



# GRACE

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli ◇ Deo ◇ Gloria

## THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

### Sermon Notes

#### *Jesus Christ: The Source of Our Salvation*

#### Hebrews 5:7-10

April 26, 2009

- ❖ Several weeks ago on April 1, President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama were in England for the G-20 Summit. During a reception at Buckingham Palace, Michelle Obama met Queen Elizabeth II and did the unthinkable: the First Lady touched the Queen, placing her hand on her back.
- ❖ This apparent breach of etiquette shocked many who were present that evening. In fact, a British online magazine wrote: “No one, including the ladies-in-waiting standing nearby, could believe their eyes...it is certainly against all protocol to touch her.” Another witness of “the touch” said, “We couldn’t believe what we were seeing.”
- ❖ In an interview with CNN, Charles Mosley, author of “Blood Royal,” was asked the question “What’s the big deal [about touching the queen]?”
- ❖ His response was quite interesting: “The big deal is that the queen is normally a sacred person. In monarchies, there’s a sacredness that surrounds the sovereign, which is perhaps not known in republics, at least not all the time in the way that it is in a monarchy. She’s been on the throne a very, very long time, and she is herself a very dignified person...”
- ❖ Yet, equally controversial was the fact that the Queen reached out to touch the first lady. One reporter wrote, “In 57 years, the Queen has never been seen to make that kind of gesture...” Also, a Buckingham Palace spokesman...said he could not remember “the last time the queen had displayed such public affection with a first lady or dignitary.”
- ❖ Such an incident brings to mind the foolishness of human sovereigns and monarch. We believe there are those things that are simply “beneath” them. We even become offended when the wife of a Head of State touches the Queen.

- ❖ However, consider the depths of humiliation that our Lord, the ONLY True Sovereign King, went to in order to save us from our sins!” And this is the focus of our study this morning.

## I. The Humiliation of Christ

### <sup>7a</sup> In the days of his flesh,

- In the first five verses of Hebrews 5, the author gives four characteristics of the high priest in ancient Israel:
  - (1) He had to act on behalf of men in relation to God [Verse 1];
  - (2) He had to be chosen from among men [Verse 1];
  - (3) He had to be appointed by God [Verse 1];
  - (4) He had to be able to sympathize with those whom he represented [Verse 2].
- In these four Verses, the author of Hebrews highlights Christ’s sympathy with those whom He represents.
- Here, in Verse 7, he uses the phrase “In the *days of his flesh*...”
  - This is certainly not the first time we have seen the word *flesh* describe Christ in His humanity.
  - Recall **John 1:14**, “And the Word became *flesh* and dwelt among us.”
  - Donald Guthrie writes, “The expression [“In the days of his flesh”] is interesting because it draws attention to the reality of his human life...He seems to want to dispel any idea that Jesus is a mystical non-historical figure by abruptly reminding the readers what happened *In the days of his flesh*.
  - Also, John Gill stated, “...[In the days of his flesh is a reference to] the time of his humiliation, when he was attended with the sinless infirmities of the flesh, or human nature; it may take in the whole course of his life on earth, especially the latter part of it: it is not to be concluded from hence, that he has not flesh now, or is not in the flesh; for it is certain that he had flesh after his resurrection...”
  - “In the days of the flesh” is certainly a statement that highlights the **humiliation of Christ in that He took on human nature, and bore with it the limitedness of a human creature, all the while maintaining His full divine nature.**
  - It impossible for our limited and sinful minds to comprehend the lengths Christ went in His humiliation in order to obey completely the will of His Father.

- John Owen writes, “Flesh as applied to Christ, signifies human nature not yet glorified, with all its infirmities, wherein He was exposed unto – hunger, thirst, weariness, labour, sorrow, grief, fear, pain, death itself. Hereby doth the apostle express what he had before laid down in the person of the high priest according to the law – he was ‘compassed’ with infirmity.” John Owen
- In short, the phrase “In the days of his flesh” focuses on the time when Jesus Christ voluntarily left His glorious and sovereign place in heaven and took on – assumed – a human nature that was characterized by weakness, temptation, hunger, need, and pain.
- What earthly king would leave the glory of his throne and voluntarily become a peasant and live his life of poverty and subjection, rather than privilege and sovereign control?

## II. The Suffering of Christ

**7<sup>b</sup> 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.**

- The author continues by explaining that **while in the “days of the flesh”, *Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death...***
- William L. Lane comments, “These moving words express how intensely Jesus entered the human condition, which wrung from him his prayers and entreaties, cries and tears.”
- This Verse brings to mind two scenes in the life of Jesus Christ where he “offered up prayers and supplication...loud cries and tears...”: (a) Gethsemane; and (b) Calvary.

