

JESUS IS A BETTER PRIESTLY ADVOCATE

(Hebrews 6:13 – 7:28)

"How could you post **THAT** picture of us on Facebook without asking me first?!"

Is that a statement that's been made in your family?

It has in ours, especially if it's a new 'profile pic'?

When it's *my turn* to make that statement, usually it's accompanied with,

"Just look at how terrible my eye bags look!

I've got 4 bags packed, 4 'layers' of eye-baggage wrinkles.

Couldn't you at least Photoshop away those eye-bags?

The reply:

*But sweetheart . . . that's what you look like. **That's you!**"*

We have a picture of ourselves, don't we, that is **not** really accurate!

Especially as we age, you we still see your "younger you" in your *mind's eye*.

From 17 to 37, most us don't really change much at all.

Us in our *prime* - that's our "image" our self still, around 50.

But our image of ourselves can be so inaccurate, it can *devastate* us when 'reality' hits!

This did not sink in for me until a couple years ago when extended family went through stacks of old printed photos. I scanned & posted some on Facebook. One was a picture of myself & Leanne in our early 20s. In the FB comment section, someone wrote:

"Wow, Leanne, you've barely changed at all!!"

And then the comment continued, in all seriousness,

"Who is that next to you? An old boyfriend?"

Leanne replied,

"That's Dave, my husband!"

". . . Oh . . . I didn't recognise him!" was the response.

Reality 'hit' because this comment was not made by some old acquaintance of Leanne's I'd never met, but someone from church! They didn't even recognise my image of me!

Do you recognise the real you?

Even as the "younger you", we often don't like certain angles of our self.

Ever seen a bunch of photos where someone has the *exact same* head tilt & angle?

It's no accident! They are avoiding been seen in a certain way.

Honest Q: what do you tend to do with photos of yourself that you *really* don't like?

If it's a printed photo, we *throw it away!* (or cut ourselves out)

If it's digital, with either *delete* it or 'Photoshop it'!

Why? Because we don't like people seeing "unappealing us", warts & all – the real us.

And that's just the PHYSICAL us!

Even *more shameful* is when 'reality hits', revealing the MORAL us, warts & all of *character*.

The point: we are unavoidably concerned with ***how we appear before others.***

Why? Because intrinsically, we need approval, validation from **outside** ourselves.
 No one is ultimately satisfied with *only* self-assessment.
 If you were, you'd *never* hide a single **photo**.
 You'd *never* hide a single **sin**.

This is not just some "insecurity" thing.
 You can't not care. It is the way God wired us, creating us with a moral conscience.
 Without acceptance & approval, we are *CRUSHED*, even *DESPAIRING!*

So, we need approval from **outside** ourselves.

The question is, "Approval FROM WHOM?"

We seek validation in so many *wrong* places, and validation for so many *wrong things!*

The right answer, the ultimate answer to that question, is "from God"!
 Every soul ultimately longs to hear,
*"Well done, good and faithful servant!
 Enter into the joy of your Master."*

But because we all fall short of God's glory, are all unholy,
 to get a '*validating verdict*' from our Holy Heavenly Judge . . .
 We need an **ADVOCATE!**
 We need someone to "**plead our case!**"

That's the "take home" truth of our passage found in Hebrews chapter 7:25
*"Jesus is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him,
 since He always lives to make INTERCESSION for them."*

That word "intercession" applies not only to **priests** in a religious context,
 but also to **attorneys** in a legal context, the guy who 'pleads your case.'

*"Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—
 who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is INTERCEDING for us!" (Romans 8:34)*

And not just any advocate will do.

Before a **perfectly** holy God, only a **perfect** advocate will do!

That's why we all need JESUS as our Advocate! Main idea:
*We press on in the Faith
 by **CONFIDENCE** in a Better Advocate –
 a **Perfect, Permanent** Priest who **INTERCEDES** for us!*

We have a long passage today, surrounding a rather mysterious person from the OT
 named Melchizedek. The take home encouragement is towards the end of chapter 7.

