

JESUS--OUR HEAVENLY INTERCESSOR

HEBREWS 7:25

Introduction:

One of the glories of our Lord that we sometimes overlook is the glory of His continuing intercession for us in heaven.

The Hebrew Christians were being tempted to return to Judaism. It is the purpose of the writer of this letter to demonstrate the superiority of the Lord Jesus to anything that Judaism had to offer. Included in these superiors is His priesthood.

The fact that He ever lives sets forth one thing that makes His intercession superior. If a Jewish man lived a long life, he would live with an ever changing priesthood. High priests were installed, served their day, and either died or were replaced by someone else. How long a priest served was often dependent on political decisions over which he had no control. But Christ Jesus has been installed as our High Priest by an oath from the eternal God and will never be replaced.

He is also superior because of the character of His life. Hebrews 7:26-27 (NKJV)

²⁶ For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled,

separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens;²⁷ who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself."

My heart was saddened recently by some articles relating to the life of the late Pope John. Any Catholic worshipper would have been blessed out of his mind to have had this beloved Pope intercede for him during his reign. But one who was very close to him reveals that the Pope was so aware of his sinfulness that he would actually beat his back until it would bleed in an attempt to atone for his sins. He went about his intercessory work with a full awareness of his own sinfulness. This has been true of every priest who has ever stood before God on behalf of others with the exception of the Lord Jesus. He stands before the Father with no sins to confess, no errors to judge. His life and character are in complete harmony with the will of the Father, and utterly pleasing in His sight. The Father acknowledged this when He raised Him from the dead.

But I want us to flesh out in our thinking the glory of what the Son of God actually does when He intercedes for us before the Father.

I. AS OUR INTERCESSOR JESUS PRESENTS HIMSELF AS SURETY FOR US.

We have a superb example of this in the intercession of Judah before Joseph on behalf of his brother Benjamin. You will remember the background of this moving passage. The sons of Jacob have been forced to travel to Egypt in search of grain by the horrible famine that had fallen upon Canaan. When they get to Egypt, they are forced to purchase the grain from their brother Joseph that they sold as a slave. Joseph recognizes them, but they do not recognize him. Through some persistent questioning he learns details about the well being of Jacob his father, and his younger brother Benjamin that did not accompany them on the buying trip.

When the sons of Jacob have made their purchase and start their journey homeward, they are told by Joseph not to return unless they bring Benjamin with them.

When the food has been used up, they discuss another trip to Egypt. But when the brothers insist that Benjamin must go with them, Jacob refuses to let his beloved Benjamin go with them. It is only after Judah makes an earnest appeal to his elderly father, and accepts full responsibility for the return of the younger brother that Jacob finally consents.

You will remember the careful plot that Joseph sets for his brothers. He is determined to confront them with their sin against him when he was a teenager, their selling him into slavery. The plot includes a planting of the money they had paid for the grain, and his own personal divining cup in the sacks of Joseph. When they are caught and the cup is in the sacks of Benjamin, Joseph declares that the penalty will be that Benjamin is kept to serve as a slave in his house. This is where Judah stands up to make intercession for his brother. Let me read it with an understanding that this Judah is actually the forerunner of our Savior. Jesus came from the tribe of Judah:

Genesis 44:18-34 (NKJV)

¹⁸ Then Judah came near to him and said: "O my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord's hearing, and do not let your anger burn against your servant; for you *are* even like Pharaoh. ¹⁹ My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a brother?' ²⁰ And we said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a child of *his* old age, *who is* young; his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.' ²¹ Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.' ²² And we said to my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father, for *if* he should leave his father, *his father* would die.' ²³ But you said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother

comes down with you, you shall see my face no more.’²⁴ “So it was, when we went up to your servant my father, that we told him the words of my lord.²⁵ And our father said, ‘Go back *and* buy us a little food.’²⁶ But we said, ‘We cannot go down; if our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we may not see the man’s face unless our youngest brother *is* with us.’²⁷ Then your servant my father said to us, ‘You know that my wife bore me two sons;²⁸ and the one went out from me, and I said, “Surely he is torn to pieces”; and I have not seen him since.²⁹ But if you take this one also from me, and calamity befalls him, you shall bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.’³⁰ “Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad *is* not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad’s life,³¹ it will happen, when he sees that the lad *is* not *with us*, that he will die. So your servants will bring down the gray hair of your servant our father with sorrow to the grave.³² For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him *back* to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father forever.’³³ Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers.³⁴ For how shall I go up to my father if the lad *is* not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come upon my father?”

The "surety" is a key word in this intercession. Judah had accepted legal responsibility for his young brother Benjamin before Jacob. Joseph would understand the seriousness of the step that Judah had taken. This is what the Lord Jesus has done for us. In fact in this very context the writer of Hebrews affirms this.

Consider with me the glory of our Surety.

1. Think of the superior worth of our surety.

The One who makes Himself surety for us is none other the perfect and beloved Son of the Father, the One who is exalted at His right hand. The one who pleaded on behalf of Benjamin had a shady past. Just as his daughter-in-law Tamar about his trustworthiness. Joseph himself knew about the past of Judah, but on this day his life moved up to another level as he in love pled for his younger brother and for his father. But Jesus has a past when He represents us before the Father and takes our place.

2. Think of the superior love of the surety.

Judah did what he did out of his love and concern for the welfare of Jacob his father. Jesus does what He does out of His love for us.

3. Think of the superior commitment of our surety.

The greater is standing as surety for the lesser, the worthy for the unworthy. He has all influence before the Holy Father.

Hebrews 7:22 (NKJV)

²² by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.

II. AS OUR INTERCESSOR JESUS MAKES OUR PRAYERS PRESENTABLE AND ACCEPTABLE BEFORE THE FATHER.

In his commentary on this passage, Kent Hughes reaches back to early church history for an illustration that helps us understand.

St. Chrysostom, the great fourth-century preacher, provides a helpful analogy. A young boy whose father was away on a trip wanted to present his father with something that would please him. His mother sent him to the garden to gather a bouquet of flowers. The little boy gathered a sorry bouquet of weeds as well as flowers. But when his father returned home, he was presented with a beautifully arranged bouquet, for the mother had intervened, removing all the weeds.

The prayers of the church, prevailing, acceptable, and fruitful as they are, are not a thing of beauty as they leave the lips of saints. As they start their way heavenward, they are a mixed bag of weeds with a few stray flowers. When they arrive, however, thanks to the intercession of Christ they are nothing but beautiful flowers.⁷ What blessed, comforting thoughts these are as we, amidst our frailties, pray.

1. Think of the mixed motives that He needs to cleanse.

2. Think of the unwise petitions that He needs to change.

III. AS OUR INTERCESSOR JESUS PROTECTS US IN OUR WEAKNESSES AND STRUGGLES.

The experience of Jesus with Simon Peter on the night of His arrest helps us understand His work of intercession better. Listen to Luke's report about this conversation.

Luke 22:31-33 (NKJV)

³¹" And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail;

and when you have returned to *Me*, strengthen your brethren.”³³ But he said to Him, “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.””

1. Jesus knows our situation better than we know it.
2. Jesus knows our vulnerability better than we know it.
3. Jesus knows what to ask better than we know.
4. Jesus knows the Father so much better than we know Him.

Dear brothers and sisters, be encouraged: Jesus makes intercession for you. From His highly exalted position in the heavens, even at the right hand of God, He prays for you. As long as He lives, You have one who represents You, one who stands for you, one who assures your salvation. amen