### ○ Gethsemane

- A.E. Garvie, in his *The Pioneer of Faith and of Salvation*, wrote, “Gethsemane seems to offer the most telling illustration of these words...While we must not limit the reference to Gethsemane, yet there [in Gethsemane] this element in the passion [of prayers and supplication...loud cries and tears] is most clearly and fully presented to us.”

### **Luke 22:39-44**

“<sup>39</sup> And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. <sup>40</sup> And when he came to the place, he said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’ <sup>41</sup> And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and

knelt down and prayed, <sup>42</sup>saying, ‘Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.’ <sup>43</sup>And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. <sup>44</sup>And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

### **Matthew 26:38-39**

“<sup>38</sup>Then he said to them, ‘My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.’ <sup>39</sup>And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, *if it be possible*, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.’”

### **Mark 14:33-36**

“<sup>33</sup>And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. <sup>34</sup>And he said to them, ‘My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.’ <sup>35</sup>And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. <sup>36</sup>And he said, ‘*Abba, Father*, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.’”

- Our Lord’s *prayers* and *supplications*...*loud cries* and *tears* were the result of His full knowledge of what was about to happen.
- The fear, horror and terror of sin were before Him. He saw it and approached it, and He was utterly terrified and gripped with fear.
- So, in His humanity, Christ cried out, in tears, before the Father, asking, “If there be any other way Father...”
- Yet, in His supplication, Christ remained fully in accordance with the will of His Father.

○ <b>Calvary</b>
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- Yet, not only did Christ offer up prayers and supplication...loud cries and tears...at Gethsemane, but also as He died at Calvary.
- Likely, the most well known of this “prayers” or “cries” was His *Cry of Dereliction*: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46)
- Yet, in order to realize the depth of what Christ was saying, one must go to the Old Testament source from which Jesus is quoting – Psalm 22.

### **Psalm 22:1-2**

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?

<sup>2</sup>O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer,  
and by night, but I find no rest.”

- Notice the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 22:2, “O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.”
- These words certainly echo Christ’s sentiment on the Cross, as He was suffering the full, eternal, and infinite wrath of the Father. It was, indeed, equivalent to suffering for eternity – day and night... day and night.
- Psalm 22 is immensely helpful in understanding the nature of Christ’s work on the Cross for our sins:

**Psalm 22:16-20**

<sup>16</sup>For dogs encompass me;  
a company of evildoers encircles me;  
they have pierced my hands and feet—<sup>17</sup>I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me;  
<sup>18</sup> they divide my garments among them,  
and for my clothing they cast lots.  
<sup>19</sup>But you, O LORD, do not be far off!  
O you my help, come quickly to my aid!  
<sup>20</sup>Deliver my soul from the sword,  
my precious life from the power of the dog!”

- Consider as well the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 69, as they apply to Christ on the cross.

**Psalm 69:1, 2, 15**

<sup>1</sup>Save me, O God!  
For the waters have come up to my neck.  
<sup>2</sup>I sink in deep mire,  
where there is no foothold;  
I have come into deep waters,  
and the flood sweeps over me.  
<sup>15</sup>Let not the flood sweep over me,  
or the deep swallow me up,  
or the pit close its mouth over me.”

- Ultimately, in His “prayers and supplications...loud cries and tears” we see that Christ was not spared from the terrifying consequences of sin.
- When we sin, we do not see sin for what it really is. Yet, Christ did, and was without sin.

- The gore and horror of sin is something Jesus knew all-too-well. No injustice in this world could ever compare to the suffering and death of Christ on our behalf.
- Furthermore, the “prayers and supplications...loud cries and tears” of Christ were a result of his knowledge of what was happening. Far from being immune from suffering and pain, Christ was all-too-aware of what was happening.
- Consider as well **Isaiah 53:7**:

“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.”

- In other words, like a lamb led to the slaughter, Christ was silent; yet, ***unlike*** such a lamb, Christ was well aware of what was happening.
- Then, finally, Christ cried out to His Father one last time:

**Luke 23:46**

“<sup>46</sup>Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!’ And having said this he breathed his last.”

