

March 25, 2012
Lent 5

"Jesus Is the Pure Source of Your Salvation"

HEBREWS 5:7-9

So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."⁶ And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."⁷ During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

When you buy a bottle of water such as this, you need to break open the seal before you can drink the water. They put these seals on containers that hold food and water to prevent malicious people from opening them and inserting poisons or other contaminants.

When your heavenly Father gave you the gift of his Son Jesus to pay for all your sins at the cross, he also put his tamper proof seal on the work that Jesus did so we can put our hope and trust in it. He sealed the work Jesus did for us by raising him from the dead. The source of your salvation is 100% pure because it has nothing to do with your contaminated life. It was all done by Jesus.

This letter to the Hebrews was written to warn Christians about false teachers who said it was not enough to have Jesus as the source of eternal life with God. They said you had to add rules and regulations of the Old Testament to what Jesus did. How foolish and dangerous it would be to pour out some water from this bottle, add contaminated water to the bottle and then drink it. It is even more foolish and dangerous to try and add my contaminated life to the perfect life and perfect death Jesus provides for me. Any attempt to supplement what Jesus has done for us will supplant what Jesus has done. Christ plus nothing equals everything. Christ plus anything equals nothing. If we add our contaminated human effort to what Jesus has done we will create a source of salvation that is soul destroying and toxic.

Only Jesus is pure

How clearly these words tell us to keep our faith in Jesus alone because only he is pure. "During the days of Jesus' life on this earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him, and he was heard because of his reverent submission." Jesus was able to go directly to his heavenly Father in prayer because of his reverent submission. He earned the right to pray because of the perfect life he lived.

We see this reverent submission to our heavenly Father by the way Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before he died. He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears. He told his disciples, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and watch with me." Jesus prayed so fervently that his sweat fell to the ground as great drops of blood. Mingled in with the sweat and blood were tears, along with loud cries.

And what did Jesus cry out to his heavenly Father with a loud voice and with tears and groans? He cried out "My Father, if it is possible may this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will but as you will." Notice the reverent submission on the part of Jesus. He prayed "Yet not as I will but as you will." In Psalm 22, we hear the Messiah speaking these words during his crucifixion: "But you, O Lord, be not far off; O my Strength come quickly to help me. Deliver my life from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouths of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild ox." He pictures his enemies as vicious dogs, ferocious lions, and wild oxen with goring horns.

Some might say that it was not a struggle for Jesus to live a pure life for us and die a pure death on the cross because he was God. Jesus was also fully human. He became one of us. It says here "During the days of Jesus' life on this earth." The better, more literal translation would be "Who in the days of his flesh." Jesus became one of us with our skin, and bones and hair. According to another verse in this letter to Hebrews he was also tempted as we are yet without sin. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin."

In the Gospel reading we heard Jesus tell his disciples, "Now is my heart troubled, and what shall I say?" Then Jesus bursts forth with the words, "Father save me from this hour. No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father glorify your name!" The disciples actually heard the voice of the Father responding to these words of Jesus, "I have glorified it, and will glory it again."

During his days on this earth, Jesus spent long hours in prayer to his heavenly Father. The disciples were so impressed by the way Jesus prayed to his Father and his reverent submission to the Father that they asked Jesus, "Teach us to pray" and then Jesus taught them the Lord's Prayer. In the Lord's Prayer we pray with Jesus "Thy will be done." We express our fervent desire to submit our life to the will of our heavenly Father as Jesus did. Jesus lived the only pure and holy and perfect life that was ever lived on this earth. He is the only one to ever offer perfect obedience to his heavenly Father.

How did Jesus feel about doing the will of his heavenly Father? Usually we don't like to hear the news reporter ask a person who just lost their home in a tornado, "How do you feel after losing your home?" Yet, if we could interview Jesus about going to the cross for us we would be pleasantly surprised at how eager he was to do the will of his heavenly Father and submit himself even to going to the cross for us. This book of Hebrews tells us "For the joy set before him, Jesus endured the cross and the shame." It quotes Psalm 40 where the Jesus tells us how he felt about coming to this earth even before the creation of the world. Here is how Jesus expresses his feelings to his heavenly Father about doing his will. "Sacrifice and burnt offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. Then I said, 'Here I am, it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do you will, O my God; your law is within my heart.'" Jesus experienced pure joy in doing everything the Father asked him to do.

Only Jesus provides pure salvation

Because of how Jesus submitted himself perfectly to everything the Father asked him to

do, he is able to provide salvation for us that is absolutely, 100% pure and safe. "Although he was a son, he learned obedience, from what he suffered and once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him." Jesus learned obedience from what he suffered. I think of how Jesus suffered at the hands of the Roman soldiers and how he was mocked and ridiculed by people as he hung on the cross. Never once did Jesus ever have an angry word or thought towards those who hurt him. 1 Peter 2 tells us "He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth." Jesus even prayed for his enemies as they nailed him to the cross with these now famous words, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."

Because of how Jesus lived and how he offered a perfect death for us on the cross, he is able to offer us a source of salvation that is perfect. This word for source is used two other places in the New Testament. Pontius Pilate wanted to find the basis or source of the charges against Jesus. It is used also in Acts where the magistrates were trying to find out the source or source for the uprising in Ephesus against Paul. If you notice a leak in your roof from the last rainstorm, you need to find out the basis or source of that leak. If you see lots of fluid on the pavement where you park your car, you will want to find the source of that fluid leak, whether it is your transmission, or engine or radiator.

What's the source of your salvation? What is the basis on which you can stand not guilty before your God on judgment day rather than condemned? That is the most important question of our existence that trumps all other questions and issues of life that we are facing.

When I look into myself I find that there is a totally inadequate source for being loved by God and escaping the judgment to come. What Paul said about himself I also have to admit about myself and so do you. "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing." What Jesus produced in his flesh was perfect and pure and holy. What I produce in my life is totally unacceptable to God. It is contaminated by sin. That is why Romans 3 passes this harsh judgment on every human being who ever lived and will live on the face of this earth: "There is no one righteous not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless." Jeremiah 17:6 says of the human heart, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" There was no deceit found in Jesus. If we had a video of all the deceitful moments of our lives, we could only conclude with the tax collector, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

This morning we celebrate with joy that the source of our salvation does not rest in our performance or anything that we do. The source of our salvation rests in Jesus. He cried out from the cross "It is finished!" He called out to his heavenly Father as he died, "Father into your hands I commit my spirit." The perfect life was lived. The perfect sacrifice was made. When it was all done Jesus committed his life to his heavenly Father, confident the Father would raise him to life again. The resurrection is the supreme evidence that what Jesus accomplished on the cross to wash you clean and declare you perfect is the pure source of your salvation.

It says here in Hebrews that Jesus became the eternal source of salvation for all who obey him." The word "obey" means to put yourself under the words or command of another person. Today we put ourselves under the words of Jesus. We listen to what he tells us

about the life he lived for us and the death he died for us. Jesus tells us, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life." God gave his only begotten Son for one purpose only and that was to be the pure source of salvation for the whole world. I don't want to try and add anything to what Jesus has done, nor do you. It is already pure and complete and uncontaminated. Now we get to live our lives out of love for Jesus and the pure source of salvation we have in him. Is Jesus the pure source of your salvation. To that we can say a loud Amen.