

*I would've been in early Primary School, when my Grandpa told me about something that happened in **his** childhood. (1st decade of 1900's [getting on toward 115-120 years]). They lived on a property near Mitchell. And his dad had some jobs to do in town, and so he took little Bill with him, and let him play on the street, while he went into a shop...*

When he came back out of the shop, he found little bill playing marbles in the dusty street of Mitchell, with a little Aboriginal kid. And he said, "Come on Bill, we gotta go" ...

And my Grandpa, with tears forming in his eyes, told me how things were different back then, and how his dad (as they rode home) explained how it's good to be nice and polite and say "G'day" to a black fella, but you're not supposed to play with them...

What a dreadful thing it is, to be excluded... To be excluded on the base "race"; or "language"; or family heritage/background...

And sadly, (over the years) even Christianity has been used (at times) as a front for exclusion or racism... But, that is **not** the way of Jesus.

And **today**, Christians get accused: "Oh, you Christians, you're so exclusive..." But that's not true. Through Jesus Christ, **all** barriers that exclude, are completely torn down.

And what a wonderful message this must have been, for those who received this letter of Hebrews... They had come to

believe in the Hebrew God, but ethnically, they were not Hebrews themselves. They believed in the **God** of the People of Israel, but they didn't share the same genetics,,, and so, they never really belonged.

And it is to **these** people, that Hebrews 5:9 says, that Jesus Christ became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him

You see, there once was a time, when the means of salvation was pretty-much only available for the descendants of Jacob.

But, Jesus Christ our Lord, tore away every barrier that prevented any race/language/social-class of a person from receiving eternal salvation.... Entrance to the Kingdom of God, is now open to **all** - to all who obey him

Now of course, when Christians are criticised for being elitist or exclusive, it's not because salvation isn't open to everyone – it's because not everyone chooses the way of Christ...

- if I choose to worship a different God (false god; demon pretending to be a god),
Of course I'm excluded.
I'm excluded by my own choice;
- if I choose to embrace sin instead of being obedient to Christ,
Of course I'm excluded.
I'm excluded by my own choice;
- if I choose to reject the creator of the universe, and live by my own philosophy/spirituality,

Of course I'm excluded.

I'm excluded, because I've chosen my own spiritual construct, over spiritual reality...

It's not Christ Jesus who excludes. He is the Son of God who became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him

That's a pretty big deal, isn't it. And in this section of Hebrews, it focuses on how Jesus became our High Priest, to make that happen.

Before Jesus, the worship of Israel, was all based on what we now call "The Old Covenant". And with the Old Covenant, the High Priest, was the intermediary between sinful humans, and a holy God. And the High Priest, had to be a descendent of Aaron (the first High Priest), and appointed by God.

But now, through the work that Jesus has done on the cross, we now worship under a New Covenant. And under the **New** Covenant, Jesus Christ Himself, is now the High priest. Jesus Himself, is the intermediary between man and God. There is no other intermediary. Any other intermediary, is now redundant. No Christian should ever seek me out because as a "man of the cloth" – he's got a better hotline to God. That's a load of nonsense. The Lord is our Heavenly Father, and you and I can approach Him direct through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, what do we learn about Jesus as High Priest?

1.

Firstly, He is a legitimate High Priest.

Up until Jesus, the High Priest had to be appointed from the descendants of Aaron. Jesus **isn't** a descendent of Aaron. Aaron was from the tribe of Levi. Jesus was from the tribe of Judah. So, how could Jesus be High Priest? (because He's not a descendant of Aaron)...

Well, Jesus has 2 things that trump that:

- i. He may not be a descendant of Aaron, but He **is** the Son of God.
- ii. And secondly:
The very first priest that appears in the Bible, is way back in Genesis 14:18 (way before the Aaronic priesthood). And we don't really know where he comes from. We're told he is the king of Salem, but that's about it. His name is Melchizedek. And he turns up with bread and wine (sounds very Christ-like (probably looking forward to the very first communion))...

And Melchizedek blesses Abraham, and Abraham paid a tithe (10th of everything he had) to Melchizedek... Now, what's the significance of this?

Well, within Israel, Abraham was considered the greatest of their ancestors.

From Abraham, it goes down to:

- Isaac;

- Jacob;
- From Jacob came His 12 sons that became the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel.
- One of those sons was Levi. And from the descendants of Levi, all of the priesthood were appointed.
- And one of the descendants of Levi, was Aaron. And Aaron became the first High Priest of Israel,
- followed by his descendants.

And so, Greater than Aaron, was:

- Levi;
- Jacob
- Isaac;
- Abraham;
- Melchizedek, because Abraham paid homage to Melchizedek.

And so, Jesus Christ is a legitimate priest. A priest similar to Melchizedek. Because He's greater than even their highly esteemed forefather Abraham... Being the Son of God trumps being a descendent of anyone.

2.