So here's my plan:

Like a hot knife through butter,
 I'd like to just 'skim' some rich buttery goodness from the "argument" section,
 then spend our time *applying* that butter to the bread, dwelling on glorious "result" of
 having Jesus as our better Advocate!

So we will 'skim through' 6:13 – 7:10, and camp out in the end of chapter 7.

Recap of Context of the chapters 5-7 'unit':

- We were introduced to Melchizedek in chapter 5.
- The author then provided an epic warning about not falling away, not turning back from trusting & following Jesus.
- Now he's back on the topic of Melchizedek, hoping his warning has caused us to turn our spiritual 'hearing aids' to full!

Chapters 5 & 7 have a different but complementary emphasis,

- Chapter 5 emphasises Jesus fully *sympathising* with us, lowly walking in our shoes.
- Chapter 7 emphasises His *interceding* for us, our perfect Advocate, exalted on high.

Similarly, Chapters 6 & 7 connect, have a different but complementary emphasis:

- The warning of chapter 6 focused on the "**Fruit**" leg of Assurance:
'Full assurance', comes with bearing fruit as you spiritually mature.
- Now chapter 7 focuses completely on the "**Faith**" leg of Assurance:
All about what Jesus has done for us, and even now is doing, interceding for us.
The Glory of having Jesus as our Great High Priest!

Outline:

- Melchizedek's Better Priesthood – than Aaron's (6:13 – 7:10)
- Jesus' Far Better Priesthood – than Everyone's! (7:11–28)

Okay, let's start 'skimming' with our hot butter knife . . .

MELCHIZEDEK'S BETTER PRIESTHOOD – THAN AARON'S (6:13 – 7:10)

We could summarise the first portion as

- **God's Sure Promise to Abraham (6:13-20)**

Verse 13 says God made a promise to Abraham, swearing by Himself, since God can "swear by" no one greater when taking an oath.

God made a promise to Abraham if first found in Genesis 12, that the nations would be blessed through Abraham's descendants, 1 descendant in particular: the Messiah, the Christ. The writer of Hebrews in 6:13-14, refers to an expression of that promise *restated* in Genesis 22, when God said to Abraham,

"By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son – your only son – I will surely bless you . . . and in your OFFSPRING the nations of the earth will be blessed" (Gen 22:16-18)

that was said when God spared Abraham's son, Isaac, by providing a lamb in Isaac's place. This was on Mt. Moriah. Centuries later Mt. Moriah would be called Mt. Zion/Jerusalem, a clear foreshadowing of when God would not spare His only Son, Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, on the cross.

What are the "2 *unchangeable things*" of verse 18?...

- 1st] "the **unchangeable character** of God" (v.17), who made a promise to Abraham, a promise about the Messiah/Christ. As v.18 says, "it is *impossible* for God to lie"! [a more *joyful* "impossible" than the one in 6:4!]

- 2nd] God sealing His promise with a public **oath** (the 'swearing by Himself' already cited)

The point: because of God's 'doubly-strong' promise, just as Abraham *waited patiently* about blessing through his offspring, in view of the fulfilment of the ultimate offspring, Jesus, we *patiently hope* through the storms of life & of persecution,

*We have this as a sure & steadfast **anchor** of the soul, a HOPE that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.*

What "curtain"?

In the Temple, only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest went behind the curtain, into the "most holy place" and offered the blood of an animal to atone for the nation's sins.

Jesus, as our *Better* High Priest, offered His own blood on our behalf, entered the heavenly Holy Place and remains there!, to intercede for us, as our advocate!

Our "forerunner", to *bring us there* into God's special presence:

Ultimately in eternity; now by intercession!

So the anchor of our soul is *hoping in Jesus*.

As Melchizedek is now 'reintroduced', notice the word "**forever**" is the key *transition* word, appearing 6 times in our passage today, revealing why Jesus is **BETTER** as our Priestly Advocate: He is a **Permanent** high priest, never leaving the Father's side!

