

Hope is Anchored in Christ's Permanent Priesthood

✠ Complete salvation in our living Intercessor (vv.23-25)

✠ Once for all in τετελεσται (vv.26-28)

In the name of Jesus, our Great High Priest, dearly beloved of God:

It's not often I have to laugh reading our WELS *Forward in Christ* magazine. But when President Mark Schroeder described his father in the November 2009 issue, I laughed out loud. His article, "Lovingly Intolerant" (p.32), brought back memories: "I can think of many words to describe my father, but *tolerant* is not one of them." Freshman called his father "Smiley Schroeder" because he never did. He had us slogging through forty lines of college Latin a day. "He would not be tolerant of careless mistakes. He was even more intolerant of students who were lazy or who gave less than their best in their preparation for class." But aren't those the teachers you remember most? Stories of "Smiley Schroeder" helping future pastors pay their college tuition still circulate to this day. He was intolerant out of love, much like our heavenly Father who cannot tolerate sin because He is holy and wants us to share heaven with Him. This text is for those who understand that. When God says we deserve eternal destruction for our sins, you get it. Now God also wants you to get this: Our **Hope is Anchored in Christ's Permanent Priesthood**. Fear not – now or ever. Thanks to our "Lovingly Intolerant" Father, we have...

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Anchors have not always been my favorite friends. One in particular my brothers and I begged our Dad to cut away because it was dragging us down. When the tide reversed in the mouth of the Coos Bay harbor, the water kept rushing past the buoy. No matter how hard Dad pulled, nearly swamping the boat, that anchor stayed stuck on the bottom. It didn't help the stories about people washed out to sea in a rip tide or a friend my age just found washed up on shore after a fishing accident. Finally, Dad cut the rope. We had to help pay the deposit and try not to tell Mom.

Before our text the dear Holy Spirit detailed our Father's **Hope** that anchors **Christ's Permanent Priesthood**. "*We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.*" (6:19) The **Priesthood** we need has been on God's mind from eternity when the Father ordained His Son to be His New Covenant Priest. The Old Covenant to Moses at Mount Sinai was obsolete, partly because its priests kept passing away. But Christ's **Permanent Priesthood** is based "*on the power of an indestructible life*" (7:16). Jesus died and rose, so He cannot die again. To make His New Covenant absolutely certain, God confirmed Christ's **Priesthood** with an oath: "*The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: You are a priest forever....*" (7:21) Now our text will tell us why this is so absolutely vital and comforting for us.

God can no more tolerate sin than we could worship with a dead corpse in the aisle. If someone rode a horse to the front doors of church and left a present, wouldn't you grab a shovel to clean it up? Sin is like that to God. But plain water cannot wash it away. Gross as it sounds, it's absolutely true: "*Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*" (9:22 NIV) The only innocent blood that could wash away sin flowed out from the wounds of God's own Son who served as both Priest and Victim. Jesus was trusting God's Word for deliverance from death to grant us **Complete Salvation**.

Now hear this: "*Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*" Jesus' **Priesthood** cannot be passed on because Jesus holds His office "*by the power of an indestructible life.*" (7:16) It cannot be lost to sin because God gave it with an oath (Psalm 110:4) as a one-sided covenant of pure grace and forgiveness: "*Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.*"

(10:17 TPA) This is God's judgment on you: Forgiven – for every sin. Jesus promises, ***“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”*** (Mark 16:15f NIV)

If that makes you tremble, then take comfort. God says, ***“To this man I will look, even to him who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word”*** (Isaiah 66:2 TPA) Your fear proves God has worked faith in your heart. Now tell the Law to be quiet while you listen to the Gospel, the Good News. Jesus loved you so much that He rescued you from sin, death and hell. How much more will He gladly intercede for you at the throne of grace? Could you win a championship and then not talk about it?

We say, “He lives for sports.” Or, “She lives to shop and she shops to live.” Jesus our High Priest lives to pray. With all His heart and soul He lives to intercede to our Father at the throne of grace. Do you think He could shed His blood for you then let you slip away? Could He abandon you in your sorrows when you need Him most at the gates of death? You have God's Name on you in your Baptism. And Jesus says, ***“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”*** (John 10:28 NIV) When you feel lonely and depressed, Jesus lives! He lives for you! He lives to pray for you night and day whether you sleep or wake, whether you feel happy or sad, whether you sense God's presence or feel as if He's far away. Like a baby upset when his mother is still holding, feeding and rocking him, we need to lay our head on our Father's shoulder and rest in God's **Complete Salvation in our living Intercessor**. Securely our **Hope is Anchored in Christ's Permanent Priesthood...**

✠ **Once for all in τετελεσται (vv.26-28)**

How can our **Intercessor** ***“save completely those who come to God through him”***? In John 10, Jesus says, ***“I am the door”*** (KJV), ***“...the gate for the sheep”*** (NIV). And the one Way says, ***“No one comes to the Father except through me.”*** (John 14:6) God made heaven so accessible in Christ that to try another way is like driving through the wall of your father's garage when the door is wide open. This Door is just the Priest we need. Jesus is ***“holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.”*** Jesus is absolutely good and uses God's Word and sacraments to bring us home to heaven. Jesus is ***“separate from sinners”*** because He has no personal sin of His own. All the sin He carried, He got from us. And all the righteousness we now possess, we got from Him in God's Great Exchange.

“Exalted above the heavens” is like Paul speaking about ***“the third heaven”*** (2 Corinthians 12:2), above the earth's atmosphere (the first heaven) and above outer space where the stars hang in the second heaven. Our risen and ascended Savior was glorified; He ***“passed through the heavens”*** (Hebrews 4:14). Jesus ***“ascended higher than all the heavens”*** (Ephesians 4:10). His goal is paradise with us. ***“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God”*** (1 Peter 3:18 NIV).

Even though Rome claims to keep resacrificing Christ in the Mass, the Holy Spirit three times in Hebrews says Christ sacrificed Himself once. It's no surprise if you listen to Him dying on the cross. Jesus said, ***“Τετελεσται – It is finished.”*** Who has a right to substitute himself for Christ and then speak against Him? The Holy Spirit says here: ***“The Son...has been made perfect forever,”*** literally, ***brought to the goal***. Seven centuries earlier Isaiah (59:16f) recorded how Jesus volunteered to do what no one else could. His ***goal*** was to save our human race from sin. When He died in our place, He reached that ***goal*** and paid our way to heaven with His holy precious blood. He has one goal left: to bring you there. Imagine the angels when you die. They pick you up and fly through opposition tackles and enemy defenses to carry you into the end zone. The stadium in the stars erupts with shouts for Christ, “He scores!” And all the angels and saints in heaven cry, “Glory!” If ever your arms ached to hold someone you love, a million times more God's arms ache for you. Do not think for a second He will ever let you go. He paid the ultimate price for your salvation. All that remains is for heaven to shout as the angels carry you across the goal line: ***“Τετελεσται!”*** when God brings you home. Father, Son and Holy Spirit will not rest until you're there. Our **Hope is Anchored in Christ** secure. Amen.