And Jesus isn't just any old High Priest. He's described as a "**Great High Priest**". He truly knows the heavenly reality because He is the Son of God, and He **passed through the heavens...**

Me: Whenever I teach you about the things of God, I'm completely dependent on what He reveals in His word.

Jesus: He **passed through the heavens...** That's greatness.

3.

Thirdly,

As our great High Priest, Jesus is a compassionate and understanding mediator. He knows what it is to be in the Highest Heavens, but He also became truly and uniquely human. He was tempted, but He remains sinless.

What does that mean for us? It means Jesus sympathises with us in our weakness. Jesus knows what it is, to suffer temptation... We are told that **in every respect** He was **tempted as we are, yet without sin**.

Before Jesus, every High Priest, first had to make sacrifices, to atone for their own sins. How could they be the intermediary between man and God, if they themselves are polluted with sin? And I can tell you from personal experience, being a priest/pastor/minister, that doesn't make you any more holy/sinless. And so the High Priest would first have to make a sacrifice to get himself right with God, and then he would be in a position, to make sacrifices on behalf of the people.

But, Jesus could skip step 1, because although He was tempted, He never sinned. You understand, don't you, that "temptation, isn't sin"... I suspect that sometimes we get tempted, and we feel guilty that we're tempted, (Oh, I've let

God down again), and so we give into the temptation, instead of fighting against it...

Anyway, Jesus was tempted, but never sinned. And so, at the cross, He became the once and for all sacrifice, to atone for my sins and for your sins.

But even though Jesus is completely sinless/holy, that doesn't mean He looks down His nose at sinful people like me and you... V² He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.

Would you ever consider Jesus “weak”?

In the eyes of the world, “weakness” is despised. But in the Kingdom of God, weaknesses develop in us, a character of Godliness...

The strong, tend to develop a superiority complex / god-complex (they have an arrogance or a loftiness about them) (living in a world full of narcissists)... while those who are aware of their weaknesses, develop humility (a character of God)...

Let me explain that:

Jesus Christ is God the Son; The God Most High; The creator of the Universe... Sinless; Righteous; All powerful... Jesus has every right, to have a god-complex, because He is God.

But, how could a God like that, possibly understand the things that you and I need to grapple with in life? Easy. He became fully human. And so, Jesus Himself, was beset with weakness; human frailty; human temptations; the weakness of a body that would die...

How can Jesus understand the temptations we suffer? He understands them, because He suffered them too. And so, ² He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.

What an incredible statement. Our Lord sympathises with us; He is a source of mercy and grace, because He too, became weak...Wow...

4.

The fourth thing we learn about Jesus as High Priest, is He was prayerful, and yet He suffered.

Jesus suffered beyond the suffering that God-willing, any of us will have to bear. And as He approached that time of suffering, He prayed (hard). Like us, Jesus was truly human. And like us, He needed the strength of God to get Him through.

And when we consider the prayers of Jesus, it makes us realise how shallow **our** prayers can be. Our prayers might be along the lines of “Don’t let me suffer” “Don’t let me die”... And Jesus prayed. He prayed so fervently, He sweated blood.

V⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

I don't know about you, but when I hear some people praying, it's like they think their prayers are going to be heard because of their loud noise. And their prayers get louder and louder. I know God's been around a fair while, but I don't think He's deaf.

And for some, their prayers are phrased as demands and claims... "I claim this thing, and God's going to give it to me"...

When it comes to prayer, let's learn to pray like Jesus prayed. Yes, He prayed with loud cries (not demands – cries from the heart) – the sort of cry that comes from tears,,, And he was heard, not because of the volume, but because of His reverence...

What is a reverential prayer? A reverential prayer, is:

- to humbly seek God;
- It is to gently request what is on your heart (not to demand it, or assume it);
- It is also to pray, "Not my will, but Your will be done".
- Is to approach God, not as my boyfriend/buddy/best mate,,, but in the reverence and respectful fear that is right for such an awesome God...

And so, Jesus was prayerful, and yet He suffered. Do you get this? God answered His prayer, to be rescued from death, but He suffered and died first...

And sometimes, God will answer our prayers. He will rescue us from death, even if we suffer and die... That's what the resurrection is about.

5.

And fifthly,

We discover the Godliness of suffering. **Jesus** was perfected through His suffering. A few weeks ago, we came across this in Hebrews 2. At the cross, we see God as He truly is. On the cross, He reveals His merciful and self-sacrificial nature.

And it was through the suffering of Jesus, that He became **the source of eternal salvation**.

The responsibility of the High Priest, was to make a sacrifice to atone for the sins of the people. As **our** High Priest, the sacrifice Jesus made, was His own life. And in doing so, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him

BTW, V8 says something extraordinary: ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.

The fact that Jesus was fully Human, meant He also had to learn obedience to the Father.

As a Christian, how important (do you suppose) “obedience” is, for us?

Some Christians will tell you that “If you try to be obedient, then you’re denying the Grace of God (that’s works, trying to be obedient)”. I would say it’s the exact opposite. **Because** we experience the Grace of God; **because** we have been saved into Christ, we have been saved into a life of loving obedience...