*"Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest **forever** after the order of Melchizedek." (6:20)*

*"He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest **forever**." (7:3)*

For it is witnessed of him,

*"You are a priest **forever**, after the order of Melchizedek." (7:17)*

But this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him:

*"The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest **forever**.'" (7:21)*

*"But Jesus holds His priesthood permanently, because He continues **forever**." (7:24)*

*"the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect **forever**." (7:28)*

7:1-10 unpack this, since the 1st OT high priest . . .

➤ **Melchizedek is Better than Abraham & Levi (7:1-10)**

The verse of highest impact in this section is verse 7,

*It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the **superior**.*

And Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek, his superior. This happened in Genesis 14.

With Abraham being the greatest patriarch/father of the Jews in the OT, the readers would truly pay attention that this Melchizedek was greater than Abraham!!

We know very little about the mysterious Melchizedek. But we know *enough*.

Mentioned only twice in the OT, Melchizedek's name means "*king of peace*".

As a king-priest, his kingdom aligns with God's kingdom of peace.

A close reading of this text shows it's not Melchizedek's **personhood** that's eternal, but Melchizedek's **priesthood** that's perpetual.¹

The crux of the writer's point is this:

The old covenant priesthood was based on lineage from the tribe of Levi, through Aaron & his biological descendants.

Verse 3 makes it clear, that we do not know Melchizedek's lineage/genealogy/ancestry.

So, Melchizy was not chosen as a priest because his *father* was a priest, nor was he a priest who had *successors*, biologically speaking.

Melchizedek is a priest of God simply by divine oath.
And with no need for successors, his priestly "order" continues forever.

In this way, Melchizedek and his priestly order are "superior" to the order of Aaron, and as well superior to Abraham.

Another proof (that we will not "dwell on") is in verse 4,
See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth/"tithes" of the spoils!

Melchizedek came by after Abraham's clan engaged in 'rescue mission' of his nephew, Then Abraham giving a tenth (a "tithes") of the spoils of war to Melchizedek.

Because the priestly of the tribe of Levi would later, under the old covenant of Moses, receive a tenth/"tithes" from the other 11 tribes of Israel, the writer is saying: it's as if Levi, a future descendant of Abraham, was also giving tribute/tithes to Melchizedek. This demonstrates that the priestly order of Melchizedek **supersedes** the priestly order of Levi because Abraham – the progenitor of the Levitical line – paid the tithes to Melchizedek.

The author is making the point that the **OT itself** teaches the *Levitical priesthood* was always meant to give way to something greater!

Now, let's 'butter the bread' . . .

JESUS' FAR BETTER PRIESTHOOD - THAN EVERYONE'S! (7:11-28)

Verse 11 really launches the main idea with the first "**P**" – **Perfection**:

*Now if **perfection** had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?*

The writer opens up a discussion about a priestly order which spells the end of the Levitical priesthood and brings a new law and a new covenant.

The new covenant & law will be unpacked further in chapters 8-10.

¹ The argument does NOT require Melchizedek to be a "Christophany", a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. A key word in verse 3 is "**like/resembling** the Son of God", not "*being* the Son of God".

Here in chapter 7 the focus is that Jesus, in His *human* nature, is a descendant not of Levi, but the tribe of Judah. Verse 14,

It is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe, Moses said nothing about priests.

Verse 16 clearly points out both what is not & what is the basis of Jesus' appointment as high priest:

[Jesus] has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an INDESTRUCTIBLE LIFE.

For it is witnessed of Him,

"You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." (7:16-17)

This gets us considering the second "**P**" – **Permanence**.

Not just the *category* of Jesus' priestly order, but the *nature* of Jesus Himself – what makes Him special: His "indestructible life."

He's a priest forever because He **actually lives forever!**

Who exactly is this Jesus?!

