrowful even unto death." And He was praying, "Father, if it is Thy will let this be removed from Me." Being a perfect Man, how could He take upon Himself all the sins of the world? That was unbearable! When He prayed, His sweat was blood. He had to be supported by an angel; otherwise He would have passed away in the garden of Gethsemane. Yet He said, "Father, not My will but Thy will be done."

He was Crucified and the Veil was Rent

Then the Lord Jesus went to the cross and in His body He bore our sins. He died for us that we may live. This is the way of our Lord Jesus. And the Bible tells us that He is our forerunner. In other words, He has gone before and opened the way for us. It is a new and living way that was opened through His own body. When our Lord Jesus was dying, He said, "It is finished!" The work was done. At the same time He was being crucified outside of Jerusalem, the heavy veil that separated the holiest of all from the holy in the temple was rent from top to bottom. In other words, the way to the holiest of all was open through the veil and that is His body. So the Lord Jesus is our forerunner. He has gone before us and opened the new and living way for us. And it is the way through His own body and it is practical. And because He has gone back to the throne after opening this new and living way for us, He is now calling us to follow Him, that we may walk in that new and living way.

He Opened A New and Living Way

This is why we find in the Scriptures the Lord repeatedly telling us: "Deny yourself; take up your cross and follow Me." The Lord has gone before us and opened a new and living way for us. This new and living way is dedicated for us. Are we willing to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him? If we are willing to do that then we will find our soul is anchored in God's throne.

He is the High Priest in Heaven

There is another thing that is very important. He has not only opened a new and living way for us, He has also become a High Priest to us according to the order of Melchisedec. We know from Hebrews chapter 3 that the Lord Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. When He was on earth, He was the Apostle—the One who was sent by God to accomplish a work. Now He has ascended up to heaven. Are we familiar with His ministry in heaven?

I remember a story of an elderly sister who wanted to be baptized, and according to the custom of the time, she had to be questioned by the elders whether she could pass or not. One of the questions was: "What is our Lord doing in heaven?" And this elderly sister thought for a while and then said: "The Lord is now in heaven, and He is looking down on earth at me. He wants to find if there is any sin or wrong in me." And of course, she did not pass.

We need to know our Lord not only as our Savior but also as our High Priest. If we only know the Lord as our Savior we may get saved, but how can we live a Christian life? We will not have the support that we need. The reason we are able to live a Christian life, we are able to live a victorious life and fulfill God's purpose, is not only because our Lord Jesus is our Apostle and Savior, but He is in heaven as our High Priest. And His being High Priest is according to the order of Melchisedec; that is to say according to eternal life. He is able to supply us with life because the Lord Jesus ever liveth to make intercession for us, and He is able to save us to the uttermost. How does this happen? When our Lord is praying for us, the Holy Spirit who dwells in us begins to work by convicting and empowering us. And it is through the power of the Holy Spirit within us that we are able to overcome because by ourselves we cannot. However, He who lives in us has already overcome and we shall also overcome. So this is the ministry of our Lord Jesus as the High Priest and it is according to the order of Melchisedec; that is to say according to life eternal.

Looking Forward with Hope

How can we continue to the end? How can we live as we should today? How can we prepare for His return? It is only through our Lord Jesus. It is because He is praying for us unceasingly, and the Holy Spirit is working in each of our lives, helping us to anchor our faith on God's throne that we may be able to endure. To be a Christian is not something that we ourselves can do. Even though we say, "I want to be a Christian, I want to be saved," we cannot save ourselves. It is only by the grace of God. The same thing is true for a Christian to be able to live today, to please God and to follow Him all the way is not something that we can do ourselves. The earlier we realize it is impossible with man then we can see all things are possible with God. So we are to cast our anchor on the throne of God, knowing that He knows everything, and He will do all things through Christ Jesus. So let us look forward with hope. Be encouraged. May we press on to the goal until we can see Him face to face. May the Lord bless every one of you. As you go to your various places press on because He is very near. May God bless every one of you.

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, we commit one another into Thy hand believing that Thou art able to bring us to the very end. Do not allow any one of us to go back. May Thy love continually encourage us that we may cast ourselves totally upon Thee, believing that Thou who hast saved us art able to save us to the uttermost. Lord, we want to glorify Thy name. We want to give ourselves to Thee to be useful in Thy hand. As we go back to our various places we look to Thee to make us vessels of honor to bring in the King. Accomplish all that Thou hast ordained for us. May Thy peace go with each and every one of us and may Thy name be magnified through every one. We give Thee all the glory; in Thy precious name. Amen.