- The author of Hebrews refers to the Father as “him who was able to save him from death...”
- And rather than saying, “And the Father saved His Son from death [which He did not do],” our author writes, “**and He [Christ] was heard because of his reverence.**”
  - To begin with, our author gives the reason as to why Christ was heard: “because of His reverence.”
  - Some translations state ***because of his fear***. Yet, here, the author uses the Greek word *eulabeia*, which most appropriately means “reverence” rather than *phobos*, which is typically translated “fear.”
  - One scholar (Westcott) writes, “more commonly it expresses reverent and thoughtful shrinking from over-boldness, which is compatible with true courage.”
  - The idea is that through his terrible suffering and pain, Christ always remained submissive to His Father’s will. And because of this, **He was heard.**

- Yet, consider what this does NOT mean. It did not mean that Christ was saved from pain, death, and suffering.
- John Owens put it best:

“His [Christ’s] mind and heart were fortified and sustained against the dread and terror which His humanity felt, so as to come to a perfect composure in the will of God. He was heard insofar as He desired to be heard; for although He could not but desire deliverance from the whole, as He was man, yet He desired it not absolutely as the God-man, as He was wholly subject to the will of the Father.”

- A.W. Pink echoes this truth:

“[the phrase, “and was heard”] means, first of all, God’s approval or acceptance of the petitioner himself. Christ’s prayer here was answered in the same way as was Paul’s request for the removal of the thorn in his flesh – not by exemption, but by Divine succor [support] which gave enablement to bear the trial.”

- Notice, as well, the words of the very Psalm Christ quoted on the Cross. Consider the “shift” in tone in **Verse 21**.

**Psalm 22:16-28**

<sup>16</sup>For dogs encompass me;  
a company of evildoers encircles me;  
they have pierced my hands and feet— <sup>17</sup>I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat  
over me; <sup>18</sup> they divide my garments among them,  
and for my clothing they cast lots.  
<sup>19</sup>But you, O LORD, do not be far off!  
O you my help, come quickly to my aid!  
<sup>20</sup>Deliver my soul from the sword,  
my precious life from the power of the dog!

<sup>21</sup>Save me from the mouth of the lion!  
You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen!

<sup>22</sup> I will tell of your name to my brothers;  
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:

<sup>23</sup>You who fear the LORD, praise him!

All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him,  
and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

<sup>24</sup>**For he has not despised or abhorred**

**the affliction of the afflicted,**

**and he has not hidden his face from him,**

**but has heard, when he cried to him.**

<sup>25</sup>From you comes my praise in the great congregation;  
my vows I will perform before those who fear him.

<sup>26</sup> The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek him shall praise the LORD!  
May your hearts live forever!

<sup>27</sup> All the ends of the earth shall remember  
and turn to the LORD,  
and all the families of the nations  
shall worship before you.

<sup>28</sup> For kingship belongs to the LORD,  
and he rules over the nations.”

- Christ was heard, and as such, the pain was not removed, rather the strength of God sustained Him. How, then, should we live in the midst of our pain, when the righteous Christ endured such suffering.
- It is often said that we know the essence of a person by how they act in the midst of adversity. What does this say, then, about our Lord?

### III. The Obedience of Christ

<sup>8</sup> Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.

- The author continues, in **Verse 8**, with a rather interesting statement, “Although He was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.”
  - First of all, the phrase, “As a son...”, in this context, should be understood more as “As Son [of God]...”
  - The idea being that Christ never gave up His divine nature; however, even so, Christ was not exempt from subjecting Himself to weakness and suffering.
- Then, however, we read that “he learned obedience through what he suffered.”
  - This may seem like a rather strange statement for several reasons.
  - First of all, it states that ***He learned***.
    - One should not forget, though that In His humanity he changed, he grew, he learned [while, certainly, in His Deity He remained unchanging].
    - We read of this in Luke’s Gospel, **Luke 2:52**, “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.”
    - Donald Guthrie writes, “...by a progressive process [Jesus] showed by his obedience to the Father’s will a continuous making

of God's will his own, reaching its climax in his approach to death.”

- Secondly, it states that *he learned obedience through what he suffered*. It would seem to make more sense to say, **he learned suffering through his obedience**.
  - Yet, the point of the author here is that, in His humanity, **Christ learned the true cost of obedience – what obedience truly meant – through His suffering**.
- In other words, for Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, perfect obedience meant eternal suffering.
- William Lane states, “Jesus learned experientially what obedience entails through his passion in order to achieve salvation and to become fully qualified for his office as eternal high priest.”
- John Owen writes, “But, moreover, there was still somewhat peculiar in that obedience with the Son of God is said to learn from His own sufferings, namely, what it is for a *sinless person* to suffer for sinners, ‘the Just for the unjust.’ The obedience herein was peculiar unto Him, nor do we know, nor can we have an experience of the ways and paths of it.”
- In short, for Jesus to **learn obedience through suffering** means that he learned and experienced, in His human nature, the true nature and cost of obedience in a fallen, sinful world. **No one has ever or will ever know true obedience, except Jesus Christ.**

#### IV. The Blessing of Christ

<sup>9</sup>And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,  
<sup>10</sup>being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

- Finally, the author writes, “...And being made perfect...”
  - The point of the author here is NOT that Christ was in some way less than perfect before His crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and ascension.
  - However, to be our perfect High Priest, all of these events were necessary and had to be done before He could perfectly fulfill that role.
  - Consequently, Christ was never “made perfect” morally; rather, He was made perfect in His role or function as High Priest.