Verse 17 is quoting Psalm 110, the *only other* place in the Bible mentioning Melchizedek.²

Since Jesus is described as having an "indestructible life", it's significant that Jesus highlights His identity, by quoting Psalm 110 when the Pharisees test Him:

"The Christ? Whose son is He?"

They replied to him, "The son of David."

Jesus responded,

"How is it then that David, in the Spirit [under inspiration], calls Him 'Lord', saying,

*'**The** Lord said to **my** Lord,*

"Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet"

If then David calls Him 'Lord, how is He David's son?"

And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions." (Matt 22:42-46)

Jesus blows the Pharisees away by a mind-blowing Question about a mind-blowing Truth: The only possible answer is that Jesus is BOTH **God's Son** – *eternal, divine, incarnate*, putting on human flesh – to be born as **Mary's son**, a *descendant* of David!

Born to die for our sins, then be raised to life, as proof of His "indestructible life", as Peter preached his very first sermon in Acts 2:24,

Jesus put an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power!

So Jesus' *priesthood* is perfect & permanent because Jesus *Himself* is perfect & permanent!

Next, verses 18-19 speaks of obsolete nature of the old covenant & priesthood:

*For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a **BETTER HOPE** is introduced, through which we draw near to God.*

² Apart from Genesis 14 (as already mentioned) and our passage, Hebrews 5-7.

Verse 18 sounds overly harsh: "useless"

In Romans 7 the law is called "*holy, righteous & good*"! (7:12)

The old covenant was not an initial plan that failed.

God's plan from the beginning was Christ.

He is "*the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world*" (Rev 13:8).

It's not that the Law did *nothing*, was 'good for nothing.'

Paul writes, "*How would I know 'coveting' was sin unless the law revealed it?*" (Rom 7:7)

It was a useful *sign-post, a pointer* – revealing God's *holiness* & our *unholiness*, our need.

But the old covenant was NOT like a "*classic car*" having everything it NEEDED ... just lacking a few "mod cons", like air conditioning and power windows.

It was *useless* to **SAVE** us. Because it was never intended for that.

It was intended to **SHOW** us our need for a Saviour, for a **Perfect & Permanent** High Priest, the One we've been promised, the One we've been waiting for!

This is why we *cannot* turn back from following Jesus, our GREAT High Priest, the **only Advocate** who can actually save us, and be interceding for us before a Holy God.

Why can only Jesus can effectively intercede for us? Verses 23 tells us, other priests are mortal, keep *dying*; they *cannot continue* interceding.

But, verse 24

Jesus holds His priesthood PERMANENTLY, because He continues FOREVER.

(Jesus' **priesthood** is permanent because Jesus **Himself** is permanent!)

Verses 25-28 are the CLIMAX, making this crystal clear:

*Consequently, Jesus is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make **INTERCESSION** for them.*

His interceding is **permanent**, never ending, because He lives forever.

His interceding is **perfect**, because He is perfect, verse 26-28,

*For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, **HOLY, INNOCENT, UNSTAINED**, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.*

He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for His own sins and then for those of the people, since He did this once for all when He offered up Himself.

*For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law [Psalm 110], appoints a Son who has been made **PERFECT FOREVER**.*

Jesus – Our *Perfect, Permanent High Priest!*

This is AWESOMELY encouraging, hope-inspiring truth!

This is why it is Jesus who, v. 19, brings

"a **BETTER HOPE**, through which we draw near to God."

Let's dwell on the application of this glorious truth, especially after last week's 'sledgehammer' passage!

For the sake I time, I will focus on the 2 greatest problems we experience, which are the 2 greatest problems Jesus as *our perfect, permanent Advocate* deals with:

Guilt & Shame

Jesus as our priestly advocate deals with *both!* Listen carefully to 1 John 1:9-2:1

If we confess our sins,

He is faithful & just to FORGIVE us our sins [Guilt]

and to CLEANSE us from all unrighteousness [Shame]

If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ The Righteous."