How much do we presume upon the grace of God? You know: When I **know** that something is a sin, and I’m about to do that thing that I know God hates,,, but I go ahead and do it anyway, because “Ah, God will forgive me...” I’m just not too sure how that goes down with God.

This passage is all set in the context of the Word of God, and obedience **to** the Word of God.

^{4:12} For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are

naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Yes, I am going to preach a word of grace today, but first we need to hear this:

- God sees and knows everything;
- His Word tells us what is righteous, and what is evil;
- He knows the thoughts and the intentions of the heart.
He knows every time I've **not** struggled against sin, and just given in to it because I enjoy it;
- He knows when I don't struggle against sin, because I treat grace as if it's cheap, and that somehow the life of Jesus isn't a cost that demands my obedience...

And we need to hear

- that this God, Who sees and knows everything, is the one to whom we must give account.

Remember, he's writing to Christians, and he says "we must give account" – not "they"/unbelievers... And it is to Christians he says, "Let us not fall by disobedience"...

Now, hear the word of Grace:

I have been disobedient to God. And I know you have too. But Jesus, our Great High Priest, is merciful, and He has become the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him

It's not about:

- being born to Christianity;
- having a long heritage of Christian parents and grandparents.

You may have learned to read the Bible on your mother's knee. You may have even said "the sinners prayer" when you were at High School, but have you surrendered yourself to God.

You might have jumped through some religious hoop, and decided "Right, now I'm a Christian",,, but then you've gone on to live a life of disobedience, that clearly demonstrates that Jesus is not the Lord of you.

Why do so many young people today (and older people too), treat sex before marriage, as if it's not a big deal? Or things like "greed"; "drunkenness"; "cheating"; "being dishonest"...When God's word that is living and active and cuts deep, says

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (ESV)

⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

And yet, there are many who claim to be Christians, who go along with their heart's desire; they know that it's "sin", but they choose to disobey.

Jesus is the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him

There is no salvation in disobedience...

So, what does obedience to Christ look like?

1.

Firstly, let me temper what I just said.

Obedience to Christ, will not look like perfection. Sometimes we will sin, because we didn't know it was a sin. Sometimes we will sin, because we were weak. And we struggled against the temptation, but eventually we yielded... And at times like this, our merciful High Priest knows our struggling, and is fast to forgive us.

2.

And so, obedience to Christ, will involve repentance (genuine repentance)... It is to agree with God's word, what I have been doing, is sin, and I am going to stop. God, help me to stop. And then, put into place, concrete steps and actions, to prevent us from falling into that same temptation all over again...

3.

Thirdly, obedience to Christ, is a total surrender to Him and to His Lordship. From now on, obedience to Christ, means that everything revolves around Jesus... He is the most important / #1.

- If I once used to choose work over worship, I repent of selfish work habits, that keep me from worshipping my saviour, and fellowshiping with my brothers and sisters in Christ, because I just wanted to make more money, or be the hardest worker on the team.
- If I once used to be afraid to mention the Name of Jesus, I repent, and not only will I talk about Jesus and Faith in Jesus with my friends, but I will share His Name with my work colleagues and neighbours.
- If I have been selfish with my time or money, obedience to Christ, and a total surrender to His Lordship, means that everything that I have – every asset; dollar; acre of land; Every talent/skill; every moment of my day, belongs to Jesus;

And because every **thing** and every moment belongs to Jesus, I will begin to serve Him, like I have never served Him before, and I'll give to the poor, and I'll give for the building of His Kingdom, and I will love others, for Him because He is Lord, and obedience, means everything revolves around Him....

Am I messing with your theology today? Good, because it ain't me. It's the Word of God.

The Book of Hebrews will have no part in any kind of anaemic Christianity... Jesus is Lord, and to be one of those who Obey, isn't about perfection – it's about being genuine in accepting His Lordship.

And for Jesus to be Lord, means that He is Lord of every part of our lives.

⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,

The good **news** of Jesus, is salvation is available for all.

The **call** of Jesus, is a call to obedience – To submit to Him, as Lord...

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,
we want to thank You,
that You learned obedience through suffering;
That You were perfected through suffering;
and that through Your suffering,
You became the source of eternal salvation
to all who obey You.

Lord, forgive us.

Forgive us, for when we have treated Your grace as if it were cheap.

Forgive us, for when we have well known, that something is sin, but rather than struggle against the temptation,
we went with it, thinking You'll forgive us.

Forgive us for when we've acted as if we are Lord – for acting as if we are the ones who are calling the shots,,,

Lord, forgive us.

And we praise You,
for You are our merciful High Priest.
You deal gently with our ignorant and wayward ways...

And so, we thank You for Your forgiveness.
We thank You that as the Great High Priest,
You atone for our sins, and make us holy...

And Lord, we pray that today would be a new day.
A day, reflecting a new beginning in our walk with You.

You have been faithful to us.

Help us to be faithful to You.

We pray this in Jesus' Name,
Amen.