- ❑ And so, **Jesus Christ was made perfect as our High Priest through His obedience and suffering, and because of this, “He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.”**
- ❑ So, this begs the question, “What is necessary for eternal life?”
- ❑ The Bible is clear on the answer: **RIGHTEOUSNESS.**
- ❑ And this Verse, then, brings to mind, once more, the centrality of the doctrine of justification in the life of a believer.
- ❑ Because of the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ, we receive, are *imputed with*, the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Consequently, we receive all of the benefits of Christ’s righteousness, sharing all of His eternal blessings as adopted sons.
- ❑ To be *imputed* with the righteousness of Jesus Christ means to be *covered* or clothed with His righteousness. In other words, there is nothing *within us* that causes God to accept us. Rather, it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ – the source of our salvation – that is entirely the basis of God the Father’s acceptance of us.
- ❑ The doctrine of *imputation* stands in contrast to the doctrine of *infusion*.
- ❑ Yet, this is what, among others, the Roman Catholic Church teaches. That is, with the assistance of Christ’s *infused* righteousness *within us*, we must *become righteous* in order to enter into heaven. That is, you must have complete righteousness *within you*. Rome teaches that God helps people become righteous by infusing the righteousness of Jesus Christ within them. Yet, this infusion of righteousness is not sufficient. The believer, then, is expected to make up the difference.
- ❑ Richard Phillips writes, “[According to the Roman Catholic Church] Sinners get into heaven after they have achieved perfect holiness in purgatory, on the basis of the righteousness infused into them by Christ, through the church and its all-important priesthood and sacraments, and with the help of Mary and the saints.”
- ❑ However, as the Reformers so strongly asserted, **we are declared righteous – justified – through faith alone in Christ. There is NOTHING within us deserving of God’s blessing.**

❑ **John Calvin writes, “[Jesus Christ] became the Author of our salvation because he made us just in the sight of God, when He remedied the disobedience of Adam by a contrary act of obedience.”**

- ❑ Yet, as part of the Roman Catholic Counter-reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Rome convened the *Council of Trent* for the purpose of condemning the Reformers. In *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, sixth session, Chapter VII, it

states, “Justification...is not remission of sins merely, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man, through the voluntary reception of the grace, and of the gifts whereby man [from] unjust becomes just, and [from] an enemy a friend, that so he may be an heir according to the hope of life everlasting... The formal cause is the justice of God, not that whereby he himself is just, but that whereby he maketh us just, that, to wit, with which we, being endowed by him, are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and we are not only reputed, but are truly called, and are just, receiving justice within us, each according to his own measure.” While justification is possible for us only because “the merits of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ are communicated” to us, “yet is this doen in the said justification of the impious, when...the charity of God is poured forth, by the Holy Spirit, in the hearts of those that are justified, and is inherent therein: whence, man through Jesus Christ, in whom he is engrafted, receives, in the said justification, together with remission of sins, all these [gifts] infused at once, faith, hope, and charity.”

- ❑ In fact, even today, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 1030, states that purgatory is needed “to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.”
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- ❑ But, praise be to God that the complete righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to us that we might be declared righteous in the eyes of God the Father on the basis of faith in Christ Alone!
  - ❑ And, finally, the author states that salvation is appropriated to the believer **through obedience to Jesus Christ.**
    - F.F. Bruce comments, There is something appropriate in the fact that the salvation which was procured by the obedience of the Redeemer should be made available to the obedience of the redeemed.”

❑ **And this is Christ High Priestly work, in the order of Melchizedek: That He has become the perfect author of our salvation through the taking on of human flesh, perfect obedience to His Father’s will, and suffering the penalty of sin on our behalf.**

A.W. Pink writes, “Many are the lessons which might be drawn from all that has been before us. Into what infinite depths of humiliation did the Son of God descend! How unspeakably dreadful was His anguish! What a hideous thing sin must be if such a sacrifice was required for its atonement! How real and terrible a thing is the wrath of God! What love moved Him to suffer so on our behalf! What must be the portion of those who despise a reject such a Savior! What an example has He left us of turning to God in the hour of need! What fervor is called for if our prayers are to be answered! Above all, what gratitude, love, devotion and praise are due Him from those for whom the Son of God died!”