1] Removal of SHAME – Confidence to DRAW NEAR to God

Shame is your conscience *convicting* you that you are **unclean**
or the feeling of *humiliation* from being **unworthy**.

Before a holy God, this may be objectively true! (we are unclean, unworthy, unholy).
But if you are a Christian, stopping there is to dismiss, even insult, what Jesus has done for you & *continues* to do for you as He intercedes for you!

Shame over our sin keeps us **distant** from God.

That promise to God you've broken – *yet again*.

That sexual sin which just feels like a '*stain that remains*'.

A big emphasis in the book of Hebrews is "*drawing near to God*", and 3 examples occur in our High Priestly sections:

7:19, 25 and also back in 4:16, the passage about our sympathetic high priest.

That's what a priest does – allows us to draw near to God by making peace.

Jesus brings *perfect* peace because He brings a *perfect* sacrifice (Himself), which empowers His *perfect* prayers of intercession! As hymn writer Charles Wesley puts it,

The Father hears Him pray, His dear Anointed One.

He **CANNOT** turn away the presence of His Son!

God's high priest has always been about **removing shame** from His people so they can again draw near to Him.

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest offered 1 goat as a sacrifice (guilt offering), but the other goat, was called the "**scape goat**", a contraction of "escape goat".

After the high priest laid hands on the escape goat, symbolic of transferring the shameful sins of the people to the goat, the goat was released into the wilderness – **carry away the shame** from the midst of the people.

Just think of the **shame** Peter felt, denying Christ 3 times the night of His arrest.

At the moment of the 3rd denial,

"as Peter was speaking, the rooster crowed.

The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter.

Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him:

"Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times."

*And Peter went outside and **WEPT BITTERLY.**" (Luke 22:60-62)*

Yet, how did Jesus prepare, even encourage Peter to 'bounce back', to draw near to God and *press on* in the faith, and help others press on?

Earlier that same night, at the "Last Supper", Jesus told Peter about His intercession!,
*"I have PRAYED for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail.
 And WHEN you have turned back, **strengthen your brothers.**" (Luke 22:32)*

I just love that! Not IF, but **WHEN** you turn back in faith – when you *confess* your sin – I will be faithful to forgive & cleanse you, because you have Me as your Advocate before the Father, interceding for you!

F.F. Bruce puts it so well,

"The ascended Lord still does for His people at the right hand of God what He did for Peter on earth."³

Amen! A believer (like Peter) persevering in his faith is so consistent with the larger concern of the author of Hebrews for his listeners. So, Bruce comments on Heb 7:25,

The outcome is clear:

Jesus lives eternally, [and is] eternally engaged to bless & protect those who have committed themselves to Him.

We need to believe this, by faith, even when we do not "Feel" cleansed & accepted.

Because ***what FEELS true is often different to what IS true.***

That's the thought Todd Stryd shared in a Christian Counselling blog last month:

I felt shame last week.

The city council sanitation worker slapped me with a written warning – for having 'unauthorized' material in that garbage can . . . a bunch of concrete!

Disapproval and disappointment shakes me up.

My legs went wobbly, my heart rate increased, and I lost my appetite.

But something fundamental needs to be understood about the experience of shame. It's this:

"What feels true is often different from what is true."

My feelings of shame were so real and powerful that I was tempted to question basic things I thought I knew about reality, namely:

I am God's child, I am accepted by God; I am eligible to serve God.

Shame can threaten our foundational beliefs like this because, in the moment, it feels like it is the most accurate representation of what is true.

My only hope (and yours) is in what God says is true. His message transcends the experience of shame and grounds me in what is real & unchanging. Shame does not decide my identity or my status before God, or my future – these are secured for me in Christ.⁴

No matter your shame – genuinely **confess** your sin to God, truly repent of it – ***because of Jesus***, He will cleanse you and send your shame into the wilderness!

