

**Hebrews 5:7-9**February 14, 2018 – ASH WEDNESDAY <sup>1</sup>**Jesus Is Our Perfect High Priest**


- I. Jesus was perfect already when He prayed.**  
**II. Jesus was made perfect by the way he obeyed.**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

**Introduction:** Possible to be too good? MN girls basketball team voted out of their league because other teams refused to play them. “Too talented.”

Jesus too great to be the Great High Priest? Note the kindness and understanding required of Jewish high priests in 5:1f. Jesus is our Creator, preserver, heir of all things, radiance of God’s glory, mirror image of His essence – but too good for us? Too great to relate to us sinners? Can’t sympathize with our weaknesses? Hebrews, Jewish Christians, tempted by persecution to leave Jesus and return to their cultural Judaism. More reason not to go back there, not to abandon Jesus as their loving Lord and caring Messiah. **Jesus Is Our Perfect High Priest** – not too good for us, but just the One we need.

**I. Jesus was perfect already when He prayed.**

- A. Garden of Gethsemane: *Jesus is a true human being.*
1. Why say, “**made perfect**”? Sounds like He was imperfect, progressing to perfection.
  2. Jesus’ prayer and struggle – human pain, “**soul overwhelmed with sorrow...**”  
 “**offered prayers and pleas with loud cries and tears...**” (v.7)
- B. Garden of Gethsemane: *Jesus is true God.*
1. “**Son of God though He was...**”
    - Knew what lay ahead – God omniscient also in feelings of anguish, suffering
    - Carried the unbearable burden of the world sin – worst human ever, must suffer wrath!
  2. Revealed the miracle and marvel of *true God and true man.*
- C. “**Conceived by the Holy Spirit...**”
1. No room for progress from imperfect to perfect – as many world religions claim / demand.
  2. Jesus was already perfect in the way He prayed: “**In him is no sin.**” (1 John 3:5)
- D. How could Christ plead: “**Take this cup from me**”?
1. He had to “**learn**” obedience during “**the days of his flesh**”<sup>2</sup> – State of Humiliation
  2. How beyond understanding that God’s own Son “**humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!**” (Philippians 2:8 NIV84)
- E. Christ never rebelled.
1. As true God, Jesus looked into the cup of suffering and could feel the curse of our sin.
  2. As true Man, He never pushed that cup away like a child refusing icky medicine.
  3. “**Heard**” - strengthened by God to carry the cross, strengthened by angels, willing to die...rise.
- F. Christ’s “**reverent submission**” (NIV84) covers our sins.
1. We don’t always pray in reverent submission – sheep turn to own way: money, time, loves
  2. Irreverence shows in giving advice to God, complaining about His will, insisting on ours.

<sup>1</sup> Based on 2017 NPH Series by James Janke: *Jesus Christ Is Our Great High Priest.*

<sup>2</sup> Scriptures EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version*, the Wartburg Project. NPH, © 2017. (800-662-6022)

**Transition:** Something strange about how we humans react to perfection when we demand it in so many ways. One blemish on someone's appearance / character → condemnation, criticism. Expect car, company, government, family, marriage to run perfectly – but have a problem with a “perfect” High Priest? Thanks be to God that He knows and does better!

## II. Jesus was made perfect by the way he obeyed.

- A. Hard to say, “Thy will be done,” still harder to *obey* and *do* God's will.
1. When Jesus “**learned obedience**” – theory → practical.
  2. He learned the cost of obedience in a very personal way, beyond our ability to know.
  3. We don't always follow through on our promises, especially when it hurts.
    - Couple sincerely promises to love and cherish each other....
      - ...until he has to give up annual fishing trip because wife thinks too expensive
      - ...until she has to give up time with friends because husband needs her @ home
    - We often promise to obey God, but we don't always do it.
- B. Jesus prayed perfectly † obeyed perfectly.
1. He “**endured the cross, scorning its shame.**” (Hebrews 12:2 NIV84)
    - His obedience paid for all our broken promises and loveless selfish attitudes – **τετέλεσται**.
    - His obedience enables us to finish like Jesus, endure hardship as God's loving discipline.
    - His obedience brings us to the “**harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained**” by God's loving disciple.
  2. Jesus is the Perfect High Priest we so desperately need.
- C. Christ's perfect obedience... “**for all who obey him**”
1. ...inspires us to “**obey him.**”
    - “**And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.**” (1 John 3:23 NIV84)
  2. ...empowers us to “obey him.”
    - “*and what He commands inspires*” (CW \_\_)
    - “*Give me what you demand of me.*” (Church Father Augustine ?)
  3. ...motivates us to “**live up to what we have already attained.**” (Philippians 3:16)
    - despair of saving ourselves, striving in joy, peace flowing from deep gratitude, not guilt

**Conclusion:** No better example than King David in today's Penitential Psalm 51. “**Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.**” (Psalm 51:10–12 NIV84)

- ✎ The Psalms are perfect prayers inspired by God the Holy Spirit and often used by Jesus in His human weakness, “**yet without sin.**” (Hebrews 4:15)
- ✎ We don't even have to say, “Thy will be done,” because God has already shown us this is His will.
- ✎ God will grant us the patient endurance to stay strong in His grace as His Word and sacraments work deep in our hearts and souls, flowing over into lives of love to reflect His love.
- ✎ How grand to know God's eternal love in Christ especially on Valentine's Day. Don't vote Him out of your league by sinning. Let love prevail in thought, word and deed for Christ, the love of our life eternal with God.

## **Jesus Is Our Perfect High Priest**

- I. Jesus was perfect already when He prayed.**
- II. Jesus was made perfect by the way he obeyed.**

<sup>7</sup>In **the days of his flesh** he offered prayers and pleas with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. <sup>8</sup>**Although he was the Son**, he learned obedience from the things he suffered. <sup>9</sup>After he was brought to his goal, he became the source of eternal salvation for everyone who obeys him, <sup>10</sup>because he was designated by God as a high priest, like Melchizedek.

<sup>c</sup>7 This refers to Christ's state of humiliation.