³ F. F. Bruce, *Epistle to the Hebrews* (New London Commentary), 173

⁴ <https://www.ccef.org/resources/blog/personal-experience-shame-hope>

Then rise from the ashes of shame and continue singing on with Wesley,
My God is reconciled – His pardoning voice I hear!
*He owns me for **His child** – I can no longer fear!*
With confidence I now draw nigh,
And ‘Father, Abba, Father’ cry!

2] Removal of GUILT – Confident Hope to Press On!

Guilt is our sense of *responsibility/accountability* for an offense or wrong committed.

Objectively, of course, we need our guilt dealt with to remove our condemnation!
 But even subjectively, guilt can be so *debilitating* to those who are Christians, whose condemnation has been dealt with by Jesus.

To help you deal with guilt, I have a really important Question for you⁵:

What do you look like in Court?

Answer: You look like Your Advocate!

You are only as good as your Advocate! As good as his representation of you!

If he is brilliant & wins, YOU win!

If he loses, you lose!

Your advocate is your representative.

I figured the best way to illustrate this is with one of the most famous ‘movie moves’ of a legal advocate – and then tell you why Jesus is a MUCH BETTER Advocate!

In the movie *A Few Good Men*, Tom Cruise plays Lt. Daniel Kaffee, a Navy JAG.
 (JAG stands for Judge Advocate General's corps)

Fresh out of Harvard Law School, Kaffee is trying to uncover Private Santiago’s cause of death, which in reality was due to a “code red” – the nickname for *illegal* military “hazing”/strenuous humiliation by dangerous tasks.

Kaffee is defending 2 marines, wrongly charged with murdering Santiago.

This excerpt is between Lieutenant Kaffee (Cruise’s character) and Colonel Nathan Jessup (Jack Nicholson’s character).

KAFFEE

Colonel, you said Santiago was being transferred because he was in “grave danger”. But, you made it clear just a moment ago that your men never take matters into their own hands.

Your men “follow orders or people die!”

*If you gave an order that Santiago wasn't to be touched, and your orders are always followed, then **why** would Santiago be in danger? **Why** would he need to be transferred?*

*... I'll ask for the fourth time. **Did you order the code red?!...***

JESSEP

You want answers?”

KAFFEE

I think I'm entitled to them.

⁵ Good question asked by Tim Keller, “The Advocate”.

JESSEP
You want answers?!

KAFFEE
I want the **truth!**

JESSEP
YOU CAN'T HANDLE THE TRUTH!
Son, we live in a world that has walls. And those walls have to be guarded by men with guns. Who's gonna do it? You?!... **YOU DON'T WANT THE TRUTH!!**

KAFFEE
DID YOU ORDER THE CODE RED!!!

JESSEP
You're @%*% right I did!

Stellar move! – find a weakness in the prosecution, a *chink in the armour*, and target it . . . in this case, tap-tap-tap into the pride of the Colonel, to point where he unwittingly *boasts about his illegal conduct!*

Kaffee wins, so the 2 marines win and are declared innocent, **because** Kaffee is their representative.

But why is **Jesus' advocacy** SO much better?...

- 1] Well, to start with, we are not *wrongly* charged, like those Marines.
We are *rightly* charged about our sins – YET *we still win*, being on Jesus' side!
- 2] Unlike Kaffee's manipulative tactics to expose Jessup's pride, with Jesus absolutely no *manipulation* is required to exploit before the judge. Jesus' case is solid, perfect!

A conventional advocate, through what is called "*plea bargaining*", tries to resolve a dispute by ***compromise***, bringing together 2 opposing parties – prosecutor & defendant – by "*settling*": pleading guilty to a lesser charge with lesser consequences.

But our Divine Advocate, achieves ***perfect peace***. Jesus in **no way compromises** the holiness of God. Instead, He fully satisfies the justice of God.

That's what 7:26-27 is all about.

- 3] Because Jesus' is our *Perfect* Advocate, in pleading our case, mercy is not required!

That might sound strange. Let me explain.
Of course, God lovingly shows sinners mercy in *sending* His Son.

But once sin has been paid for . . . it's paid for!
"Double jeopardy", or "paying twice" for a crime committed, is not justice.

While 'the law' certainly benefits society, promoting kindness by punishing wickedness, **The law is not "about" Mercy.**

The Law is about **JUSTICE**.

This is what ex-convict Jean Valjean learned from inspector Javert in Les Miserables:

*You will starve again
Unless you learn the meaning of the law.*

So a good advocate rarely works the "**Mercy**" angle. Why not?

When an Advocate pleads *mercy* before the judge, he's admitting he's LOST THE CASE!

"Please give Him a break, Judge? Pretty please? I throw myself on the mercy of the court!"

The best advocate pursues the "**Justice**" angle, which a good judge can never deny.

So Jesus' advocacy for us, the basis of His intercession, goes something like this:

Father, you demand Justice. You are a Righteous & Just God.

And, yes, my friends here that I represent are indeed guilty!

But here – here is My payment, My ransom! My blood in their behalf.

Their ransom has been paid in full by Me.

*It would be **unjust** to require two payments for the same debt.*

*Therefore, I stand here not asking for mercy for them; **I plead JUSTICE!***

That's an infallible case!

That why John does **not** write "*He is faithful and MERCIFUL to forgive us our sins.*"
but, "*He is faithful and JUST to forgive us our sins.*"

When Abel was murdered by Cain, his blood cried out from the ground for **JUSTICE!**

So, too, Jesus' blood cries out for justice. Yet,

"Jesus' blood speaks a BETTER word than the blood of Abel," (Heb 12:24)

because Jesus' blood actually **accomplishes** what it cries out for: justice.
peace & reconciliation won by righteous payment, *perfect* payment for sin.

Charles Wesley put this so well,

*Arise, My Soul, Arise! Shake off your guilty fears!
Your bleeding sacrifice in my behalf appears!*

He ever lives above, for me to intercede!

*His all-redeeming love, His **PRECIOUS BLOOD TO PLEAD**.*

5 bleeding wounds He bears, received on Calvary.

*They pour effectual prayers, they **strongly plead** for me!*

'Forgive him, O forgive', they cry!

*Don't let that **RANSOMED** sinner die!*

Do you realise how empowering this should be for us?

The be set free from guilt, and awestruck by the love of our Advocate, Jesus Christ,
The Righteous!

Listen to how Stephen was empowered during his martyrdom, in Acts 7:55-60, as the
Jewish court (the Sanhedrin) was picking up stones to kill him for proclaiming Christ:

"full of the Holy Spirit, Steven gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God,

*and Jesus **STANDING** at the right hand of God."*

Standing is the position of a courtroom advocate!

At the moment an earthly court was **condemning** Stephen,
the only court that matters was **commending** him!

Stephen saw his Heavenly Advocate, Jesus – *standing, pleading* His perfect case!

If you can stand in GOD's court, you'll have courage to stand in ANY lesser court!

Be Confident to press on in the Faith, because we have a *perfect & permanent* High Priest!

CALL TO ALL - EVEN SCEPTICS

At the start I mentioned the way God wired our souls, needing validation from outside ourselves is not just an "insecurity" thing. It's also not just a "**religious**" thing, either.

This is reinforced so clearly in 'Quentin', a character from Arthur Miller's play "*After The Fall*", which is quite autobiographical, reflecting much of Miller's troubled marriage to Marilyn Monroe. The character Quentin says,

For years I looked at life like a case at law, a series of arguments.

When you're young you prove how brave you are or smart you are.

Then you prove what a good lover you are, later what a good husband or father you are.

Finally how wise, how powerful, or whatever.

*But underlying it all, I now see there was an assumption that person moves on a path toward, being justified or condemned – a **verdict**, at any rate.*

My disaster happened when one day I looked up and realized the bench was empty.

No God, no Judge in sight.

*And all that remained was the **endless argument with myself**, the litigation of existence before an empty bench, which is another way of saying—of course—despair.*

Miller is saying, no one can rest in your own evaluation.

Atheism did not solve anything. It *created despair*.

Quentin could not stop arguing; he couldn't stop the trial regarding himself!

Because even when our minds try to deny God, and deny that we are accountable for our lives . . . our soul knows that there is a God, there is indeed a Bench with a Judge, and there will be a Trial at the end – the Day of Reckoning.

So underneath **all** those efforts to get verdicts of approval from those outside of us, ultimately is a desire to hear a verdict of approval from the Lord of the universe.

The ultimate question is this when you approach God's Bench:

- **will you go it alone – representing yourself** – futile!

or

- **go with Jesus as Your Advocate** –

so that when you hear the rap of His gavel, it's followed by His words
"Enter into the joy of your Master!"

[Discussion Questions - next page]

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Jesus is a Better Priestly Advocate!

Main idea:

*We press on in the Faith by confidence in a Better Advocate –
a **Perfect, Permanent** Priest who **INTERCEDES** for us!*

Introduction

- 1] What do you tend to do with photos of yourself you really dislike? Why?
What does this reveal about our deep concern for how we appear to others?

Melchizedek's Better Priesthood – than Aaron's (6:13 – 7:10)

- God's Sure Promise to Abraham (6:13-20)
- 2] Who was God's promise to Abraham about? (see Genesis 22:16-18)
Why is God's doubly-strong promise an anchor in the storm?
- Melchizedek is Better than Abraham & Levi (7:1-10)
- 3] What about Melchizedek makes his priestly order *unique* and *better* than Aaron's/Levi's?
 - a] Who were Levi & Aaron, and who was Melchizedek?
 - b] Who came first, and what do blessings & tithes have to do with it?
 - c] In what way[s] does "*Melchizedek resemble the Son of God*"? (7:3-4)

Jesus' Far Better Priesthood – than Everyone's! (7:11–28)

- 4] What are two words starting with "P" that characterise the supremacy of Jesus' priesthood?
- 5] What does 7:16-17 say is the basis for Jesus' priestly appointment?
What does Psalm 110 have to do with this, and why does Jesus quote it?
- 6] What in particular was old covenant law "useless" in achieving? (v. 18) What did it achieve?
How should it encourage us this was God's plan all along? (see Rev 13:8; Luke 24:25-27)
- 7] What do think of the claim that the 2 greatest problems we experience are *guilt & shame*?
- 8] In His intercession, how does Jesus deal with our **Shame**?
 - a] What did Jesus do for Peter (re. the thrice denial)?
 - b] Why is it that what "feels" true is often different than what "is" true?
 - c] If we *genuinely, repentantly* confess our sins (1 John 1:9 – 2:1), but still feel ashamed, what is this ultimately saying about our view of Jesus' advocacy?
 - d] What will truly help you "draw near to God" at such times? (read 7:25-28)
- 9] In His intercession, how does Jesus deal with our **Guilt**?
 - a] What/Who makes all the difference re. how you appear in court?
 - b] Discuss numerous ways our Divine Advocate is *far better* than a conventional one.
[HINTS: Are we innocent? What role does *Manipulation* play? What is "plea bargaining"?
What role does *Mercy* play? Does 1 Jn 1:9 say "He is faithful & *merciful* to forgive us?"
Why does "*Jesus' blood speaks a BETTER word than the blood of Abel*"? (Heb 12:24)
- 10] How should knowing Jesus is your Perfect, Permanent Advocate *empower* you? (Acts 7:55-60)
- 11] What is the opposite *enslaving* truth? Discuss this suggested Answer:
"If you live for people's acceptance, you'll die from their rejection."
- 12] What does Arthur Miller's "Quentin" say about a 3rd option":
denying the need for any external approval, and denying the reality of a verdict or a judge?
– O Lord, give us a desire to hear Your approval, in Jesus! –